

Fresh Steps

**Summary of research findings into the development issues for
staff over 50 years old**

by

**Liz Willis and Jenny Daisley
The Springboard Consultancy**

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THANKS

A research project of this size requires the collaboration of many people, without whom it could not have happened.

First of all, we want to thank all of the 14 organisations who opened their doors to us and gave us access to their staff for this survey. They include:

The Patent Office, Birmingham University, University of Cambridge, Portman Building Society, Oxford Radcliffe NHS Hospitals Trust, Dorset Police, Barclays PLC, South Staffordshire Water, North Wales Probation, Wiltshire County Council, University of Oxford.

We also want to thank the contact person in each organisation, who organised the groups and the policy-maker interviews and whose enthusiasm literally opened the doors for us to be able to conduct this research. We greatly appreciate the trust they placed in us and their very practical support.

Thank you also to the 185 older workers who participated in the consultation groups and the 18 policy makers who gave opinions from the employers' point of view. This report is about their views.

Thanks also to the many Springboard and Navigator licensed trainers who put our request for access to their clients and facilitated the contact and also to Colin Heyman who conducted one group for us.

And a big thank you to Liz Bailey of Liz Bailey Diversity who conducted several of the consultation groups and has made a substantial contribution to the conclusions in this report.

Liz Willis and Jenny Daisley
The Springboard Consultancy Ltd
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Research Summary

The main issues for older employees are:-

- Enthusiasm and commitment to their work but a frustration about the lack of flexibility and imagination shown by their employers.
- Dissatisfaction with their role at work and a request for recognition of their skills and experience and for a possibility to pass these onto younger colleagues.
- A desire for an improved relationship with younger colleagues, based on mutual respect.
- A lot of money worries, especially in the area of pensions.
- Concerns about approaching deterioration of physical and mental health.
- Concerns about disability – others and possibly their own.
- Greater self-confidence and comfortableness with themselves now they are older.
- A feeling of time speeding up or running out, so a greater motivation to achieve goals.
- Changes to aspirations, values and dreams.
- Need to get to grips with various changes at work – especially technological.
- Frustration at the lack of opportunities for development, promotions and training, as they face the possibility of a further 15-20 years in work.

The main issues for employers were:-

- Initiative fatigue
- For many employers there were very few issues around older workers as they were mostly focused on the recruitment and development of young people.
- The Age Discrimination Act coming into force in October 2006.
- The demographic changes in the UK workforce – soon to take effect.
- An intention to develop the potential of all workers.
- Skills shortages.
- A need to see development for older workers in terms other than pre-retirement courses!
- A need to encourage older workers to deal with change positively and to embrace new technology.
- A need to counter older employees' beliefs that the organisation isn't interested in them.

THE BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH

'People in power who now decide how we live need to be more aware of how culture is shifting. As more live longer, the changes can only accelerate. 'Old' is not another country, a place you're shunted off to when the real business of life is done; where you're parked in the anteroom of death and live in expectation of its imminent arrival. It is an era, as vividly a part of living as any other. It may be situated at the other extreme from youth, but being old is not being ill. Life can be as full of value and delight, of incident and insight as it is for a 20 year old.

There must be more varied and adaptable options than simply working full tilt until you're 60, then slamming the door on all your wisdom and experience. We shall all certainly have to work longer. The whole economic house of cards will collapse unless we do. But that doesn't mean that we stay in the rat race, with the stress and competitive thrust that gives middle age its ulcers. We need to plan for part-time, less hectic working lives, in jobs that society needs and welcomes. But also jobs where we feel needed and valued.'

Joan Bakewell – The Independent - 10 February 2006.

- More than one third of the UK workforce (36%) is now aged 45 and over, by 2010 this will have risen to almost 40%.
- Today, for the first time ever, there are more people in Britain over 60 than there are children.
- Census data shows that the proportion of the UK population aged under 16 fell from 24% in 1951 to 20% in 2001.
- Half of all new recruits who join an employer leave in less than two years. Voluntary turnover is highest amongst the young and falls with age and length of service.
- Many pension schemes are predicted to deliver a great deal less benefit than their purchasers anticipated.
- The governments Green Paper on Welfare Reform outlines the need for 1 million older people to return to work.

These and other statistics highlight a new situation in the UK's workforce: unprecedented numbers of older employees will be in work and working longer than they or their employers anticipated. Some of these people may be happy to do so, continuing to find work interesting, stimulating and developmental. Others may be reluctant workers, in jobs that they now find boring and working solely

because their pension scheme has not come up with the goods. These are extremes – it's likely that the vast majority of older workers will be somewhere in between, but all these people may be facing another ten or fifteen years work ahead of them.

As UK employers and employees face this unprecedented situation, we were interested to explore how we might contribute. As leaders in the field of personal and work development programmes we suspected that older workers and their employers will need a personal and work development programme to enable workers to adjust to new circumstances and to embrace additional years at work in a positive and constructive manner.

