



# AGE AT WORK END OF PROGRAMME IMPACT REPORT 2024





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# INTRODUCTION

The Age at Work Programme, now completed after five years, has been delivered by Age NI in partnership with Business in the Community NI, and counterparts in Scotland and Wales, funded with £2,244,944 by the National Lottery Community Fund.

This programme has directly addressed the challenges and opportunities for both older people and employers in an aging society by:

- supporting older workers and mature candidates to seek and stay in employment, helping them to earn sufficient income, stay connected and have a fuller working life.
- encouraging and supporting businesses to use more age-inclusive policies and practices in recruiting, retaining, and retraining older workers.
- raising awareness of the impact of an ageing workforce and the need for an age-inclusive agenda in government, business, and wider society.

The past five years has seen the programme adapt and innovate to address the changing employment landscape as the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown

challenged the delivery of the planned Age at Work programmes, while simultaneously increasing their importance to the beneficiaries. With a refocus on digital delivery, the programme was able to deliver support to both employers and older workers and adapt again in the later years of the programme to the Post Covid-19 hybrid workplace. In the past year the challenges of the growing cost-of-living-crisis and return-to-work drive that has demanded the attention and time of many employers and HR professionals has also added complexity to the programme's delivery.

In the face of these challenges and opportunities, this independent research shows that the individual initiatives, and nations, as well as the Age at Work programme overall, have successfully adapted and delivered the desired outcomes of behavioural and attitudinal change, and the numbers of older people and businesses engaged have met the overall five-year targets.



Bean Research and Age at Work teams have tracked outcomes and outputs for individuals and organisations, to enable the robust evaluation of the programme against the Impact Framework and deliver both insights into the changes to older workers and employers that the programme has facilitated, and to calculate the financial value to society of the impact of Age at Work, as a whole.

This Impact Report summarises the impact of the programme overall, as well as detailing an in-depth Social Return on Investment (SROI) analysis, that has been assured and accredited by Social Value International (and is also available on the Institute of Social Value's library of assured reports).

This report has been written by Bean Research, appointed as evaluators of the Age at Work programme in 2020.



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- Age at Work has engaged **3,105** older workers and **274** employers in its five years. **2,495** people participated in the Mid-Career Reviews and **610** in the Still Ready for Work Programme; and **199** businesses completed an Age Inclusive Business Review or Matrix.
- The Age at Work Programme has delivered on its purpose, with evidence from independent research showing positive changes to attitudes and behaviours of older people, and changed age-inclusive practices for employers across the three nations of Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.
- **90%** of engaged older workers are more aware and knowledgeable about their rights, and financial and retirement options. Significantly, **87%** are still using the information they received in the Age at Work programme, six months later. **66%** feel the Age at Work programme has enabled them to lead a fuller working life and **40%** of all respondents still feel this way **six months later**.
- Mid-Career Reviews and Still Ready for Work programmes also positively increased confidence, crucial in sustaining employment and healthy lives. Overall, there is an **81% increase in confidence** around future employment and a **65% increase in confidence** in the future.
- The Still Ready for Work Programme is having an impact on employment. While **106** individuals are recorded as moving directly into employment straight on from their placements and coaching, **374** self-report that they are in employment six months later (with **194** moving from unemployment to employment).
- In five years, the Age at Work programme has engaged **274** employers. **156** have used the Age at Work toolkits and **199** have completed business audits. **115** have told us that they have changed policies and practices as a direct result.
- Social Return on Investment analysis shows that over the last four years, the Age at Work programme has generated over **£15 million** in benefits to society. We therefore, estimate that for every **£1** spent on the Age at Work programme, approximately **£7.67** of social value is generated (over three years) through economic benefits and the gains for participants through increased confidence and employment outcomes.

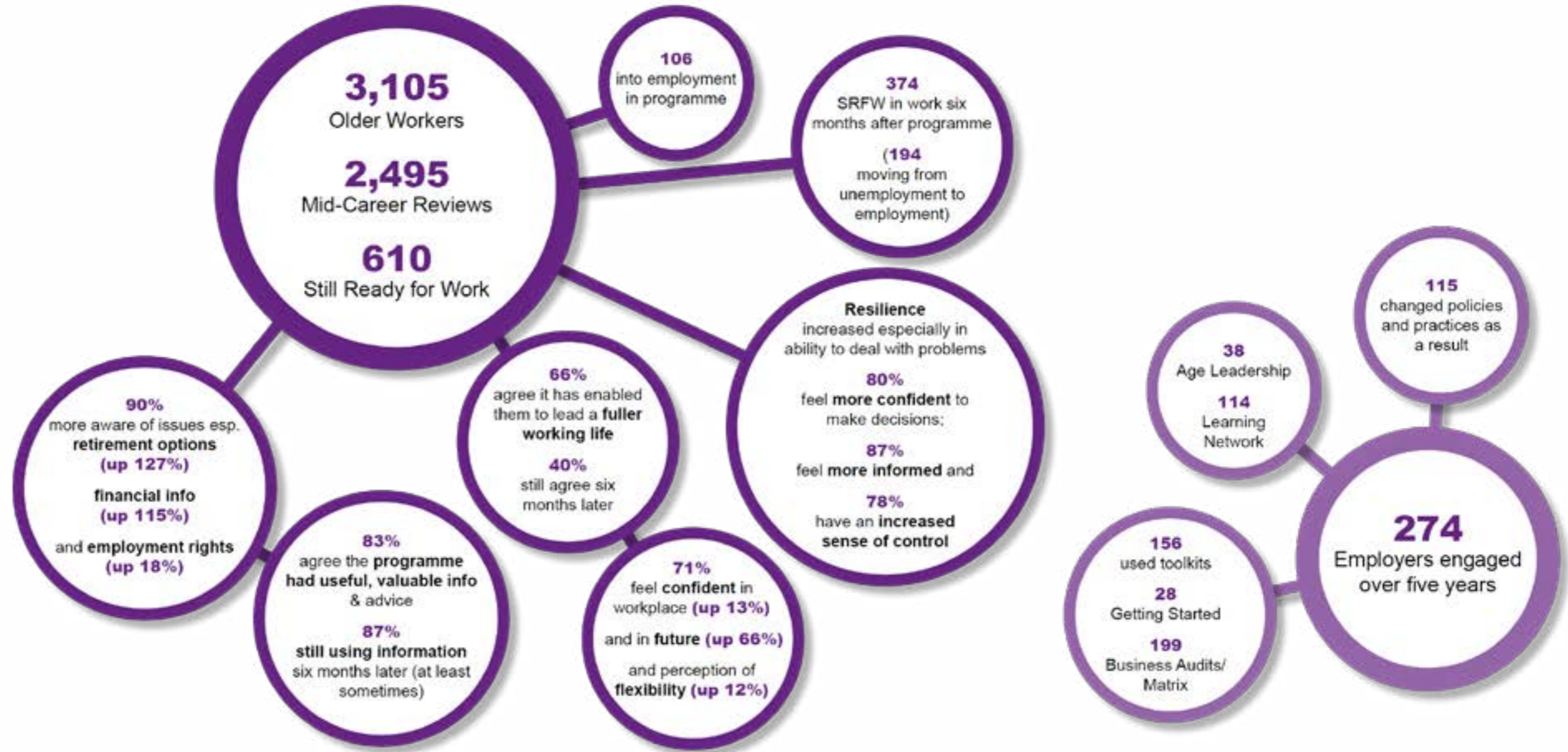




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AGE AT WORK YEAR FIVE DASHBOARD: ALL NATIONS TO DATE

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Older Person Data: May 2020 to 31 July 2024. Pre, post and six month post surveys



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# CONTEXT

The Age at Work Programme was created to address the challenges and opportunities for both older people and employers in an aging society.

There are almost 11 million workers aged 50 and over<sup>1</sup> in the UK. This is a third of all workers and four million more than 20 years ago. In Northern Ireland, this trend is amplified as the population is ageing more quickly than elsewhere in the UK. The Age at Work programme has responded to this shifting landscape, helping employers in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales assess, benchmark and change their approaches to age inclusion.

Whilst the proportion of workers 50+ is increasing, employment rates suggest that more support is required to enable older workers to return to, and remain in, work.

The pandemic disproportionately affected older and younger workers, stalling progress on increasing employment rates for older age groups in particular. Despite a recovery in employment rates for those aged 35 to 49, recovery for 50 to 60-year-olds has been slower and the employment rate is still below its pre-pandemic peak. There are a few reasons behind this: a pronounced increase in the number of

workers who have become economically inactive due to long-term sickness since the pandemic; and many who left the labour market in their 50s and 60s would like to return, but struggle to do so because of caring responsibilities, a lack of flexibility in the workplace, age discrimination in hiring practices, and employment support services that do not meet their needs<sup>2</sup>.

