



# Smart Ageing and the World of Work

Working together longer

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## **Section 1 - Introduction**

ISAX (Ireland Smart Ageing Exchange) is an independent network of businesses, government agencies and academic institutions collaborating on research to develop products and services targeted at the global smart ageing economy. ISAX exists to develop responses to the ageing of the global population and the growing pressure to ensure that:

- people enter their later years healthy and stay so;
- life-style behaviours improve to prevent or delay the onset of chronic diseases;
- health care migrates out of hospital settings to community and self-care;
- a range of options exist to provide income security in later years including supporting people to stay working longer and set up their own business;
- current shortages of carers are addressed through better technologies and housing design and better career structures for carers;
- we develop 'smart ageing' homes and cities; and
- older adults are enabled to live 'life with purpose' contributing socially, economically and culturally to the communities in which they live.

The Smart Ageing and the World of Work is one area of focus for ISAX. In 2017, ISAX commissioned Professor Maria Slowey & Tania Zubryzcki of the Dublin City University Higher Education Research Centre to conduct an initial scoping study of the major ageing associated societal and demographic change taking place in Ireland, with associated challenges for individuals, employers and public policy. The result is a report titled *Population Ageing – Some Implications for the Workforce in Ireland* (2017). In this report, the authors find that the situation in Ireland is characterised by three main demographic trends:

- (1) the unprecedented growth of older population, particularly among those aged 65 and over – primarily due to higher life expectancy, consistent with trends globally;
- (2) increasing Old Age Dependency Ratios: signalling the rising number of persons aged 65 and over to the persons of “traditional” working age; and
- (3) labour market challenges and opportunities presented by the new demographics, both in Ireland and globally, including the increasing talent shortages and the need for

research-informed measures to support longer working lives, aimed at the employers and individual.

The authors also report that there is limited evidence of how employers in Ireland are responding to the ageing workforce. Aside from the obvious economic issues raised by workforce ageing, the authors state that “it will become increasingly important for employers in Ireland to recognise the potential benefit older workers can bring to the workforce”.

This paper - The New Old Workforce – Disrupting the way we think about older workers in Ireland seeks to:

- (1) use the evidence provided by Maria Slowey & Tania Zubryzcki to make the case for increased participation in the workforce of older people;
- (2) provide a brief glimpse of what that “age-inclusive” workforce and workplace of the near future might look like;
- (3) reveal the endemic negative age-bias in our workplace institutions today and provide the evidence to counteract the rationale for this bias;
- (4) identify some examples of emerging age-inclusive good practice in organisations; and finally,
- (5) act as a mobilising “call to arms” for ISAX members to begin the process to identify and adopt age-inclusive strategies that have proven successful elsewhere and to design and develop some innovative Irish-based solutions for the Irish context

## Section 2 – The ‘Older’ Worker Landscape

*“We have never had a society where half of the population is aged between 50 and 100 – quite simply, things have got to change”*

Sarah Harper, Professor of Gerontology and Director of the Institute of Population Ageing, University of Oxford

Older people are often blamed for the consequences of increased longevity. Simply put, because they are living longer healthier lives, people are staying at work for longer. This draws criticism from the young workers that their older colleagues are taking their jobs and

We are becoming ‘older’

- 4.67 million people now live in Ireland (Census 2016)
- Since 2011, the over 65s increased by 102,174 making them the fastest growing segment (Census 2016)
- In contrast, the number of those aged 15-64 increased by only 44,477 (Census 2016)
- There will be c.1.4 million people over 65 living in Ireland by 2046, up from 532,000 in 2011 (CSO estimate)
- The population aged 80 and over will rise from 128,000 in 2011 to c.480,000 in 2046 (CSO estimate)
- 2013-2060 projections show that life expectancy for males in Ireland will increase from 78.7 to 85.2, while life expectancy for women will increase from 83 to 89.2 years (CSO estimate)
- Most babies born since 2000 will celebrate their 100<sup>th</sup> birthdays (The Lancet, 2009:1196)

their opportunities. At the same time, older people are criticised for the growing burden of pension costs.

Older people, it appears are in a bind. The world doesn’t want them to work, nor does it want them to draw their pensions (assuming they have one).

Older people are stuck in a bind and something must change.

Let’s begin.

### Growing old – it’s a numbers game

The common perception of Ireland is that it is a “young” country. For centuries, there was an unbroken supply of young people to work the land at home or build the cities and roads in far flung countries. More recently, our highly educated trained professionals have garnered success at home and

abroad. This young Irish educated workforce, along with the unspoilt natural environment, English-speaking, EU membership & competitive Corporate Tax regime are the significant themes of the national narrative when selling Ireland. To a large extent, this ‘young Ireland’

perception is based on reality as the Irish birth rate has tracked significantly higher than the European average for all the 20<sup>th</sup> century. But now, we are becoming older.

In parallel, and in common with most of the industrialised world, Ireland has achieved remarkable advances in **Life Expectancy** throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The average gain in Life Expectancy through the last century has been an astonishing 30 years. The evidence now

### We must work for longer

- The Irish Old Age Dependency Ratio was 19% (approximately 5¼:1) in 2013 but this is projected to align to the European average of 28% (approximately 3½:1) in the coming years and to be at 45% (approximately 2¼:1) by 2050 (The Ageing Report, 2015)
- To address the challenges this poses to the Public Finances, the State Pension Age rose to 66 in 2014, and will rise to 67 in 2021 and rise gain to 68 in 2028 (The Ageing Report, 2015)
- The Potential Support Ratio for Ireland in 2015 was estimated at 4.5 but is estimated to contract significantly to under 2 by 2050 – that is less than 2 earners for every dependent (UN, 2015)
- An Irish government report states that “At an international, EU, and Irish domestic level, key policy documents have ... confirmed that unless women and men, as they live longer, also stay in employment and save more for their retirement, the adequacy of pensions cannot be guaranteed and the required increase in public expenditure would be unsustainable” (Report of the Interdepartmental Group on Fuller Working Lives, 2016)
- In Ireland, “Occupational and private pensions are supposed to compliment the basic State Pension, but half the workforce lacks coverage” (CSO, 2008)

suggests that, if this pace of advancement is maintained, most babies born in countries with long Life Expectancy (such as Ireland) can expect to reach their 100<sup>th</sup> birthdays. And they will do so with less disability and fewer functional limitations than their occasional long-lived ancestors.

### The many support the few model

Through the 20<sup>th</sup> century, despite the dramatic increases in Life Expectancy, the high birth rate provided a continuous supply of new labour to compensate for any increase in the number of retirees and dependent older people. Thus, the **Old Age Dependency Ratio**, the number of those aged 65 and over per 100 people of the ‘traditional’ working age of 15-64, remained remarkably stable at under 20 over the years 1960-2010. This ratio has now started to rise dramatically. Between 2010 and 2015, it rose from 16.35 to 20.19 - a 30% increase in 10 years.

This Old Dependency Ratio is an interesting equation in that it defines ‘traditional’ working age as those aged between 15 and 64. In most Western European countries today, the reality is that the lower limit of this definition has trended upwards. This happened because of a significantly higher percentage of the population staying in education until well in to their 20’s. So, while the statistical definition remained constant, the cultural norm changed significantly.