To avoid making assumptions about the needs and issues for older workers and their employers, we conducted informal face-to-face needs analysis research in 14 organisations across the UK in the autumn of 2005 and winter 2005/6.

Participating organisations include:-

The Patent Office, Birmingham University, University of Cambridge, Portman Building Society, Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals NHS Trust, Dorset Police, Barclays PLC, South Staffordshire Water, North Wales Probation, Wiltshire County Council, University of Oxford.

The objectives of the research were to:-

- identify the personal and work development issues for older workers.
- assess whether there were sufficient issues particular to this group to merit designing a new programme just for them.
- identify the issues for employers around employing older workers and what they had in mind for the work and personal development of their older staff.
- assess employers' level of interest and/or commitment to developing their older staff.
- consult older workers and their employers about the content, process and format for such a programme if we decided to go ahead.

METHODOLOGY

Three experienced training and development consultants conducted the research:

Liz Willis, Director, The Springboard Consultancy Ltd
Jenny Daisley, Chief Executive, The Springboard Consultancy Ltd
Liz Bailey, Liz Bailey Diversity

All three have many years of in-depth experience of conducting needs analysis and have sensitivity to the needs of employers. In addition, Colin Heyman of 'Recharge' conducted the research in one organisation as logistics made it impossible for the research team to make the only available date.

A request was sent out through the network of Springboard Consultancy licensed trainers, for employers prepared to allow access to older workers for this research. In addition, a request was published in our regular newsletter, 'NewsSplash'. Twenty three organisations volunteered to help. This was reduced to fourteen when it came down to finding mutually convenient dates and venues.

Participating organisations were simply asked to:-

- put together groups of workers over 50 years old, both men and women, and with as wide a variety of jobs and background as possible. Groups usually consisted of approximately 8 – 10 people, all volunteers and were in jobs ranging from senior management to unskilled manual work.
- organise one-to-one conversations with a least one senior policy maker who was able to put the employers' point of view.

All conversations were informal, entirely confidential and approximately 90 minutes in length. The researcher took copious notes at all times and, as often as possible, noted comments verbatim.

A number of standard questions were always asked, especially at the beginning of the discussion. After that, researchers asked other questions if a line of discussion seemed to need further exploration.

The standard questions asked in groups were (not always in this order):-

1. What are issues for you now you are over 50, that weren't issues for you when you were younger?
2. What are the positive aspects of being over 50?
3. What are the negative aspects of being over 50?

4. What motivates you to keep working?
5. If you could wave a magic wand, what would you like to be doing now you're over 50?
6. If we developed a new course for your age group, what would encourage you to come on it?
7. And what would put you off?
8. And what format would suit you and your work patterns best?

The standard questions asked of the employer were (not always in this order):-

1. What issues are there for you, as an employer, around employing people over 50?
2. What is the age profile of your workforce? What percentage of older workers?
3. What employment issues are different for your older workers to those for younger workers?
4. What hurdles do you see that prevent you from tapping the full potential of your older workers?
5. What are the positive aspects of employing older people?
6. And the negative aspects?
7. What do you think of our idea of developing a personal and work development programme for older workers?
8. Would you be interested in using such a programme, if we go ahead? If so – what format would suit you best?

On return from conducting these research discussions, each researcher immediately wrote up extensive notes and, when they had completed all the discussions and interviews, compiled a summary of their findings.

This summary of research findings is a compilation of these notes.

In total, 185 people were involved in 24 groups (56 men and 129 women), plus 18 policy makers. This gender imbalance is curious and worth bearing in mind when promoting the resulting programme.

ISSUES FOR OLDER WORKERS

The 185 people provided us with a wide range of life circumstances, work experience and attitudes. At one extreme were people who were lively, cheerful, positive and focussed who enjoyed their work and looked forward to continuing in it for several more years. At the other extreme were tired, fed-up, resentful people who didn't like their job but who knew that they would have to keep working for several more years in order to get a reasonable pension on retirement. These people were, perhaps, more in need of some form of personal and work development programme but couldn't necessarily see how anything in their lives could change.

The majority of people were, of course, somewhere in between these two extremes. The following general themes emerged from the 36 hours of discussion:-

WORK THEMES

1. The pace and nature of change

A need to embrace and enjoy change at work. People expressed fears about the sheer amount of change which can seem to be for its 'own sake', but also a weariness about yet another re-organisation and some sense of 'We've seen it all before'.

'There's so much happening – it's exciting.'

'I feel more vulnerable because of the changes.'

'Whilst I like change, sometimes it's all a bit too much – there's never time to consolidate.'

'I find myself more nervous of new things.'

'Pace of life and rate of change is harder to keep up with as I get older.'