The Mid-Career Review (MCR) and Still Ready for Work (SRFW) programmes have tackled these issues and supported those in work to remain productively and confidently employed, while assisting more older workers to return to the workplace.



<sup>1</sup> Office for National Statistics. Labour Force Survey. A05 SA: Employment, unemployment and economic inactivity by age group (seasonally adjusted)

<sup>2</sup> The State of Ageing 2023-24, produced by The Centre for Ageing Better, is the most detailed, varied and up-to-date report about ageing in England.





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# MEASURING IMPACT

Since 2020, Bean Research has been working with Age at Work to design an impact framework and methodology to measure the effectiveness of the programme and its impact on the lives of older people and employers across Scotland, Northern Ireland, and Wales and to provide a process of ongoing monitoring and evaluation. After five years, the robust, simplified evaluation methodology, together with the overall impact framework has:

- Demonstrated change and social value for the programme collectively across the work of six teams, three countries, and eight programmes – telling the story of the Age at Work programme as a whole, whilst understanding the nuances of the individual programmes in different nations.
- Included key measures to allow measurement of Social Return on Investment and impact on wellbeing and resilience – a key determinant of sustained employment.

**Older people** participating in the programme completed a survey pre-programme, immediately after completion of a programme (or set of modules) and six months afterwards, with the same questions asked of all participants across the nations. The pre-survey also captured registration and equality data. Data included in this report is based on all responses to the end of programme delivery at the end of July 2024, from all three surveys (2,177, 1,501 & 761, respondents respectively). Bean Research also conducted SROI analysis on the Still Ready for Work Programme,

based on a focus group with SRFW participants in Northern Ireland, depth interviews with employers, an employer survey and detailed analysis of qualitative and quantitative data from the Older Person surveys.

For **Employers** in the programme, evaluation includes tracking reach, involvement in audits, matrices, and networks, and resulting changes in approach. The teams used an employer tracker to record the involvement of all their employers and annually, record **policies & practices** put into place in the organisations. In addition, pre and post involvement surveys were used as an optional tool to capture further information about employer participants.

**Theory of Change:** Agreed in 2020, and refined throughout the programme, the Theory of Change clarifies the outputs, outcomes, and beneficiaries to be measured, to prove value to older people, employers and wider society.

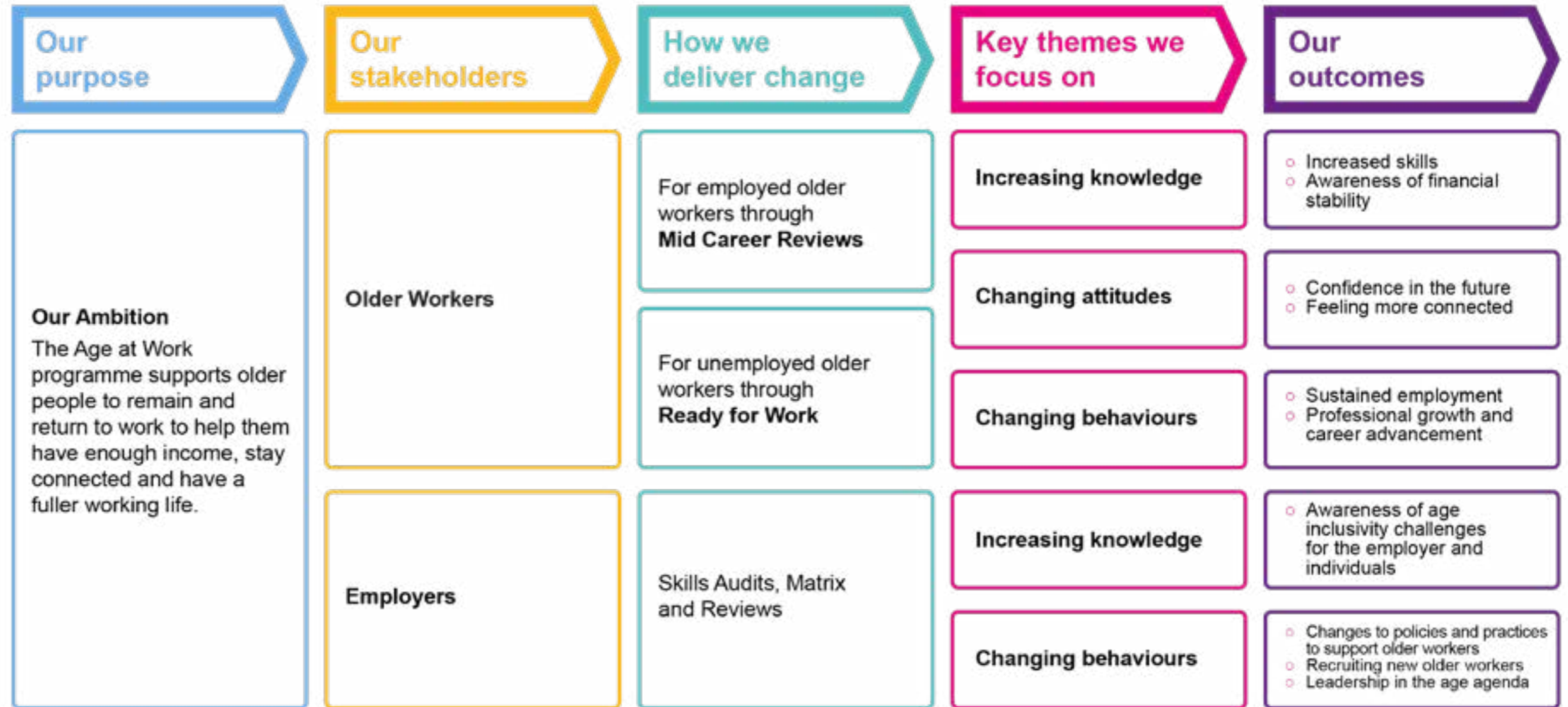




# MEASURING IMPACT

## AGE AT WORK THEORY OF CHANGE

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# ACTIVITY REVIEW

Across the three nations and six organisations, the Age at Work programme has delivered a range of free initiatives, resources and tools to help businesses become more age inclusive, support more older workers to remain or return to work and raise awareness of the impact of an ageing workforce.

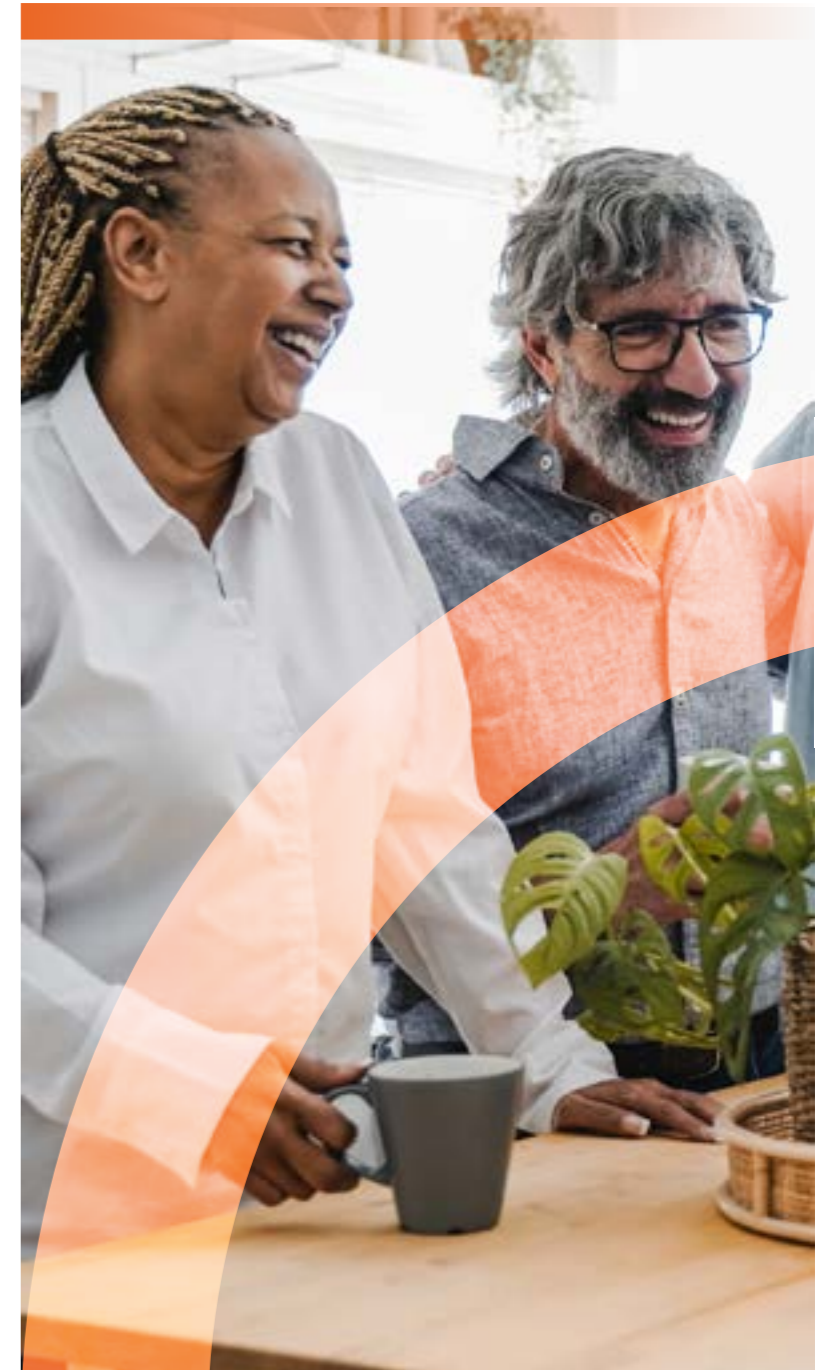
## PROGRAMMES DELIVERED FOR OLDER WORKERS