### Not enough of us work

- 64.6% of men aged 15-64 were in employment in 2013, versus 57.5% of those aged 55-64. For women, 55.9% aged 15-64 were in employment in 2013, versus 43.1% of those aged 55-64 (CSO, 2013)
- 3.2% of the workforce in 2015 were aged 65 years and over and a large proportion (35%) of these were working in the Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing Sector (Report of the Interdepartmental Group on Fuller Working Lives, 2016)
- All Sectors, except for Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing, show a dramatic fall in the numbers at work over the age of 65 (Report of the Interdepartmental Group on Fuller Working Lives, 2016)
- Average employment participation rates in 2013 were 45.5% amongst 60-65-year olds, dropping to 9.4% for those aged over 65 (CSO, 2013)

### This (shorter) working life

The reality is that the upper limit of the statistical definition also changed - in the opposite direction. The **Effective Retirement Age** (the average age at which people withdraw from the workforce) in Ireland decreased from 73.1 years of age in 1970 to 63.3 years in 2011. The aspiration of ‘early retirement’ became the norm for many baby boomers. Only recently, as the State Pension Age increased to 66 (2014) and with plans to increase this to 68 by 2028, has the decrease in the Effective Retirement Age potentially been arrested. However, increases in the Effective Retirement Age have not

kept pace with the dramatic increases in Life Expectancy. These additional years of life outside of the labour force challenge our economic models of retirement and old age dependency. Future generations of retirees appear faced with stark choices in terms of the timing of retirement, the duration of that retirement, and the standard of living & geriatric wellbeing they may enjoy during their retirement.

Once, inward migration of young workers was viewed as a potential solution to the ageing demographic in advanced economies. But while inward migration may form part of the

## Migration only part of the solution

- Ireland had a negative net emigration of -28,558 for the 5 years 2011-2016, compared to a positive net emigration of 115,800 in the previous 5 years (Census 2016)
- Emigration in large part is amongst qualified, skilled young people with tertiary education, and currently, the outflow of university graduates exceeds their inflow (OECD Economic Survey : Ireland, 2015a)
- Due to the inability of domestic companies to hire workers from abroad (compared to their multi-national counterparts), the need for Ireland to optimise policies to retain and attract internal qualified workers is critical (OECD, Economic Survey : Ireland 2015a)
- The UK is facing the same issue - "UK employers would need to fill an estimated 13.5 million job vacancies in the next 10 years but only 7 million young people will leave school and college over this period" ... "migration alone will not fill the gap" ... "older people are the main untapped source of labour: unlike migrants, they already live here, and their numbers are growing" (Managing a Healthy Ageing Workforce, McNair et al, 2012)

response to ageing, it is not a panacea. And, as seen recently in Western Europe, brings issues in terms of social tension, integration and multicultural inclusion.

Today, about 7 years of our additional 30 years is apportioned to the pre-work years of one's life – those years spent in education and training before one enters the workforce. Previously, before the era of mass access to tertiary education, the majority began their working lives at 15, hence we use the age range 15-64 to calculate the Old Age Dependency Ratio. Today, with a majority of Irish young people accessing tertiary education, the early 20's is a more likely real starting point for one's working life.

Given that we are not yet working significantly longer, the remainder of the years gained appear, by default, to be apportioned to the post-work years

of one's life – those years one currently spends in retirement. As an increasing number of us live to be centenarians, we are now close to the point where many people will draw retirement benefits for as long as they spent working, if not longer.

The reality is that the apportioning of this additional time has not been purposeful, but has occurred rather by default. In truth, this is not the way many of us would choose to spend the extraordinary gift of more time.

## Many of us can and want to work longer

- “People are not only living longer than they did previously, but .... with less disability and fewer functional limitations” (The Lancet (2009:1206)
- The numbers of people in their 60’s and 70’s capable of contributing to the economy is increasing as a result of “improvements in health and functioning along with shifting of employment from jobs that need strength to jobs needing knowledge” (Christensen et al, 2009)
- “The majority of older workers require flexible working arrangements instead of fixed age for retirement”, and a “significant number of older workers do not want to be forced to retire” (Cantillon & Vasquez del Aquila, 2011)
- 63% of employees over the age of 55 would like to (or believe they will need to) work past the age of 66 (William Fry Report 2016)
- There are “mixed views about retirement. While some older people see retirement as an opportunity to have time to engage in hobbies and interests, others viewed it as a time of loss of social contact and reduced income. Interestingly, the loss of social contact was an issue that tended to affect more men than women” (Dept. of Health & Children, 2010)

We are getting older and this trend is predicted to continue. Currently, most of us neither work for long enough, nor save enough during our working lives, to fund our increasingly elongated retirement. We will have to work for longer. Conventional wisdom is that public sentiment with this development will be negative. But, the evidence is that many of us can, and want to, extend our working lives. This is an important consideration in a country that is engaged in a social dialogue on retirement, has increased age at which a citizen can access state retirement benefit, but still maintains mandatory retirement at 65 (or younger) as the national default.

## Section 3 – A glimpse of an age-inclusive future

### 'Older' Working - a glimpse of the age-inclusive future

*"The 'new old' ... will increasingly resist a medical model of ageing based on disease, decline and dependency, with new narratives related to active ageing"*

**George Lee & Jonathan Collie, Founders, The Age of No Retirement**

It's more than just working longer - if this were simply a matter of working for longer we would just remove mandatory retirement ages. But, the longer working life, the extended career, the workplace of the future that is age-inclusive require some fundamental design changes and different cultural norms to those that pervade today.

Traditionally, we have punctuated our lives into 3 distinct phases. The first is the learning and training phase where we develop, grow and prepare for our careers. The second phase is where we deploy that learning and training in the working phase. The third and final phase is where we remove ourselves from active participation in the workforce and we retire from being contributors economically to being consumers of 'geriatric' products and services. This 'punctuated' linear career model of a period of Learning, followed by our Working-life and ended by our Retirement is shown in Figure 1