'They assume as we are older we are reluctant to change but it's just not true.'

'They keep throwing the baby out with the bathwater.'

'You don't stop doing things because of your age; you age because you stop doing things!'

2. The role of older people and their relationship with younger colleagues

A definite need to challenge the negative stereotypes and assumptions made about older workers.

Annoyance at the way they are treated at work. People are making assumptions about their abilities and interests. Employers and younger colleagues, 'writing them off' because they are over 50 and not valuing their knowledge and experience.

Some people are consciously keeping their heads down and not speaking up because they feel out of step with the dominant youth culture at work. Annoyance at being taken for granted.

'We're the generation that just shut up and get on with it.'

'I worry that others will think differently about me – their perception is that I'll forget everything.'

'People listen to me because of my experience and people come to me for advice.'

'The culture we were brought up in makes it difficult for us to ask for help – we have always had to cope.'

'There's a different work ethic. We used to work 120% when we were young – just to get on. Today's young people are not the same. We were mugs. Have you seen the statistics for days off with 'tummy bugs'? It horrifies me – we never took time off.'

'The organisation doesn't take you seriously after 50.'

'Younger people come to me for help and advice.'

'When a colleague retired recently, I heard his boss say 'We'll be able to get a young whizzy person in now.'

3. The Type of Work

The need to find interesting, fulfilling work for the years leading to retirement – not just more of the same. Many women felt they were ‘just getting going’ as they had taken career breaks to have children when they were younger and are now raring to go, looking for new challenges and ready for promotions. Other people felt they had done their career climbing and were now more interested in finding something more personally fulfilling and useful.

A desire to pass on their knowledge and experience. Those who were ambitious were frustrated at the lack of career and training opportunities that were routinely offered to their younger colleagues. Annoyance at being passed over for promotion when they may have another 15 – 20 years to offer an employer.

A general request for more flexible forms of working – and for a gap year when people turn 50: *‘We never had one so, I’d like one now!’*

‘I’ve reached a plateau and I’m bored, so I’d like a change but it’s more difficult to motivate myself to know what I want to do anymore.’

‘Do I have a career or am I on the decline in terms of what I might do next?’

‘I don’t feel I have to take on more responsibility at work if I don’t want to.’

‘John Lewis Partnership give their staff a 6 month sabbatical when you’ve done 25 years service – I’d love to do that.’

‘I’d like to wind down gradually as I approach retirement but the pension scheme doesn’t allow you to do that.’

‘As I’ve got older, I realise there is more to life than work.’

‘Work would be more exciting if lifelong learning was encouraged more and there was more flexibility to develop ourselves more.’

‘I took a 2 year gap before doing this job - it was great.’

‘My employer is not going to invest in me, so it’s my problem now!’

4. The Need for Recognition

One of the remarkable aspects of the research groups was the energy and vitality released by these people meeting each other. A common theme that was recognised by almost everyone was the way that people seemed to become invisible at work once they turned 50.

Simply running the research groups and acknowledging the contribution made by older workers seemed to rejuvenate many people.

Sadness and apathy at being 'written off' at work, with many anecdotes about younger bosses and colleagues ignoring them or denigrating their experience. One young boss told an older worker when she applied for promotion; 'You've had your time – it's someone else's chance now'.

'I have loads more general experience and youngsters are keen to talk with me.'

'My younger colleagues ignore me most of the time but, on a one-to-one basis come to me when they want to know something or for advice because they know that I have more experience. I'd like to be appreciated for that'.

'What do people think of me? Am I a Dad or a Granddad? I don't even get given leaflets these days – I'm too old for them to bother with me.'

'I lack the sphere of influence that I used to have.'

'I was told I would not go any higher – it made me feel demotivated and not at all good.'

'I often feel invisible.'

'I get infuriated at work when I am treated like a junior. Younger people have a perception of us being old, even though we don't feel it!'

'There should be an interview process for older people – techniques for us as we're not the generation to sell ourselves – we hide our light under a bushel!'

'I'm invisible – we're at that in-between age'

5. Deteriorating Mental and Physical Health

For everyone, but especially for people with a physical element to their work, (such as nurses) there was a frustration about backs etc. giving out, being less physically robust and noticing a failing memory.

However, as several people pointed out, younger colleagues often worked under par after heavy drinking sessions or staying out late at night during the working week, and employers did not see this as a problem.

'I can't do all the things I want to do. I get tired and that makes me angry and frustrated.'

'I'm more aware of the physical things I can't do and I don't like to ask for help. In my mind I'm still 18.'

'I started playing netball again just before I was 50 and I tore a calf muscle very badly – I never expected my body to fail me so.'

'I need glasses to read now – it's so frustrating and I keep losing them!'

'My health is deteriorating and I'm slowing down – in some ways my elderly mother is in better shape than I am – older people just seem to go on forever!'