**Mid-Career Reviews** were delivered by Age Northern Ireland and Age Cymru, primarily to support Older Workers currently in employment. Started as in person workshops in Year 1, these evolved through necessity to online workshops covering Financial Wellbeing, Health and Wellbeing, and Career Support.

In Northern Ireland, the **Still Ready For Work Programme** supported those 50+ wanting to change career, find employment or remain in work. The programme offered a range of services including: regular online employability workshops; e-learning covering a range health and wellbeing topics; and one-to-one job search support from a consultant. In addition, Ready for Work placements matched partner employers and older workers, opening the door for those looking for work to gain experience, and build confidence in a job role.

In Scotland, the **Still Ready for Work Programme** is a multi-pronged approach which has helped individuals return to work (or explore a role in a different business). Business in the Community Scotland's programme of online workshops supported individuals aged 50+ with short online workshops to increase confidence in exploring and preparing for the current job market. The sessions covered Skills Assessment, Job Search in the Digital Age, Creating a Social Media Profile (LinkedIn), CVs and applications and Interview skills. In addition, older workers who were facing redundancy, were unemployed, or looking at a new career were invited to join The Coffee and Job Club, an informal, drop-in style online group to share experiences, learn from others and get tips, advice and support from BITC staff, reducing isolation, keeping those seeking work encouraged and building confidence to achieve job goals.

Crucially, these two initiatives led to longer-term relationships with individuals, who were also supported with Practical Skills Workshops, events and face-to-face meetings, leading to a programme of work placements with partner employers. These opportunities allowed older workers to gain experience, receive a reference and interview for a role at the end of the placement.







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# ACTIVITY REVIEW

## PROGRAMMES DELIVERED FOR EMPLOYERS

In Wales and Northern Ireland, the **Age-Inclusive Business Review** identified strengths and gaps and provided an age inclusion report for each business. Moved to an online platform in Year 4, registration and completion provided employers access to a wide range of resources regarding age inclusiveness to employers, including toolkits, and videos.



The **Age Inclusive Workplace Toolkit**, provided as a resource to employers, supplied information to support businesses to retain, retrain and recruit older people. This now forms part of the legacy of resources available on the [Age at Work Resources Hub](#), online.



The **Age-Inclusive Learning Network** has brought professionals with an interest in age inclusion together online to share best practice, network and hear from topic expert speakers.

In Scotland, **The Age Inclusive Matrix (AIM)** offered practical advice and support to employers via two options. **AIM Getting Started**, an online survey and one-hour consultancy proved successful in engaging businesses onto the AIM programme. The **Age Inclusive Matrix – Into Action** – supported organisations to analyse all relevant areas that would enable age inclusivity. Through AIM work, Age Scotland recognised the need to provide support in specific areas and launched two new workshop initiatives: **Age Inclusion for Managers** and **Age Friendly Customer Services** workshops.

Networking and leadership initiatives in the three nations have built relationships across organisations through discussion and sharing of experiences. In Scotland, the Age at Work Employers' Network met throughout the year. In Wales, the Age Leadership group has met regularly, with employers sharing age-inclusive changes they have implemented and group discussion supporting best practice.

In March 2024, BITC NI hosted the Age at Work Exchange in Belfast. The event brought HR, D&I, DEI and operations professionals together to discuss the challenges and opportunities brought by an ageing workforce and share best practice case studies, learnings and impacts from the Age at Work programme across the three nations.





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# AGE AT WORK PARTICIPANTS

**3,105** older people have been supported through the Age at Work Programme. Targeted at two distinct groups with different needs, analysis shows that motivations for taking part in an Age at Work Programme and the benefits described post-participation, are well matched. SRFW participants were looking for support in finding work, and to increase confidence and skills.

## WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO PARTICIPATE IN STILL READY FOR WORK?

“

Being alone for the last year due to COVID restrictions, lost all my confidence.

[The UK jobs market] has completely changed and I feel ill-equipped as well as perhaps deemed too old to now gain productive work.

The need for confidence and resilience in the present-day job market, and for new skills necessary, particularly for job-seeking and interviews.

Re-assess my skills, update my knowledge to look for a job in a new challenging marketplace, gaining confidence and finding my new job.

”

SRFW participants

## WHAT MOTIVATED YOU TO PARTICIPATE IN MID-CAREER REVIEW OFFER?

“

Planning to retire in 6-7 years, so thinking ahead about financial planning.

I am concerned about my pension/retirement and am experiencing menopausal challenges.

This programme is accessible and came highly recommended by a colleague.

Wanting to be well informed about future decisions for retirement planning.

”

Mid-Career Review participants







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# AGE AT WORK PARTICIPANTS

The needs outlined on the previous page demonstrate have been met by the Age at Work programme and, in the next section of this report - 'impact on older workers' – detailed outcomes will be described.

The need for a multi-facilitated programme to address the issues facing older workers in work, looking to re-start or develop careers, and plan for retirement, are clear. The Age at Work programme delivered a variety of courses and interventions, catering both for those who are wanting to find a new job, as well as those planning to remain in work or prepare for retirement.

At the start of their participation in the programme, most participants planned to be in or return to employment, but their intentions and therefore needs for support in the work environment varied.

**58%** of those on the **Still Ready for Work** programme were looking for new employment or a new position in the near future, **2 in 5** wanted to gain confidence/skills and work experience (42%), and **38%** wanted to return to work but in a new role/sector. **76%** of Still Ready for Work participants intended to work for at least another five years, and over a third for more than 10 years.

**2 in 3 Mid-Career Review** participants (64%) aimed to remain in employment for the foreseeable future, **2 in 5** (41%) anticipated the transition to retirement, **21%** planned to seek new employment or a new position and **18%** were looking for more flexible hours. Nearly half of this group are planning for retirement in the next five years.

The older workers' career intentions highlight the value to businesses in supporting older workers. Half the participants still intend to be working in five years time, and businesses will need to adapt to this growing number in the workforce.

The overriding motive for continuing or returning to work was financial, with **88%** stating that the money to sustain a good quality of life was the most important factor in employment, and **67%** wanted to make additional pension contributions. **46%** enjoyed the social side of work and **44%** have skills they want to use. Almost a third recognise that their health is better when they are employed.





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# IMPACT ON OLDER WORKERS

Both the Mid-Career and Still Ready for Work programmes have been beneficial to participants, providing awareness, information and advice, improving their ability to make informed decisions and decreasing stress and worry.

Overall, **91%** felt the programme they participated in had been 'beneficial to me,' with **86%** reporting that it, 'made me feel more informed to make decisions about my future.' **83%** felt they now 'had information and advice that I will value and will use,' and **94%** would

be likely to recommend the programme to others. The Still Ready for Work programme in particular has contributed to decreased stress.

## AGE AT WORK TO END YEAR 5: BY PROGRAMME TYPE



Older Person Data: May 2020 to 31 July 2024. Pre, Post & Six Month Post Surveys. \*Figure from Outcomes Reporting





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# IMPACT ON OLDER WORKERS

According to the agreed Age at Work Theory of Change, the three main behavioural and attitudinal outcomes for assessing the impact made by the Age at Work programmes are:

- Increased confidence
- Awareness of financial and retirement options available to them and
- Reduced isolation and loneliness

These indicators have been tracked before and after programmes and the improvements in older people's behaviour and attitudes are shown in the table below. There continues to be a clear achievement of outcomes that is different for each of the programmes. The impact of the Mid-Career Reviews has been on awareness of pertinent issues as well as greater knowledge of age-related concerns. For the Still Ready for Work programme participants, there is an increase in confidence in the work environment and in the ability to seek and gain new employment, should they so wish. Furthermore, the positive impact of the programme on employment status is demonstrated for the Still Ready for Work Programme, with employment up 110% for older people, six months after their participation.