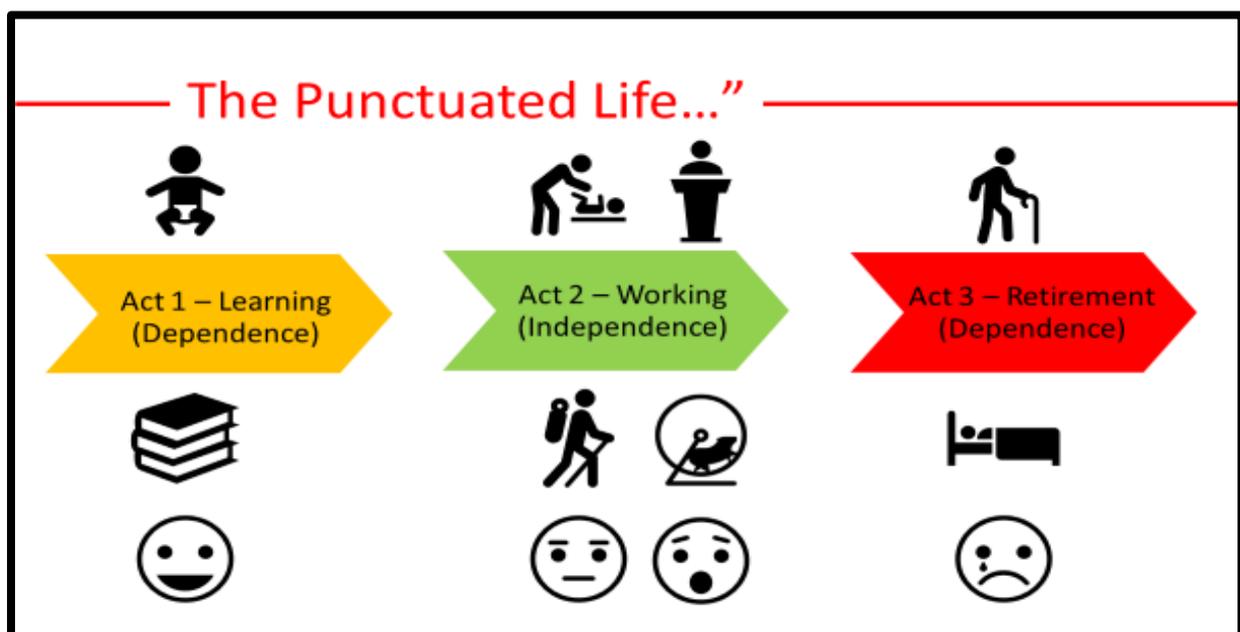


Figure 1 – The Punctuated Life

Our lives today are not so simple. Nor are they so linear. In parallel with the changes in demographics already outlined, there have been radical changes in the world of work. Concepts such as ‘life-long learning’, ‘flexible careers’, ‘encore careers’ and ‘down-shifting’ have all entered the lexicon as the linear certainty of a single career has largely ceased.

From a **‘Punctuated’ life** to a **‘Progressive’ life** – Our simple linear ‘punctuated’ life model are now starting to evolve into one that is ‘progressive’ with continuous life-long learning and the attainment of new skills and qualifications, multiple career changes, and a graduated approach to the end of working life involving downshifting (less intense work roles), flexibility in terms of locations (some home-working etc) and time (some part-time work etc)

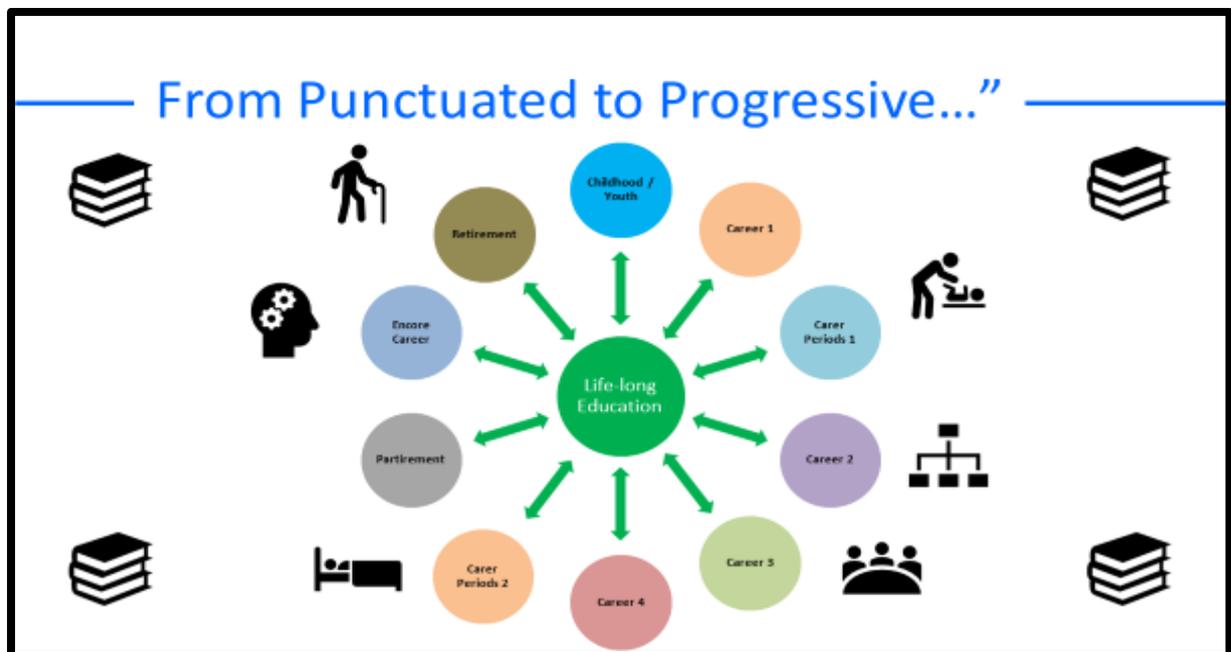


Figure 2 – The Progressive Life

*“But society is changing. The linear life path – study, work, marry, have kids, retire, die – is over. College students could be 20, 30 or 60. First-time parents could be 20, 30, 40 and older. Moving into a new home can be a milestone for a new family, or for older empty-nesters who are downsizing. Grandparents could be 45 or 85. In this new world, people don’t want to be treated like just another member of a demographic herd.”*

**George Lee & Jonathan Collie, Founders, The Age of No Retirement**

There must be a shift away from the traditional approach of working careers consisting of three main stages such as “qualification phase, working phase and retirement phase” and as

“employees today are expected to be more flexible in terms of duties they perform and working conditions, the commitment to life-long education constitutes a pre-condition of an active and flexible life style” (UNECE, 2012)

Research confirms the importance of investing in adult learning to deliver “greater employability, increased productivity and better-quality employment, reduced expenditure in areas such as unemployment benefits, welfare payments and early retirement pensions”. Research on older adults indicates that “those who engage in learning are healthier, with a consequent reduction in healthcare costs” (OECD, 2005).

Key to the participation of older workers in the economy are the provision of Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA’s). This flexibility needs to be Temporal (e.g. Part-time etc), Spatial (e.g. Working from Home), and Work-role (e.g. Work Intensity – mentoring etc) (Atkinson & Sandyford, 2016). Christensen et al (2009) found that an increase in jobs needing 15, 20 or 25 hours of work per week appears likely because “many people in their 60’s and 70’s would prefer part-time work to fulltime labour”.

Interestingly, Vaupel & Loichinger (2006) posit that if part-time work becomes common among the older population, more part-time opportunities may become available for younger people as well, ultimately resulting in people of all ages working less hours per year but for more years, creating New Life Patterns.

The concept of “Encore” careers has existed primarily through the process of volunteering during retirement or periods of semi-retirement. Some progressive organisations are now formalising the opportunity to for long-serving employees to reinvent themselves for their later years at work, possibly accessing an opportunity to retrain and/or pursuing a latent passion. Social enterprises have benefits from accessing skills, capabilities and experience using these initiatives.

The formalisation of the ‘Worker/Carer’ model may be one of the most significant outcomes of these New Life Patterns. Many of the workplace roles older people take on as they age will facilitate their dual responsibilities of worker and caregiver. The majority of Geriatric Carer’s today are barely unacknowledged by the economic system. But as the population ages, the requirement for age-related caregiving, and hence carers, becomes more acute, and

therefore the opportunity exists to integrate it into the work system. This can only benefit other life-stage caring responsibilities such as parenting.

This has been acknowledged in the National Carer's Strategy (2013) where it identified that there is a requirement to manage carers' obligations flexibly in working arrangements and this requirement that will increase over time. The US trend shows that assistance through Company sponsored leave for "Working Caregivers" is increasingly the norm with other companies providing relevant training for working carers to manage the 'double burden' (Citation needed).

Age inclusive workplaces allow the older worker to participate and contribute on an equal basis with all other age segments. This may sometimes require capital investment to create the type of workplace accommodations required by 'older' workers. As automation, mechanic and robotic substitution of manual labour increasingly remove the requirement for human 'strength-based' work, it becomes increasingly possible to design work processes and tasks around the human (regardless of age) rather than have the human accommodate to the needs of the processes and tasks.

Where strength-based work is still required, identifying and making physical changes to work stations, production lines and other workplaces to reduce wear and tear on workers' bodies, and thus the likelihood of absence due to injury, are improvements that may be initiated as a response to an ageing workforce but in reality, benefits all workers. Smart ergonomic design is emerging as the default workplace standard and is increasingly less about age than it is about worker welfare and organisational productivity.

In Japan, 27% of the active workforce is aged 65 or older. Pola, a cosmetics maker, has a 100-year old working on their sales force. Kato Manufacturing, a sheet metal manufacturer who makes parts for the Boeing 787 jetliner, only hires staff over the age of 60 (Financial Times 2017). Already in Germany, BMW has developed work practices, processes and patterns that suit older employees and reduce 'wear and tear' on workers' bodies are necessary. BMW has invested in such age-friendly production lines to address an ageing workforce. The outcome was the development of its most productive line with efficiency gains of >7% staffed by older workers who had the lowest absence rate in the entire workforce of >50,000 employees (Loch et al, 2010).

Each of these individual stratagems to increase the workforce participation rate of older workers in an ageing population in of themselves appears logical and implementable. However, collectively, they represent a fundamental redesign of the world of work frameworks developed over the past 200 years. These frameworks have been developed to 'manage out' the ageing and now contain very significant structural (systemic) and institutional bias against older people and in favour of younger people. This 'Jeunism' (favouring younger people over older people) is evident on a societal scale in the workforce participation rates, where in 2013 they were 64.6% for those aged between 15-64 years, collapsing to 9.4% for those aged over 65. This systemic and institutional ageism will be an obdurate barrier to the type of age-inclusive workforce and workplace envisioned above and required to fix the economics of ageing.

## Section 4 – the barriers to change

### When do we become an 'older' worker?

#### When do we become old?

- Discussions about the lower labour participation rates among older workers tend to focus on those aged over 55 since that is when the declines become particularly evident in many countries (McCarthy et al, 2014)
- Similar results were seen where younger employees were regarded by the participating employers as 26 years and under, while persons aged 51 years and over were viewed as "older". Interestingly, the answers were consistent across the three groups surveyed (employers, employees, and those currently unemployed) and seemed to "follow societal stereotypes" (William Fry Employment Report, 2016)
- 38% of the unemployed aged 35-54 "thought they were too old for a particular job" compared to 87% of those aged 55 and over who "believe that age has been a factor in their not getting work" (William Fry Employment Report, 2016)

It depends! The State Retirement Age in Ireland is currently 66 (as of 2017). In the world of work however, research indicates that we start to change the way we treat people who are ageing from their early 50's where we start to see significant fall off in investment in training, up-skilling and sponsored tertiary education, as well as how we treat this demographic in terms of succession planning and identification and promotion of 'top talent'. It is worth noting the 14-year difference between the 'perceived older' worker age of 52 and the current established retirement age of 66 in Ireland. That is 14 years in which the demographic increasingly loses its employability and relevance to the world of work through both individual and institutional failure to maintain and develop skills and qualifications. This definition of 'old' at 52 has permeated its way into the cultural norm and we now see employees themselves self-

discriminating on the basis of their age.

Empirical research explored how a sample of 407 organisational decision makers in Ireland determined who constitutes an older worker. The results show that the decision makers in

Ireland “identify an ‘older worker’ as an employee who has reached the age of 52 years”. Among the reasons provided for describing a worker as ‘older’ at 52, most decision makers used the organisational age approach rationalizing ‘older’ in terms of “their perceiving employees at this age to be planning for retirement, to have reached the pinnacle of their

### Systemic Age Discrimination

- While 64% of participating CEO’s had a strategy to promote diversity and inclusion, only 8% included age as a dimension of their diversity and inclusion strategy (PwC 18<sup>th</sup> Annual CEO Survey, 2015)
- 96% of HRD’s admitted not tailoring their “reward offerings to meet the different generational needs of their workforce” (PwC HR Directors Pulse Survey, 2017)
- The CEO of American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) notes that, while many employers are now aiming to recruit and retain workers over 50, others are “slow to adapt to the changing workforce, largely because of negative stereotypes and outdated notions about the value of older workers” (Feinsod et al, 2015)
- “Employer practices regarding hiring, lay-offs, workplace environment and employee benefits structure all play an important role in determining an older worker’s ability to work” (Adler & Hibler, 2009)

career or for simply being older than the prevailing organisational or industry norm (McCarthy et al, 2014).

### Age as a Diversity issue

Our organisations and institutions have made great strides in promoting and developing diverse and inclusive cultures and practices such that all participants in the organisation feel equally valued and are equally represented at all levels of the organisation. But it seems from the evidence that age-inclusion is one aspect of inclusion that has been overlooked.

Worse than merely overlooking age-inclusion in diversity and inclusion policies and strategies is that leaders and managers openly report sharing and perpetuating the negative age-bias (‘Jeunism’) that pervades society in general.

In Ireland, the William Fry Employment Report (2016) made for particularly depressing reading. A few of the lowlights - 71% of employers surveyed “identify technology as an

inhibiting factor for older workers". 60% believe that it can be difficult for younger employees

### No training, no chance

**"There is a statistically significant correlation between training after 55 and retention in the workplace" and "the incidence of training with age declines in all European countries, Ireland ranking mid-place, with under 25% of employees over 55 undergoing training in the previous 12 months". The resistance may be coming from both employer and employee (O'Neill, 2010)**

**There is a "well documented need to get older workers into formal and non-formal education and training in order to maximise their potential in the labour market". "Only 1% of people aged 65-74 had participated in formal education in the past 12 months". "0% of the over 75s had participated" and, based on CSO 2008 data, "only 7% of 65-74 year olds and 4% of the over 75s had participated in training that could help them to be more competitive in the labour market" Cantillon & Vasquez del Aguila (2011)**

**"Although older workers are as likely to succeed in training as their younger counterparts, they are less likely to undertake training" which will have an impact on these workers' "motivation, productivity and on-going job options" (UK DWP - Employing Older Workers, 2013)**

to manage their older colleagues. 42% believe there is an upper age limit for customer facing roles.

When comparing their younger workers (<26 years of age) to their older colleagues (51 years and above), employers reported that younger employees are perceived as being more willing to learn new skills, more innovative and more technologically capable. Older employees are perceived to have better interpersonal skills, be harder working, and to be more loyal and dependable. However, older workers are perceived to be more resistant to changes in work practices and hours.

As McCarthy et al's (2014) empirical research has shown, "these managers and supervisors determine entry/re-entry to employment, identification of talent for promotion, access to training and development opportunities at work, and retention prospects for all workers".

According to Johnson (2013). common age stereotypes about older workers are (i) Poor cognitive function (ii) Lower ability/performance (iii) More resistant to change (iv) More resistant to training (v) Have more sickness absence.