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# IMPACT ON OLDER WORKERS

## KEY OUTCOMES MEASURES

	TOTAL	Northern Ireland	Wales	Scotland	Still Ready for Work	Mid-Career Review
<b>CONFIDENCE</b>						
More confident to make decision about my future	80%	84%	69%	81%	80%	81%
Increased my sense of choice and control	78%	84%	66%	70%	75%	79%
I have the confidence to seek and gain new employment, should I so wish*	↑81%	↑81%	↑68%	↑106%	↑113%	↑79%
I feel confident in my future (at work)*	↑65%	↑65%	↑49%	↑121%	↑120%	↑66%
<b>AWARENESS OF OPTIONS</b>						
More aware of the issues I should be considering at my age	90%	94%	82%	77%	79%	92%
I am aware of my employment rights*	↑18%	↑16%	↑18%	↑28%	↑9%	↑18%
I am aware of my retirement options*	↑127%	↑132%	↑132%	↑36%	↑22%	↑131%
I have access to information to increase my financial awareness/stability*	↑115%	↑122%	↑103%	↑42%	↑24%	↑121%

\*Percentage change to pre to post





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# IMPACT ON OLDER WORKERS

## CONFIDENCE

As a result of participating in the Age at Work Programme, older peoples' confidence levels have increased. **80%** are more confident about making decisions about the future and **78%** felt a greater sense of choice and control. For those on the SRFW programme, confidence in the workplace rose by **72%** pre to post-intervention. Overall, the number of older people with the confidence to look for new work (should they wish to) rose by **81%**, and for those on the Still Ready for Work programmes, this confidence to gain new employment was up **113%** after their participation.

### Anna's Positive Experience of Mid-Career Review Sessions

Anna joined the Mid-Career Review webinar on Career, Health and Wellbeing to remind herself of what she was capable of. Since then, using prompts from the webinar, Anna applied for a job within her organisation and despite being unsuccessful her employer created a new role for her showcasing her capabilities once she believed in herself.

[Find out more here.](#)

Still Ready for Work participants



The confidence and understanding that my age is NOT a barrier to employment.

It is an excellent programme that has help me to feel confident and supported, with very helpful and professional people.

It has given me the confidence to apply for any job, by adapting my CV and showing how my skills are transferable.

Given me confidence in returning to work for the next decade or so.



Mid-Career Review participants



I'm feeling much more informed and more confident about going forward into retirement.

Excellent for my knowledge and confidence in employment.





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# IMPACT ON OLDER WORKERS

## REDUCED ISOLATION & LONELINESS

Owing to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic, it is difficult to get an accurate assessment of this measure across the five-year programme, as was intended with the indicator “feeling close to other people” measured in pre-programme survey and the six-month post survey.

To mitigate the effect of Covid-19 on measures we have looked at post-Covid period, pre and post measures for the SRFW participants, where there was more in-person interaction, with placements, online forums such as the coffee and job club and personalised advice. The data showed a **23% increase** in the number of SRFW participants who agreed they felt close to others, six months after taking part. Qualitative evidence supports this measure of reduced isolation and loneliness as a result of the Age at Work programme.

“ Still Ready for Work participant

The job club is a great way to mix with other people in similar situations all over the country, all with different experiences and views of the job market.

”

“ Mid-Career Review participants

Before I signed up to the workshops, I would go sometimes a whole day without speaking anybody. It was lovely to feel that connection with others in similar circumstances.

Good to have a forum where I’m not alone in my worries.

I wasn’t alone and there is great knowledgeable support out there.

I am not alone.

”

## EMPLOYMENT STATUS: STILL READY FOR WORK

The key outcome for Still Ready for Work Participants is employment within six months. The programme has delivered against this objective. While the delivery team report that **106** individuals through the SRFW are known to have gone into employment directly, and can be fully attributed to the programme, survey data gives the self-reported figure six months later: 374 in work six months later, **194** moving from unemployment to employment.



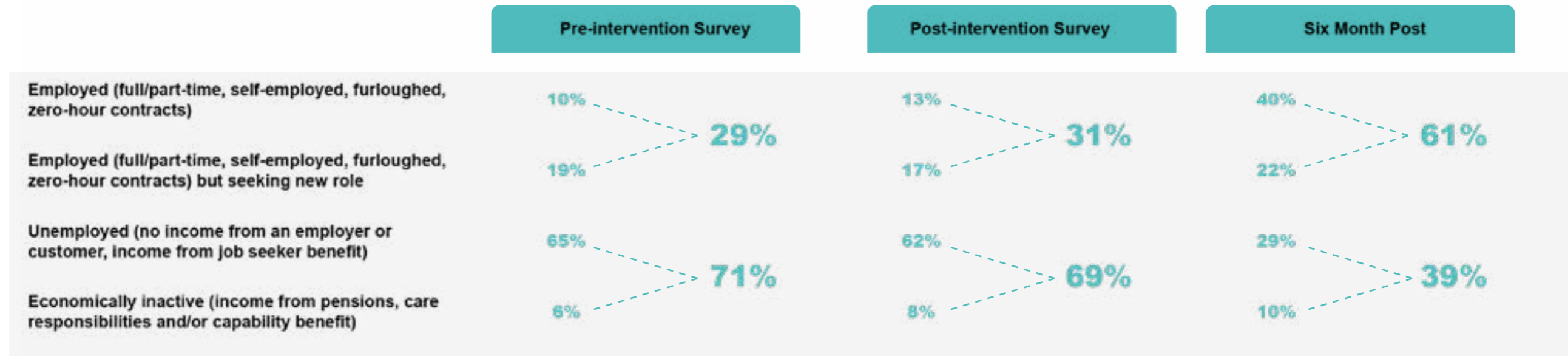


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# IMPACT ON OLDER WORKERS

AGE AT WORK TO JULY 2024: CHANGE IN EMPLOYMENT STATUS – STILL READY FOR WORK PROGRAMME PARTICIPANTS

## SRFW RESPONDENT'S EMPLOYMENT STATUS



**110%**  
increase in  
employment

**374**  
in work six months  
after programme  
(**194** moving from  
unemployment to  
employment)

<sup>9</sup> Older Person Data: May 2020 to 31 July 2024. Pre, Post and Six Month Post Surveys – SRFW Participants only



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# IMPACT ON OLDER WORKERS

At the end of the programme, participants in Still Ready for Work showed a 110% increase in employment, six months after taking part. This increase in employment, from 29% pre-programme, to 61% six-months later, evidences the difference made by the programme to older workers. Along with increased employment, there was a correlating drop from 71% to 39% unemployed.

## Phil, 56, Swansea

After completing workshops and an online job club, with Business in the Community's Age at Work team in Swansea, Phil was able to create a LinkedIn profile, improve his CV, and identify his most useful IT skills. As a result, after 15 months out of work, Phil successfully applied for a data processing position with the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency.

[Find out more here.](#)

Six months after completing the SRFW programme, participants from Northern Ireland and Scotland shared how their working lives had changed, as a result.



Still Ready for Work participant

It was incredibly useful. One of the main things that helped me to get a job was getting this specific workshop advice.

Positive, supportive, inspiring and far exceeding the government job centre support, particularly the lack of job coach support, My coach hadn't heard of this programme, I made him aware of it. The support I received from Age at Work programme was fantastic, it's changed and improved my life and in return, I can now financially help my three precious children. Thank you so much.



It gave me great confidence and new CV for applying for, and getting, my new job.

It gave me great confidence and new CV for applying for, and getting, my new job.

It gave me confidence in my abilities which in turn helped me find a new job.

The additional digital job search skills and interview skills training was a vital part of securing my new role.

Helped me to define and present my key skills in my CV to get interviews and secured my new job!







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# IMPACT ON OLDER WORKERS

## Cliff Davitt, 61, Edinburgh

The 6-week online course with Age at Work, enabled Cliff to create a CV and build back his confidence. Cliff later successfully applied for a position at Waitrose and has remained there since describing how his “whole life has changed for the better”.



[Find out more here.](#)

In Scotland, the partnership with Marks & Spencer resulted in the offer of 18 placements in the Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen stores. The face-to-face placements proved successful. 13 people attended two weeks of online training, 12 finished the placements, and 8 were employed by Marks and Spencer as a result.



In Northern Ireland, intensive one-on-one coaching in the SRFW programme has also led directly to employment. BITC NI worked with Triangle Housing Association to enrol in the Still Ready for Work Programme. Five went on to get one-on-one support and at least three went on to employment. In Q2, another six participants benefitted from one-on-one coaching and all moved into employment as a result.