Perhaps the clearest evidence that our workplace cultures are 'Jeunist' (favour younger workers over older workers) is evidenced by the general failure to invest in people as they age to ensure that they remain employable with relevant skills and competencies. The evidence points to a double bias here – there is no point investing in 'older' workers as they are going to leave, and they are harder to retain. This has become a cultural norm and it has permeated itself into the psyche of the older worker themselves who are also less likely to put themselves forward for training and further education. 'Older' workers actively collude in their own exclusion, and we can see this in the William Fry Employment Report (2016) where 75% of employees surveyed identified technology as an inhibiting factor for older workers (4% higher than the figure reported for employers).

*"Anyone who stops learning is old, whether at 20 or 80. Anyone who keeps learning stays young"*

**Henry Ford, Founder, Ford Motor Company**

Of course, the reality is that people sometimes lose their job through a variety of reasons and at all ages. In this regard, Fourage and Schils (2009) found that while flexible early retirement schemes can encourage older workers to participate in training, generous early retirement schemes have the opposite effect. This is an important design issue. The greater the direct financial early retirement payment(s) to the employee, the less likely they were to access the type of training and further education required to keep their skills and capabilities relevant. And while retiring early may have some cache in our modern society, the Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA) states that "better health allows people to remain at work for longer but it is also possible that work contributes to mental and physical health through its impact on social interaction or physical activity (Fifty Plus in Ireland, 2011). Furthermore, Waddell and Burton (2006) "... find no evidence that continued working is generally harmful to the health of older workers, and it may be beneficial. So decisions about retirement age can properly be made on social, economic and other non-health grounds".

Age discrimination can often be layered over other forms of discrimination and bias. For example, the reality is that women currently earn less across their working lives than their male counterparts. Women also live longer than men. These two dynamics drive end-of-life female poverty and when negative age-bias is factored in, the solutions to this poverty are even more difficult to influence.

Cantillon & Vasquez del Aguila (2011), quoting EQUAL (2007) state that gender poverty (women earn less than men over their lifetimes) is exacerbated by age exclusion – older worker retention supports the move out of poverty of women. Therefore, women are more affected by older participation rate decline than men. They further quote SSSR (2007) that returning to the workforce after being absent due to Carer responsibilities affects women disproportionately – “older women are more likely to feel that age is a barrier for them returning to work” and “while companies appreciate men’s experiences they consider older women less competitive for the current market”.

Geriatric Care Referral Services, Geriatric Care Leave (supplemental to Carer’s Leave), Emergency Geriatric Care, Subsidized Geriatric Care, On-site Geriatric Care Centres, Geriatric Care Training Programmes, Geriatric Care Support Groups and Carer Wellbeing Programmes are examples of a broad range of supports currently being offered by a minority of companies which will increasingly become the norm;

## Section 5 - tackling the myths

### Jeunism – the case against

If we want to increase older worker participation in the workforce, then the first thing we need to do is to equip ourselves with some facts that refute the negative prejudice and biases that pertain to ageing and older workers. These facts are not solutions in of themselves, but they are an important foundation that allow us to confront resistance head-on with science and facts, as opposed to arguing purely from an emotional or principled perspective. Here are some common negative biases (let's call them myths) that infest our perceptions of 'older' workers.

#	Myth
1	The 'older worker' stereotypes must be true as they are so pervasive
2	Education & Training are not for 'older' people
3	Working beyond normal retirement age is bad for your health
4	'Older' workers suffer more absenteeism
5	Flexible part-time working is unattractive & uneconomic for employers
6	The old take the jobs of the young
7	The generations can't work together
8	'Older' workers cannot perform to the required standard
9	'Older' workers cannot be customer-facing

Let us examine the evidence for each, in turn.

#### **Myth 1 – The 'older worker' stereotypes must be true as they are so pervasive**

Despite the pervasiveness of age stereotyping, Ng and Feldman (2008) found "in a review of over a thousand studies, there is "little supporting evidence for the negative stereotypes" (towards older workers). Supporting this position, Johnson (2013) found that there is an "accumulation of evidence that shows little, if any, justification for age stereotyping".

Here in Ireland, the William Fry Employment Report (2016) found that "research in this area indicates that stereotypes held about older workers in particular are generally not consistent

with the research evidence” and that “employers should be live to the risk of stereotyping staff/job candidates on age grounds”.

### ‘Older people can learn

- “If learning can be assimilated into an existing knowledge base, advantage tilts to the old” (The Economist, 2017)
- Friedberg (2013) Some of the positive cognitive changes with ageing, associated with the Late Life Creativity, are “wisdom, strategic thinking and reasoning” (Friedberg, 2013)
- The issue in acquiring, for example, a new technological skill is not the age (Borghans & ter Weel, 2002), but rather “the degree to which education is provided” (Friedberg, 2013)
- The key factor in not attaining computer skills is impending retirement rather than age and “acquisition of computer skills was associated with later retirement, an important issue for recruitment / retention in an ageing workforce” (O’Neill, 2010)

### **Myth 2 - Education & Training are not for ‘older’ people**

The proverbial expression ‘you can’t teach an old dog new tricks’ probably best summarises the myth surrounding the learning ability and propensity of older people. As Henry Ford indicated however, life-long learning keeps the mind young. Research supporting the strong connection between one’s cognitive abilities and employment suggests a very positive relationship. Up to one’s 70’s, participation in training activities provides an improvement in people’s skills. How well older workers do depends on what type of work it is. With very few exceptions (e.g. air traffic controllers) various studies

support the fact that older workers have higher levels of personal motivation and persistence and less absenteeism allowing them to perform better than their younger colleagues. So, while there may be a decline in the capacity of older workers, it is compensated for with acquired skill and creativity (Salthouse, 2012, and Depp et al, 2010)

### **Myth 3 - Working beyond normal retirement age is bad for your health**

The perceived wisdom is that the physical nature of work means that we must discontinue our participation as we age. Ironically, according to the Report of the Interdepartmental Group on Fuller Working Lives (2016) those over the age of 65 with the highest participation rate in employment are those working in the Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries sector – one

of the most physically demanding sectors in the economy. The Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (TILDA) states that “better health allows people to remain at work for longer but it is also possible that work contributes to mental and physical health through its impact on social interaction or physical activity (Fifty Plus in Ireland, 2011). Additionally, Waddell & Burton (2006) “... find no evidence that continued working is generally harmful to the health of older workers, and it may be beneficial. So, decisions about retirement age can properly be made on social, economic and other non-health grounds”.

#### **Myth 4 - ‘Older’ workers suffer more absenteeism**

Another pervasive myth in the world of work is that older people suffer more absenteeism than younger people which becomes another reason to not hire them (or even to maintain them in employment in their later years). However, an extensive study in the United Kingdom conducted by the NHS found that “older workers do not necessarily have substantially more sickness absence (despite suffering more severe illnesses and injuries)” NHS Working Longer Review (2015). This is consistent with the findings of Waddell and Burton (2006) that “older workers tend to exhibit fewer spells of absence, but of longer duration”.

#### **Myth 5 - Flexible part-time working is unattractive to employers**

Another factor making the employment of older people unattractive to employers is that many of them want to work a reduced working week, either through forms of part-time or job-share working. The conventional wisdom is that these work schedules are unattractive to employers as they are less efficient and incur higher costs than full-time schedules.

However, in an earlier review of available research, the NHS in the United Kingdom found that there is “robust evidence” that while there may be marginal rises in administrative costs if the number of part-time employees in the organisation increases, they are “generally offset by: enhanced scope for matching staff levels to peaks and troughs in demand, enhanced employee motivation; higher hourly productivity, better retention rates and less sickness absence” (NHS Working Longer Review Audit of Existing Research, 2013).

The conventional wisdom that reduced working week schedules are unattractive has the air of laziness and sounds self-serving when compared to some examples of good practice provided later in this paper.

### **Myth 6 - The old take the jobs of the young**

An emerging narrative on working longer is that there will inevitably be losers and the losers in this instance will be the young who will have fewer job opportunities as incumbents will not be vacating their roles as quickly as in the past. This resonates with the “lump-of-labour” theory is based on the assumption that the amount of work in an economy is fixed, so one more job for an older person is one less job for a younger person. This theory however is a fallacy and was disproved in Ireland and elsewhere with the end of the Marriage bar and the introduction of Equality Legislation in 1977 (Report of the Interdepartmental Group, 2016). As Sinclair, quoted in *The Economist* (2011) explained:

[It] was once used to argue that women should stay at home and leave all the jobs for breadwinning males. Now lump-of-labourites say that keeping the old at work would deprive the young of employment. The idea that society can be more prosperous by paying more of its citizens to be idle is clearly nonsensical. On that reasoning, if retirement age comes down to 25 we would all be rich as Croesus

Separately, but related, is the perception that when older people remain in employment, there will be reduced progression and advancement opportunities for their younger colleagues, again because the older workers will be slower to vacate their roles in the hierarchy. However, this assumes that older people wish to remain in their exact roles in the hierarchy in order to remain at work. As we shall see, older workers can sustain their participation in the workplace by reducing the intensity of their role. They do this by stepping out of the hierarchy, but not out of the organisation. These types of reduced-intensity roles exist today in areas such as coaching, board memberships and internal consulting roles. They have not been designed yet for the broader population. This is a job design issue.

Furthermore, we need to revisit Succession Planning in that the absence of turnover can affect the influx of new talent – but this is a job design issue (Wolff, 2013).

### **Myth 7 – The generations can't work together**

The differences between the generations as it relates to the workplace has become a significant theme as we enter that period where there are upwards of 4 generations working in some organisations. The attraction and retention of millennials appears to be a key concern. Of course, multiple generations have always worked beside each other. While there are some grounds for concluding that while generational differences may be present; this is outweighed by the degree of commonality and similarity between the generations. Furthermore, multi-generational teams have greater strengths than single age teams (NHS Working Longer Report, 2013).

Furthermore, many organisations have always practiced a multi-generational approach to team-building intuiting that the generations have a positive influence on each other. This has been validated in the research of Gobel and Zwick (2010) who found that “in establishments that apply mixed-age working teams the productivity contributions of old and young employees are significantly higher than in establishments without this measure”, which, “might be an indication of important complementarity effects between the age groups”.

### **Myth 8 – Older workers cannot perform to ‘the required standard’**

Perhaps the most insidious myth that ‘older’ workers confront is the view that performance deteriorates with age thus placing ‘older’ workers at a competitive disadvantage when selection and retention decisions are being made in organisations. As with the previous age-related myths, the evidence points to a rather more nuanced reality, often ignored by organisations. Griffiths (1999) in a review of the available research at the time, found that “most reviews of the data on older workers do not support any particular decline in work performance”. Since this review was conducted, further research has resulted in similar conclusions.

For instance, Malmberg et al (2008) found that “in the newest study, matched worker-firm data in a longitudinal study could not find any decrement in productivity across the ages. Indeed, some authors point to an increase in age-productivity”. The longitudinal aspect of this study is important in that it tracked performance over time. The Cognito Study (2010) on cognition found the productivity of older workers to be more consistent than that of younger

workers. Finally, the NHS Working Longer Review (2013) found that “there is as much variability within younger and older employee cohorts as there is between them”.

In a 2011 XpertHR survey, 59% of employers predicted an increase in exits related to capability or performance. This was reinforced in 2013 when 53% agreed with the statement that “too many employees will suffer the indignity of a forced exit on capability grounds as a result of the abolition of the Default Retirement Age”. Yet, only 8% of those surveyed have seen any increase in older workers being dismissed due to capability or performance concerns”. UK employer concerns about a deterioration in workplace performance and absence metrics with the abolition of mandatory retirement have not been borne out by the reality (Wolff, 2013).

### **Myth 9 – ‘Older’ workers cannot be customer-facing**

And finally, perhaps the most insulting of the myths about ‘older’ workers – they are less deployable in to customer-facing roles as they get older. The evidence here could not be more categoric and the antithesis of the myth. Johnson et al (2013) found in their research that a key finding is that “age was negatively related to customer stressors and older employees were less likely to experience negative customer behaviours than younger employees”. The authors conclude that “older employees make good service employees”

A number of organisations, notably McDonald’s and B&Q have had active strategies to hire older worker in to customer-facing roles for some years now. McDonalds, in their Later Life Workers Press Release (2009) state that “the levels of customer satisfaction were on average 20 per cent higher in restaurants that employ staff aged 60 and over”.

## **Section 6 - possible responses**

Mary Beard in “Women and Power” (2017) posed the question: if women aren’t perceived to be within the structures of power, isn’t it power that we need to redefine? This paper has built towards posing a similar question: if older people are not perceived to be within the structures of the world of work, isn’t it the world of work we need to redefine?

The Report of the Interdepartmental Group on Fuller Working Lives (2016) states that to support longer working and reduce the gap between effective retirement age and State pension age “measures to strengthen incentives to stay in work, measures to tackle employment barriers to older workers, and measures to improve the employability of older workers” are required.

While some progress has been made in this regard at a national policy level, notably the increase in the Irish State Pension Age, Phillipson et al, (2016) state that “despite unprecedented policy reform across a number of spheres to extend working lives, significant challenges remain and that many older people, notably those in the poorest segments, are particularly affected as ill-health and low levels of qualifications limit their employment prospects”. Furthermore, they state that while “retention rates of older workers may have improved, the prospects for recruitment in older age remain poor”.

*“A cultural model moves beyond the medical view of ageing as a disease to be cured”*

**Dr Yanki Lee, The Ingenuity of Ageing for Designing Social Innovation (UK Department of Business Innovation and Skills, 2012)**

To design for ‘age-inclusiveness’, that is a civic, social, and economic eco-system that facilitates and enables older citizens to have the choice to participate in the workplace for as long as they require or desire, requires a coherent integrated approach at the (1) structural and the (2) institutional levels. Typical initiatives or interventions include:

### **1) Structural / Systemic Initiatives**

- a) A **National Training / Skills Strategy** for ‘older’ people that equips people to maintain employability from their 50’s onwards and aligns to the skills requirements of employers for the forthcoming 10-20 years – typical measures of progress here would

be (i) a balanced rate of participation in skills training across all age demographics regardless of proximity to State Pension Age; and (ii) a balanced demographic spread on apprenticeship programmes;

- b) A **National Life-long Education Strategy** for 'older' people that provides life-long access to 3<sup>rd</sup> Level education institutions to support, facilitate and enable "life-long" learning and the potential to continuously re-equip and gain qualifications for career change and career diversity – typical measure of progress would be the participation rates of those over 50 years of age in tertiary education;
- c) The **National Pension's Strategy** to include far more comprehensive enablers to promote the flexibility to encourage, and incentives to adopt, concepts such as Gradual Retirement, Down-shifting, Part-tirement, and Encore Careers, as well as recognising the economic contribution of Working Carer's.
- d) Implementation of the 2013 Department of Health **National Positive Ageing Strategy** which established a goal of removing the barriers for participation of people as they age in various aspects of cultural, economic and social life", with specific objectives (among others) to:
  - i) Develop a wide range of employment options (including options for gradual retirement) for people as they age and identify any barriers (legislative, attitudinal, custom and practice) to continued employment and training opportunities for people as they age
  - ii) Promote access (in terms of affordability, transport availability, accessibility of venue) to a wide range of opportunities for continued learning and education for older people

In parallel, **National Health Strategies**, as well as **Taxation Policy** etc, need to align around the goal of enabling and incentivising the participation of older people in work and economic life for longer, in ways and at an intensity that is both appropriate and desirable on an individual level. It is interesting to note the symbiotic nature of the relationship between education and health in older people – a European Commission Communication titled Adult Learning: It is never too late to learn (2006) noted research on older workers indicating that "those who engage in learning are healthier, with a consequent reduction in healthcare costs" (EC, 2006).