Employer in Scotland

We see this as an important next step in our diversity, equality and inclusion journey and feel that age is a topic which crosses resourcing, development and retention. We have an older demographic in our business and industry and want to bring age up the agenda with our leadership team and develop an understanding of what we can do to improve our working environment and experience for all of our people, all ages.



In a **focus group** run by Bean Research, five Still Ready For Work participants in Northern Ireland shared glowing feedback. They all spoke about the positive impact of the SRFW coaching they had received to update their CV's, to understand and optimise the application process and to prepare for job interviews.

Key benefits and outcomes from the Still Ready for Work programme included:

- The programme increased knowledge of the current CV requirements and practical process of application in the digital world. Many older workers – particularly those in long-term jobs – didn't have a CV, and were unaware of digital changes to the recruitment environment and the significant changes in CV, application and interview requirements.

- Interview techniques and one-on-one interview practice significantly changed the outcome of interviews for those who had started a job search.
- Confidence and self-esteem, which for many had taken a dip due to redundancy, unsuccessful job applications or interviews increased as a result of the programme.
- The Still Ready for Work programme not only provided tools and guidance but gave participants the motivation to move forward and engage with the process. This mentorship through the individuals' employment journeys was viewed as invaluable.

As a direct result of these changes, participants who were actively going through a job search process secured interviews, progressed through, and were offered jobs.

Together, these figures, feedback and qualitative research show the positive impact the Age at Work programmes have had on the working lives of older people, in addition to the behavioural and attitudinal changes resulting.



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# IMPACT ON EMPLOYERS

The Age at Work teams have faced challenges of engaging employers in and after Covid-19, with multiple demands on the time of HR and DEI professionals making it difficult for them to prioritise time for age-inclusion issues. Teams reported that in the last two years, organisations have been particularly focused on immediate responses to the cost-of-living crisis and issues around hybrid working.

However, the age agenda remains extremely relevant, as the impact of these two challenges affects older workers disproportionately and the interest in age inclusion remains high with recruitment challenges, retention challenges and equalities awareness all driving activity. For example, with the focus on the current state of people’s finances, employers have been reminded that they also need to support over 50’s into the future.

Across all nations, a cumulative total of **274** employers have engaged with the programmes over the past five years. **156** used the toolkits and **199** completed Age-Inclusive Business Reviews or the Age Inclusive Matrix. A total of **114** participated in the Learning Network and **38** were engaged in Age Leadership Groups.

As a direct result, **42%** of all Employers have changed policies and practices to make their organisations more attractive to and supportive of older workers. These initiatives include introducing menopause policies, more flexible working policies, along with financial and wellbeing policies.

## VALUE OF AGE AT WORK TO ORGANISATIONS: QUALITATIVE AND QUANTITATIVE RESEARCH

At the beginning of 2023 Bean Research conducted six in-depth interviews with employers about their involvement with Age at Work and the benefit to their businesses.

- Martina Donaghy: HR Centre Of Expertise**  
Business Audit completed; Toolkit Action Plan completed; Attended Event; Learning Network
- Sarah King: Human Resources Director**  
MCR; Business Audit completed; Toolkit; Learning Network Participant; Age Action Plan completed
- Beverly Counsell: HR Advisor at Target Group**  
Business Audit completed; Toolkit; MCR; Age Action Plan completed; attended event
- Shaun McCahill: Head of HR and Organisational Development**  
Age Inclusive Matrix
- Andrew Loughran: Learning and Development**  
MCRs: Financial Wellbeing
- Jane Carr: Human Resources Manager**  
Business Audit; Action Plan Completed; Advisory Leadership Team; Toolkit



The feedback [from the MCR Financial Wellbeing] is like no other I have seen. We have done 450 in the last year; we started this year with 200 more interested in taking part and we still have 200 on the waiting list. We’re not advertising the course, this is just spreading by word-of-mouth. The feedback is fantastic from people I wouldn’t normally hear from and very senior civil servants want more of these programmes. It is an untapped resource. The 450 we have done has just scratched the surface.



Andrew Loughran, Learning and Development, NI Civil Service





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# IMPACT ON EMPLOYERS

Discussion and feedback from employers was universally positive and the following themes emerged on the value that the Age at Work programme has delivered to their organisations.

## 1. Provided organisations with framework and capacity to address age inclusivity within their businesses

- Business Review/Audit provides structure to evaluate organisations' current position.
- The process effectively identifies gaps in business policies and the current offering.
- By joining the Age at Work Programme, professionals can specifically earmark time and dedicate capacity to address age inclusivity as a priority.
- The expertise of the Age at Work team, and the tools it provides, optimises the use of businesses' limited time and resources.
- The Age at Work programme has been a catalyst for actionable change by providing pathways and impetus to change policies.

## 2. Provided leading expertise and experience in the Age at Work agenda

- Consultations and training from Age at Work team members provide external experts, with knowledge and experience as well as an independent viewpoint to business.
- Trainers provided for the Learning Network and MCR workshops are experts in their areas and share their experience of working with many organisations and

individuals (at no cost to the business participants).

- The Age at Work team is versed in industry and global standards relating to age inclusivity, this has helped businesses to benchmark and target their own age agendas.
- ## 3. Enabled organisations to develop valuable networks
- Age at Work has connected organisations to share experiences and best practices.
  - Through the programme, HR professionals have been exposed to new ideas and approaches to address age inclusivity in their own organisations.
  - The programme has introduced businesses to expert trainers, whom they can access independently for other training needs.

## 4. Changed businesses' awareness and approach to Age Inclusion

- Conversation, courses and policy changes have increased the engagement of employees and the feeling of inclusion, for older workers in businesses.
- Businesses saw an increased awareness of how the loss of skills and expertise will impact the business if older workers are not retained.
- As a result of their participation, businesses have started to tailor communications, both internally and externally to attract and retain older workers.
- Employers talked about their participation and subsequent actions as sending a clear message to talent and acquisition teams on their value of older workers.

## 5. Older Employees feel more valued

- Participants of the Mid-Career Reviews found them interesting, relevant, and useful – and therefore a valuable offer from employers.
- Age at Work programmes for individuals have encouraged them to have further informed conversations with HR or pensions teams, facilitating their roles at work.
- Businesses showing interest and investment in age inclusion issues have made older employees feel valued as part of the organisation.

## 6. Value for Money

The Age at Work Programme is offered free to employers and is recognised as being valuable. The following are examples of the costs employers feel they have "saved":

- Six one-hour business consultation sessions (provided by BITC Scotland).
- Northern Ireland Civil Service could specifically value the MCR's. NCIS had been looking to tender (and pay for) the training but found Age at Work with a programme offer that delivered exactly what they were looking for. At the time of the interview, 450 NICS employees had attended 21 MCR Finance Workshops. Andrew Loughran estimated that it saved NICS £8k-£12k, the cost of courses to be delivered privately.
- In addition to cost, some employers had no capacity to deliver the equivalent of the Mid-Career Review course independently.



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# IMPACT ON EMPLOYERS

In addition to talking to employees, data was collected from The Post Employer Support Survey (an optional evaluation tool). It was completed by 29 organisations that had completed Age Inclusive Business Review or Matrix (AIM) and provides additional insight into the success of the audit process. Organisations have gained:

- Increased awareness of how they can proactively support older employees
- Increased awareness of gaps in provision
- Help in creating new age-inclusive initiatives

Positive feedback from employers illustrates the impact of the programme on businesses from generating awareness and ideas, to taking positive action:

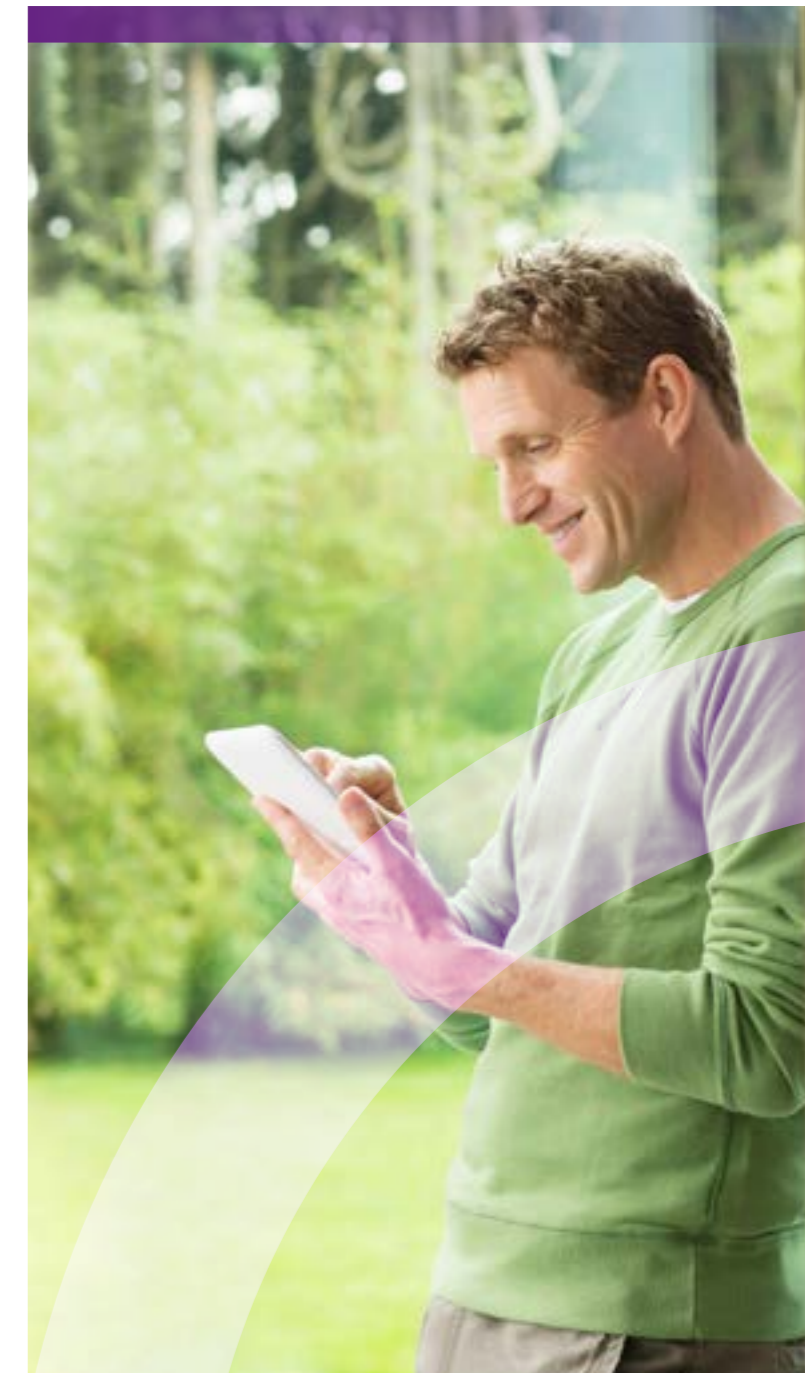


We are now more aware of the challenges for ‘older’ workers and feel equipped to support with overcoming those challenges.

The programme has raised awareness ...and given staff a voice ... Through workshops, we have been listing and taking suggestions to CMT and retirement and carer policies are being created. The suggestion of an induction buddy to assist younger staff was rolled out to all new staff & was extremely successful.

It’s been really good to have support & advice from experts. We had lots of good ideas but this feedback & finesse has helped us to come up with an action plan.

This helped us create a structured set of goals to ensure we raised awareness, educated both our managers and employees, removed obstacles including stereotype perceptions due to age.





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# IMPACT ON EMPLOYERS

## NORTHERN IRELAND

In Northern Ireland, a cumulative total of **140** Employers engaged with the programmes. Of these **76** used the toolkits and **108** completed Age-Inclusive Business Reviews. A total of **33** participated in Learning Network and **14** engaged in the Age Leadership Group.

As a result, **30** changed policies and practices to make their organisations more attractive to older workers.

### Allstate Northern Ireland

BITC NI has worked with Allstate NI since 2021. As a result of their involvement in the Age at Work programme they made multiple changes to their policies and procedures, including introducing a Reverse Mentoring programme between its employees over 50 and the graduate programme. In March 2023, Allstate NI became the first company in UK & Ireland to earn Gold Diversity Mark, the top distinction for an inclusive and diverse workplace. One of its key diversity and inclusion achievements was *“Equal opportunity for progression and mobility regardless of age, with employees ranging from ages 18 to 70. Commitment to the 5 Actions to be an Age-Friendly Employer standard, to protect and support its multigenerational workforce.”*

**Allstate Northern Ireland**

[Find out more here.](#)



Health & Wellbeing, Menopause, and Flexible Working policies have been changed this year in organisations across Northern Ireland, as a result of their participation in the Learning Network and the wider Age at Work programme of events, support and advice.

### Danske Bank

Danske Bank has engaged with various colleagues to create their Guiding Principles on Menopause Support. The approach has benefited from clinical input, colleague engagement and external stakeholder advice. Danske Bank now has many platforms for these issues to be explored in greater depth. The Bank has introduced: thermostat control in the office; flexible working arrangements; and a ‘tell me more’ series which – with clinical input – provides advice and learning sessions for colleagues.

[Find out more here.](#)



“

The Business Audit carried out has helped us focus on areas where we can learn to become more age inclusive as an employer. The Age Inclusive Learning Network has also provided a valuable opportunity to learn from and share best practice across the public and private sectors.

”

John Gow, Northern Ireland Ambulance Service





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# IMPACT ON EMPLOYERS

## WALES

In Wales, a cumulative total of **87** Employers participated the programmes. Of these **80** used the toolkits and **66** completed the Age-Inclusive Business Review. A total of **48** engaged with the Learning Network and **13** joined the Age Leadership Group. As a result, **38** Employers have changed policies and practices to make their organisations more supportive of older workers.

### South Wales Police

South Wales Police used the Age at Work programme to review and change their flexible retirement process; creating an environment of happier staff that continue to be engaged with their work as they can more easily retain a healthy work life balance.



[Find out more here.](#)

“

I really love being part of the Age Leadership Group because it's a great opportunity to share ideas and challenges with other businesses. The programme has really helped South Wales Police increase momentum and improve the focus of our activity on the age agenda.

”

Sarah, South Wales Police

### Legal & General

Legal & General's involvement in the Age at Work programme helped them to better understand what more that needed to be done to both attract and retain older workers. This process highlighted that their job adverts did not appeal to a broad range of candidates and further policies that need to be put in place to enable equality of opportunity throughout the employee lifecycle. There have been clear positive impacts as a result with '103 over-50s' having been hired in the last two years.



[Find out more here.](#)

### Cardiff & Vale College

Cardiff & Vale College worked with BITC Wales since 2022, completing the Age-Inclusive Business Review, using the Toolkit and engaging in the Learning Network. As a result of their involvement with the Age at Work Programme, Cardiff & Vale College developed a Menopause Policy, started a Menopause Employee Group in September 2022, and completed menopause training for staff. They have also invested in their Mental Health programme with Mental Health First Aid Training and the promotion of Mental Health champions. They launched their new Financial Wellbeing policy in Autumn 2023.



### Coleg Gwent

Coleg Gwent engaged with the Age at Work programme in October 2022, completing the Age-Inclusive Business Review, using the Toolkit and engaging in the Learning Network. As a result, they reviewed all policies and added Financial Wellbeing to their Health and Wellbeing strategy in 2023. The College also launched its "overall inclusive language toolkit" and the HR department organised Mid-Career Reviews for staff.



### Dŵr Cymru

Dŵr Cymru undertook an Age-Inclusive Business Review offered through Age at Work which highlighted their strengths and areas to improve. They offered Mid-Career Review webinars to their employees. They developed the Carers network and partnered with Carers Wales to ensure colleagues who may be a carer have access to the adequate support. Some colleagues came forward and shared blogs on their experiences and, during National Inclusion Week 2023, there was a first carers panel hosted showcasing the importance of being able to offer support for colleagues and hearing firsthand from the carers themselves.

[Find out more here.](#)





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## IMPACT ON EMPLOYERS

### SCOTLAND

In Scotland, **47** Employers engaged with the Age at Work programmes. Of these **28** engaged in the AIM Getting Started programme and **25** completed the Age Inclusive Matrix. **12** attended networking events. All of these employers are working with Age Scotland to change policies and practices to ensure their organisations are attractive to and supportive of older workers.

“

We greatly appreciate the flexibility that was built into the AIM process. Being able to use our allocated time with Age Scotland to feed into our Action Learning sets and age inclusion tea study groups was greatly valued.

”

Nature Scotland





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# IMPACT ON SOCIETY

Based on the data collated, Bean Research conducted a Social Return on Investment analysis to understand the social value of the programme.

Social Return on Investment measurement is a relatively complex process, but one which has clear steps defined by NEF in 2010, and in this instance was conducted based on the eight principles defined by Social Value International. One of these is transparency, and therefore this stage of the report is purposely detailed, to allow robust analysis of our evaluation and calculations.

The first part of the SROI process is conducting a Theory of Change process and designing an Impact Framework which was completed in 2020 and is detailed in the 'Measuring Impact' section. Given this process identifies outcomes and impacts, key indicators that demonstrated success were then developed, and Bean Research has been working with the Age at Work teams over the last five years to ensure that these are collected in a systematic and robust way.

SROI analysis means that a financial value to society is placed on the impact you have – mostly in terms of increasing employment, increased knowledge & practical support and increased confidence – as well as cost savings to employers. These impact values are then divided by the **input** – the cost of running the programmes. In this case, it has been based on the full grant from National Lottery Community Fund of £2,244,944 for 5 years.