It is also worth pointing out that Smart Ageing remains a relatively neglected area of research and Ireland has an opportunity to be a thought leader in this space – one which will be of benefit to the wellbeing of the vast majority of citizens.

## **2) Institutional Initiatives**

Organisations have, perhaps, the greatest redesign challenge. The DNA of workplace structures and systems is 'Jeunist', that is, it favours younger workers by designing-out 'older' workers from their early-50's onwards. Therefore, redesign must take place at many points and levels with the organisational eco-system.

### **a) Leadership**

- i) Leadership cadres to be educated and trained on negative age bias and on the opportunities that this neglected demographic presents to organisations to solve emerging talent shortages and develop inclusive cultures in to the future - this goes beyond the standard "Unconscious Bias" training provided for selection purposes;
- ii) Diversity & Inclusion Policies & Strategies to include Age-inclusion as a priority aspiration with specific goals and measures across a broad range of organisational people activities to monitor and measure levels of age inclusion and balanced participation of 'older' workers in organisational activities such as training as appropriate;

### **b) Deployment**

- i) Manpower Planning Strategies and Systems to formally include 'targeting' 'older' population talent & resource pools when identifying resource requirements and availability, as well as the measurement and analysis of comparative participation rates across all age demographics in the organisation workforce versus general society;
- ii) People Selection Policies & Procedures involving any, and all, elements of selection to be audited for bias against older workers, including Recruitment, Promotion, Succession, and exit selections such as Redundancy (and other forms of exit). This is not an exhaustive list and all organisations will need to review the entirety of

their People Policies and Procedures. Examples include the removal of upper age limits on Apprenticeship Programmes and Graduate in-take Programmes, as well as the redesign of early retirement schemes into flexible retirement schemes;

- iii) People Selection Policies and Procedures to include specific goals and measures to monitor and measure levels of age inclusion and age-related participation as appropriate;

c) Development

- i) Internal & External Training Programmes, including selection for such programmes, to be audited for bias against 'older' workers including the measurement and analysis of comparative participation rates across all age demographics in the workforce;
- ii) Learning & Training approaches to be reviewed to accommodate different generational learning styles and needs, particularly in the area of digital technology and IT skills where older workers are not 'digital-natives';
- iii) Further Education Programmes, including selection for such programmes (particularly sponsored Tertiary education programmes), to be audited for bias against older workers including the measurement and analysis of comparative participation rates across all age demographics in the workforce;
- iv) Succession Reports to be audited for bias against older workers including the measurement and analysis of comparative participation rates across all age demographics in the workforce;

d) Career & Reward Frameworks

- i) Future Career Frameworks to adopt the design principles of progressive multi-faceted careers as outlined in Section 3 including opportunities for reduced work-intensity in late stage careers such as "Down-shifting", "Part-tirement", "Encore" Careers etc;
- ii) Career Frameworks, including Career Paths, Development Paths, Promotional Advancement Paths, and the behaviours they promote in the organisation to be audited for bias against older workers including the measurement and analysis of

- comparative participation rates and comparative outcome experiences across all age demographics in the workforce;
- iii) Career Workshops and Training Programmes, as well as Career Guidance and Coaching Frameworks to be redesigned to promote progressive multi-faceted careers and to provide information, choice and encouragement for workers to remain in the workforce for as long as they choose and are able to participate;
  - iv) Current Reward & Benefit Strategies to be audited for bias against older people and future Reward Frameworks to be designed to accommodate the different generational needs of the workforce;
  - v) Current Pension & Retirement Planning Strategies to include options (possibly incentivised) to adopt graduated approaches to late-stage and end of working life involving downshifting (less intense work roles), flexibility in terms of locations (some home-working etc) and time (Part-tirement etc);
- e) “Encore” Careers
- i) The formalisation of “Encore” Career opportunities within the career frameworks of both contributing employers and recipient organisations
  - ii) Expansion of employer participation in enabling initiatives such as the ISAX Senior Fellowship Programme amongst others
- f) Flexible Working Arrangements (FWA’s)
- i) Temporal flexibility, including job-sharing, standalone part-time roles, flexitime, and seasonal roles, which provide excellent opportunities for older workers to remain in employment but at a reduced capacity, to be included in job design and manpower plans;
  - ii) Spatial flexibility, including home-working, tele-working and other forms of mobile and remote working, which provide opportunities to overcome travel and mobility issues and allow older workers to remain engaged in the workforce, to be included in job design and manpower plans;
  - iii) Role flexibility, designed into Future Career Frameworks, to allow for roles to be designed leveraging many of the skills and experiences older workers have developed over long careers, but with reduced role-intensity by gradually

removing these roles from the organisational hierarchy. The potential contributions older workers can make as trainers, educators, mentors, coaches, as well as other non-hierarchical roles designed to leverage the older workers, is immense;

g) Workplace Environment /Accommodations

- i) Smart ergonomic design to be the default physical workplace design standard. Identifying and making physical changes to work stations, production lines and other workplaces to reduce wear and tear on workers' bodies, and thus the likelihood of absence due to injury, are improvements that may be initiated as a response to an ageing workforce but, benefits all workers;

h) Job Design & New Roles

- i) While Flexible Working Arrangements and Workplace Accommodations may be retrospectively designed into or over-layered on to existing roles, organisations would benefit from a fundamental new design of jobs and roles within the organisation.

i) Proactive Health & Wellbeing Programmes

- i) Development and introduction of programmes that incentivise and encourage workers to be health-aware and health-ageing conscious across the entirety of their working lives to facilitate longevity, active participation in the workplace, but also, productivity and attendance across the entirety of the working life;

j) Geriatric Care Support

- i) Development and introduction of policies and schemes / programmes to support "working caregivers" to remain in the workplace while also sustaining this double burden / dual-responsibility. This requires higher levels of design sophistication and for leave policies and practices to be far more comprehensive than heretofore;

k) HR & Line Manager Training

- i) A comprehensive curriculum of knowledge and skill-building training programmes and supports are required to support line managers to transition from managing people systems and structures that manage the ageing worker out of the organisation to one where workers of all ages are encouraged to remain relevant from a skills and capabilities perspective and where work participation and retirement flexibility are the new norm;
- ii) The same applies for Human Resources departments and professionals who, to date, have designed people processes and systems to manage ageing workers out of the organisation and who now must come to recognise the ageing workforce as a key talent pool of the future.