In total, over the last five years, we found that the **Age at Work** programme has generated

**£16.6million**

in benefits to society.

We, therefore, estimate that for every

**£1**

spent on the **Age at Work** programme, approximately

**£7.43**

of social value is generated (over three years) through economic benefits and avoided spending for employers, and the gains for participants through increased confidence in the future, practical guidance and employment outcomes.

While there is a set process for calculating SROI there are several assumptions (of drop-off, attribution, displacement and deadweight) that are made through the analysis, and these are summarised below. Drop-off calculations were enabled through establishing post-programme surveys, completed after six months, which show continued changes in attitudes, wellbeing and behaviours.

The full Social Return on Investment report has been assured by Social Value International, and is available on the Institute of Social Value's library.





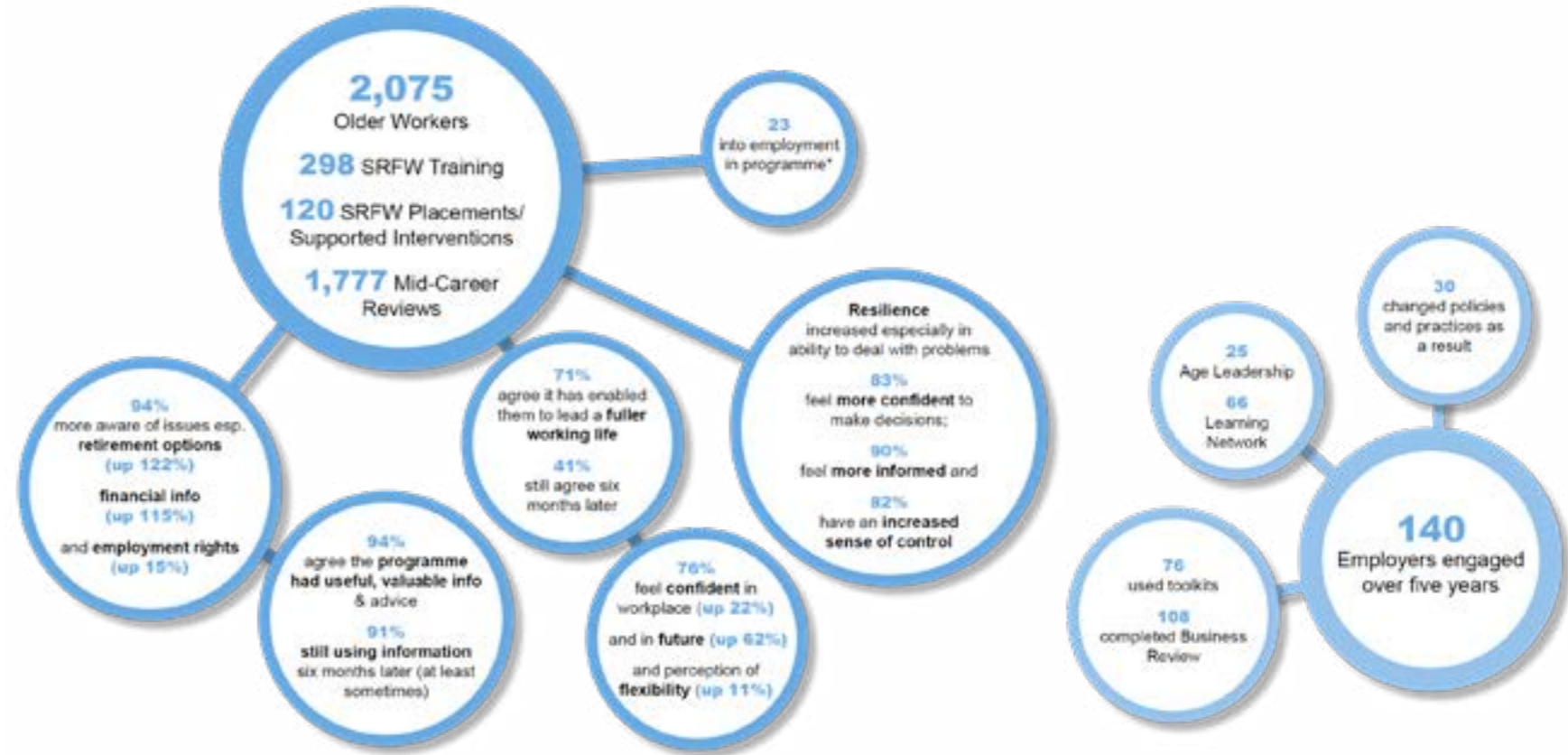
# APPENDIX: RESULTS BY NATION

## NORTHERN IRELAND: SUMMARY OF IMPACT

In Northern Ireland, **2,075** older workers and **140** employers have been engaged in the programme. **298** older workers completed SRFW training, 120 had a work placement or specific intervention and 23 went into employment. **1,777** older workers completed MCRs. Positive feedback from participants confirms that Age at Work in Northern Ireland is effectively addressing relevant issues.

- **94%** are more aware of issues they should be considering as older workers. Specifically, awareness increased by **122%** around retirement options; by **115%** around sourcing financial information
- **94%** found the programme to have useful and valuable information, and importantly, **91%** are still using this six months on
- Resilience has also improved, with **83%** now more confident to make decisions about their future and **82%** reporting an increase in their sense of control and choice
- In Northern Ireland, **140** employers have been engaged, with 76 using the Age-Inclusive Toolkit, and 108 completing the Age-Inclusive Business Review

## NORTHERN IRELAND



Older Person Data: May 2020 to 31 July 2024. Pre, Post & Six Month Post Surveys. \*Figure from Outcomes Reporting

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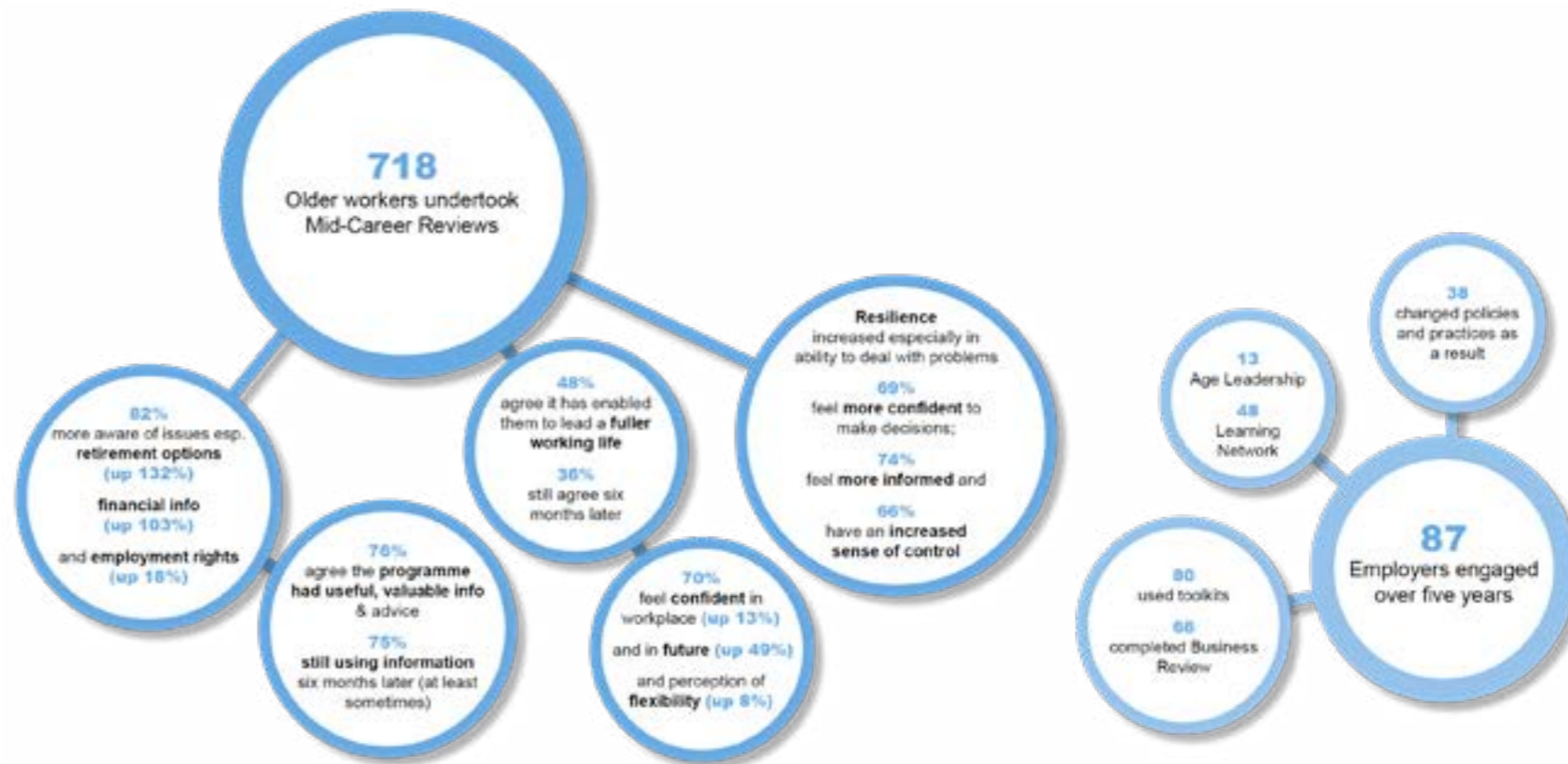
# APPENDIX: RESULTS BY NATION

## WALES: SUMMARY OF IMPACT

In Wales, **718** older workers have participated in **Mid-Career Reviews** and **87** Employers were engaged. The magnitude of positive shifts post-intervention, for people and businesses, is clearly evident.