These institutional initiatives would begin the journey of changing the organisational perspective on 'older' workers from one where they are to be 'managed out' to one where 'older' workers are perceived as a talent pool to be nurtured, invested in, and developed to optimise its contribution to the organisations' mission and strategy. These initiatives must be led and driven from the most senior levels of our organisations. As Kunze et al (2013) state, "low negative top managers' age stereotypes as well as diversity-friendly HR policies are potential organisational factors that can prevent the negative relation of age diversity with organisational performance transmitted through the negative age-discrimination climate".

*"Age-inclusive design is the future of design. It is people-centric, not product-centric, and benefits everyone at any age"*

**George Lee & Jonathan Collie, Founders - The Age of No Retirement**

### **3) Individual Initiatives**

We, as individuals, do not escape the responsibility to transform also. Tolstoy's "everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself" is apposite. The greatest change is likely to be that of mindset.

- a) The Purpose of Living Longer

- i) We have gained an additional 30 years life expectancy over the last century. We have obtained these additional years of life without any significant reflection as to what the purpose of those life-years should be. In the absence of a scenario where even a majority will be of independent financial means in our later years, many will need to redefine the purpose of their later years to something other than leisure and un-involvement in economic life. In time, the general answer to the challenge of whether we “live to work or work to live” may be different;
- b) The end of the ‘Retirement Mindset’
  - i) When Otto von Bismark introduced the first state-sponsored pension scheme for workers over 70 in 1889, the life expectancy of the average Prussian was 45. Once, retirement funded by the state was for the lucky few long-lived. Today, most of us access state-sponsored retirement, often for very long periods. This will end as it is unsustainable economically. As the Economist (2009) posited, we are going back to the pre-Bismarkian world, where work had no formal stopping point. While many older workers are keen to remain active in the workplace, it would be better for all if the social and cultural desirability of retirement was eroded such that we could aspire to remain active at work for longer and not be the exception;
- c) Natural Ageing
  - i) To age is to change. Heretofore, for many of us, that resulted in exclusion. Our laws discourage discrimination in paid employment on the basis of disability, but for these policies to be of benefit, individuals must define their functional limitations as disabilities. There is a strong relationship between age and gradual emergent disability amongst those of working age, yet it is unclear whether older workers attribute their limitations to disability or to ‘natural ageing’. One requires workplace accommodations, one does not. Canadian research suggests that, even when other factors are controlled, e.g. type and severity of disability, number of limiting conditions, gender, age, education, income & occupation, those who made ageing attribution were less likely to recognise the need for accommodation; and even where acknowledged, those who attributed their disability to ageing were less likely to have their needs met (McMullin & Shuey, 2006).

## **Section 7 – some examples of existing good practice**

Organisations are already implementing an age-inclusive workforce strategy. Some are operating in environments where hiring talent is a challenge and they see older workers as a stable source of new hiring. Others have used the hiring of older workers as a means of addressing retention issues. Some have identified having a workforce that reflects the composition of their customer base allows them to connect with that customer base with far greater empathy and effectiveness. Examples of this emerging good practice include:

<b>#</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Age-inclusive Initiative(s)</b>
<b>1</b>	United Health Group	USA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implemented a recruitment strategy that seeks to develop a workforce that reflects their customer demographic composition</li> </ul>
<b>2</b>	Centrica	UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developed an age-diverse workforce through the implementation of flexible work policies</li> <li>Age-awareness training for the vast majority of employees</li> <li>Offers 12-week 'Returnships' for 'older' men and women returning to the the workforce</li> <li>Carer's Network – an employee support network for staff with carer responsibilities</li> <li>Apprenticeships – upper age limit removed</li> <li>Graduate Programme – upper age limit removed</li> </ul>
<b>3</b>	Huntingdon Ingalls Industries	USA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Apprenticeships – upper age limit removed</li> </ul>
<b>4</b>	ESB	Ireland	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Health &amp; Wellbeing Programme</li> </ul>
<b>5</b>	BMW	Germany	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work Station &amp; Environment adapted for age-inclusiveness</li> <li>Age inclusive Programme including Managing Healthcare, Skills Investment, Part-time working policies and change management policies implemented following pilot</li> </ul>
<b>6</b>	McDonald's	USA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Age-diverse workforce as a talent strategy</li> </ul>
<b>7</b>	B&Q	UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No Retirement Age</li> <li>Flexible Working Patterns</li> <li>Flexible Learning Options</li> </ul>
<b>8</b>	South Wales Forgemasters	UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flexible Working Patterns for Carers</li> </ul>
<b>9</b>	Herefordshire County Council	UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Flexible Working Patterns for Carers</li> </ul>
<b>10</b>	Intel Corporation	US	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>'Encore' Careers through Encore Fellowships</li> </ul>

This clearly is not an exhaustive list and the initiatives tend to be organisational responses to specific needs that have emerged as opposed to comprehensive redesign of entire workplace systems and structures using age-inclusiveness as a foundational design principle.

## **Section 8 - The Challenge for Organisations**

Today, we face large and growing uncertainties. Globalisation, Digitalisation, Robotics, Automation, Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, Demographics, Chaos Theory, Complexity Theory, the merger of IT, globalisation and our financial systems creating large tightly interlocking systems that appear impenetrable and have unpredictable effects when they malfunction are all significant examples of these uncertainties. It is self-evident why the leaders of organisations spend significant effort and resources trying to bring predict the effects of all this to uncertainty.

But there are some impending certainties that we seem to overlook. One area where we can be quite confident in forecasting the future 10-50 years out is in demographics and specifically, in population ageing and longevity. We appear to be doing very little with that data and insight to prepare for that future.

As Sarah Harper, Professor of Gerontology and Director of the Institute of Population Ageing, University of Oxford has said, *“we have never had a society where half of the population is aged between 50 and 100 – quite simply, things have got to change”*. That change will be transformational in that it will disrupt the traditional orthodoxies that have informed the design principles of our organisations and our people systems over the last couple of centuries.

Transformational change of this nature is hard. Cultural values and practices that have endured for generations are not switched off over-night. New behaviours do not embed themselves without sophisticated change initiatives that facilitate the entire organisations to “behave their way to new thinking”.

This is not just about launching an age-inclusive Diversity & Inclusion Policy, though that is a start. This is about redesigning core workplace people structures and systems to engage all generations equally. You can't easily fit 'older' people into structures or systems that were originally designed to exclude them: you have to change those structures and the systems.

*“Design can enable, or it can disable”*

**Patricia Moore, Designer & Gerontologist**

## **About the Author**

Neville Bourke is the co-founder and Partner at Futurus. He is an Organisation Change Specialist with deep knowledge and experience in Organisation Behaviour and Organisation Design & Development. This allows him to address the complex and difficult people issues associated with strategy & change to identify simple compelling articulations of the “path forward”. Neville is also a C-Suite & Executive Leadership Coach. Engagements range from behavioural performance coaching; transition leadership, developmental leadership coaching; change readiness; leadership team alignment; and organisational readiness in scale-up strategies or change transformations.

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## **About ISAX**

ISAX (Ireland Smart Ageing Exchange) is an independent network of businesses, academic institutions and government agencies fast tracking the R&D and commercialisation of solutions for the global ageing economy. Solving these complex problems requires a ‘joined up approach’. ISAX was established by Anne Connolly in 2015 to provide the enabling environment for exactly this type of collaboration. Organisations wishing to become members of ISAX may do so at [www.ISAX.ie](http://www.ISAX.ie)