- After completing a Mid-Career Review, **82%** were more aware of age-related issues to be considered. Specifically, there was an increase of **132%**, in participant's awareness of their retirement options, while the number who were aware of how to access financial information to help them plan for the future increased by **103%**. **1 in 5** feel better informed about their employment rights.
- **48%** agreed the programme had enabled them to lead a fuller working life, with **36%** still agreeing with this six months later. Moreover, levels of confidence to seek new employment rose by **68%**, while **13%** more employees feel confident in the workplace.
- Resilience in the ability to deal with problems had also grown, with **69%** feeling more confident to make decisions, **74%** feeling more informed to make decisions and **66%** feeling a greater sense of control.
- In Wales, **87** Employers have engaged with the programme, with **80** using the Age at Work Toolkits, and **66** completing the Age-Inclusive Business Review.

## WALES



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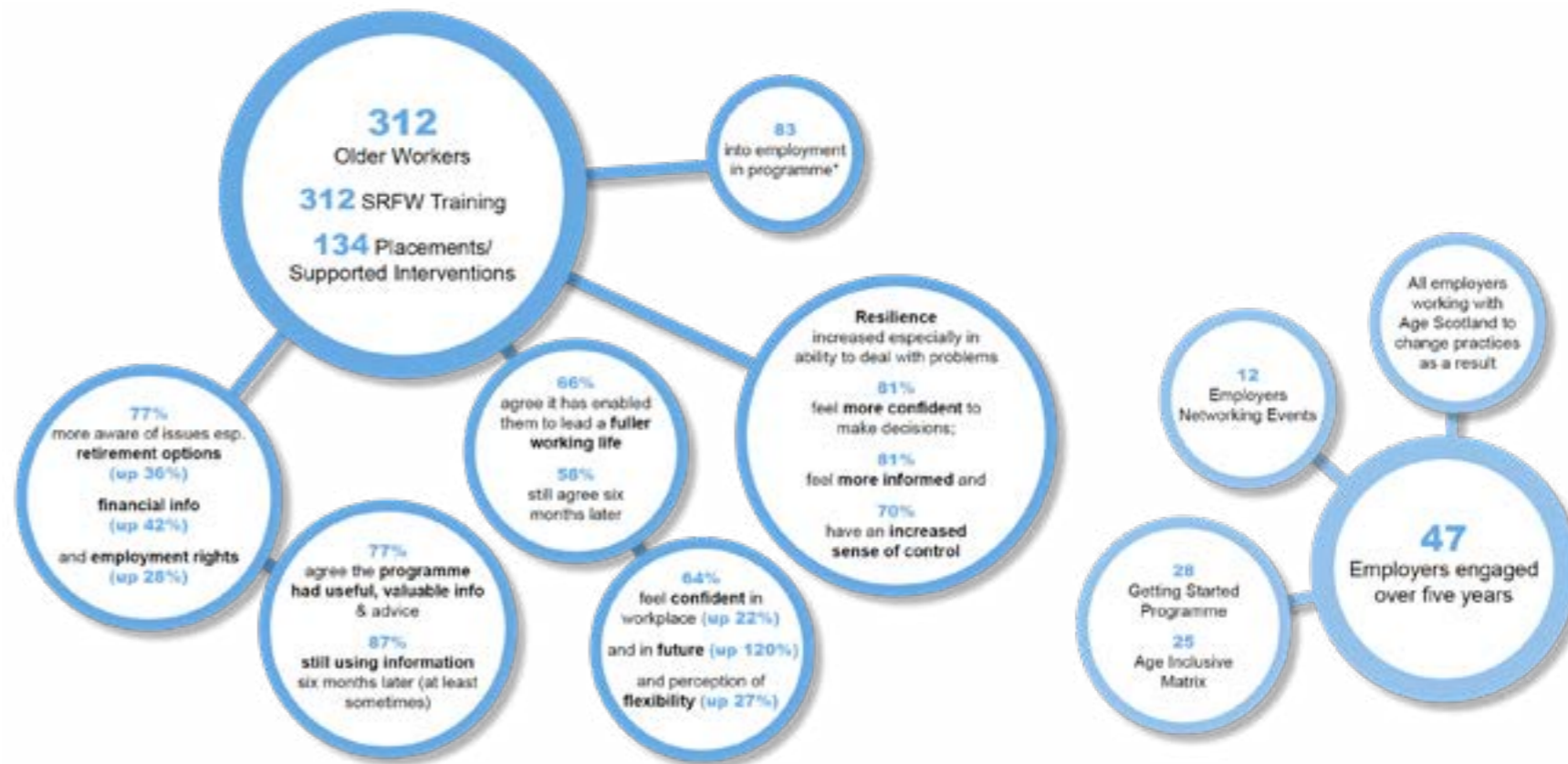
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## SCOTLAND: SUMMARY OF IMPACT

- In Scotland, Age at Work has engaged **312** older workers in Still Ready for Work. 312 individuals were provided with SRFW training, with **134** then completing placements or supported interventions and **83** were employed directly through the programme. **47** employers have changed policies and practices in the workplace.
- **77%** of older workers reported an increased awareness of issues that they need to be considering.
- **66%** feel the SRFW programme has enabled them to live a fuller working life and six months later **58%** still agree.
- **88%** felt the programme was beneficial to them and **87%** were also still using the information and advice they had received six months later.
- Scotland Ready for Work has also increased the resilience of participants, with **81%** feeling more confident to make decisions and **70%** reporting an increased sense of control as a result.
- In Scotland, **47** employers were engaged, working with with Age Scotland to change policies and practices. **28** completed AIMs Getting Started Programme, **25** completed the Age Inclusive Matrix work.

## SCOTLAND







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## PUBLIC POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

As well as providing direct support to older workers and businesses, the Age at Work programme is raising awareness of the impact of an ageing workforce and the need for an age-inclusive policy agenda in government.

This Impact Report provides an evidence base for effective interventions that can help government departments create age-inclusive employment policies and workplace support programmes. Age NI is engaging with the Northern Ireland Executive to call for a policy framework that addresses the challenges and inequalities experienced by older workers and provides support for older people who wish to return to work. Interventions such as those developed through the Age at Work programme, that can demonstrate impact should be considered by the Departments that are working to tackle economic inactivity, prevent poverty in later life, and address urgent and future labour market shortages to boost economic growth.

Since concluding the programme delivery, Age NI commissioned a review of existing relevant government policy in Northern Ireland and make recommendations about what public policy makers could learn from the Age at Work programme. Age NI has also included key learning from the Age at Work programme in recent submissions to public consultations on the draft Programme for Government 2024-27 and the Department for the Economy's draft employment rights bill.

The following summary of recommendations may change over time as the public policy landscape changes, but they currently reflect the key asks that Age NI will be making of Northern Ireland Executive Ministers:

- Adopt a whole of government approach to preparing for our ageing population that recognised the economic and social benefits of adapting the labour market to promote the inclusion of older workers.
- Ensure that employment legislation provides rights and benefits that can be equally accessed by older workers, with the support needed to overcome the barriers associated with working in later life.
- Develop an Older Workers' Strategy that sets out a clear plan for improving older people's access to employment through targeted programmes of support for workers and employers.
- Align new policy on older workers with other relevant strategies such as the Anti-Poverty Strategy, Active Ageing Strategy, and existing economic and skills strategies.
- Commit to resource evidence-based interventions such as those developed through the Age at Work programme. These include age-inclusive job training, apprenticeships, entry-level opportunities, and incentives for older workers to stay in work, as well as support for employers to better understand what older workers need.



[WWW.AGEATWORKHUB.CO.UK](http://WWW.AGEATWORKHUB.CO.UK)