6. Money Worries

The need for better understanding of financial matters, especially pensions. People are sometimes hanging onto jobs that have become boring and unfulfilling to them, solely because their pension contributions are not sufficient for them to retire yet.

Most people in this age bracket are facing having to work many years longer than they ever imagined, because their pension scheme will not pay out as much as they were led to expect.

Some people acknowledged that employers provided good financial advice on pre-retirement courses, but all said this was far too late and expressed a wish for advice several years prior to pre-retirement courses.

'I feel cheated as I now realise it's too late to plan the finances I should have done some years ago.'

'Financial pressures create emotional pressures at a time when you're less able to cope with them.'

'I wish I could go part-time but I can't, because of the pension.'

'I used up all my savings by being ill for a year, so I don't know what I'm going to do for a pension.'

7. Modern Systems

A need to overcome a fear of, not only computers and IT, but also all the gadgets and fast moving changes in systems that so quickly become the norm in the workplace. Sometimes a need for re-training.

'Other people seem to be more computer literate than me.'

'Mobile phones are an irritation.'

'I admire the younger people – how they learn so quickly.'

'New technology gives us more time but it creates the demand for quick actions – e-mails put pressure on us to answer immediately.'

'I need time to sit down and think about how to programme the new TV – it's like a foreign language which I've not yet learnt. It makes me feel very old.'

'Nothing stands still in IT but youngsters don't understand numbers at all and can't do mental arithmetic because they have no idea what the answers should look like.'

'Technology changes so fast. Setting the video, mobile phones etc, concern me.'

8. The Need for Networking

Most older workers felt a sense of isolation in a workplace dominated by younger workers who imposed their culture. Many said that they were the only person over 50 in their office or department. Many found simply meeting with other people in these research groups to be an uplifting and encouraging experience.

The researchers noticed that participants in the groups often swapped contact details after the discussions and several participants said that the research group discussion had been 'as good as going on a course' and given them a real lift.

'I want us to have time to listen to each other.'

'I want to share my life experience and see how others' life experience can help me.'

'I want time to enjoy being with new people.'

'We need people around us –for the contact.'

PERSONAL THEMES

1. Health and Fitness

Great fears about deteriorating mental and physical health. A special fear of Alzheimer's. General sadness about deteriorating stamina and energy. A need for factual information and encouragement to get fit. A need to acknowledge that levels of fitness and stamina of a 20 year old may not be appropriate for a 50 year old but that deterioration can be delayed with simple lifestyle changes. Issues around pacing. A need for de-mystifying many health issues.

'I go home and fall asleep whilst I used to dance the night away.'

'My family expect me to do everything I've always done, but I get tired.'

'I've got to be careful now – I get really tired.'

'I'm slowing down but I think it's only me who knows this.'

'My shape has changed and I don't like it!'

'I'm more aware of my health, with the demise of my parents and realise I need to take stock and get my life in order.'

'Post menopausal – I have to write everything down now and my skin is sagging!'

2. Relationship to disability

In addition to concerns about general deterioration in physical and mental health, there were real worries about:-

- a) Becoming physically disabled themselves
- b) Dealing with other peoples' disabilities

These concerns seemed to be greatest amongst women, who felt that they had a lot of other people depending on them. People who were already taking care of disabled elderly relatives were concerned about their abilities to cope if the person deteriorated further and were worried about becoming similarly disabled themselves. These fears were often expressed in a jokey way, with lots of references to Zimmer frames etc! A fear of Alzheimer's was often mentioned.

A need for factual information and open discussions about disability.

'At present I'm looking after my elderly mother, my daughter and her little girl. Who's going to look after me when I need it?'

'My arthritis is already stopping me doing things. I dread to think how I'll manage if it gets any worse.'

'There's a lack of good care – it's not like childcare!'

'I can't bend down to do the filing – why does the filing have to be at lower levels?'

'I don't look forward to being old and frail – it's quite frightening.'

'My aching joints – I can't run up stairs anymore.'

'Problems carrying things.'

3. Family Commitments

A need to set clearer priorities. Resentment about being the 'sandwich generation' i.e. stuck between dependant adult children and dependant elderly relatives. Many people were caring for grandchildren too, on a regular basis. Frustration at adult children who expect everything to be done for them.

People experienced less understanding and support from employers around eldercare issues than for childcare issues. There is also the positive side: particularly the joy of grandchildren.

'I've had my children and now my daughter is a single mum, I'm having to look after and financially support my grandchild as well – I do resent it.'

'Dad was ill recently and I found myself torn between elderly parents, children and family.'

'My elderly parents can be demanding. I work all week and then have to spend a whole day at the weekend going to see them.'

'You can't leave older relatives with childminders or a nursery.'

'Dealing with dementia in parents takes so much time and I do not get support from work.'

'Working full-time as a mother, daughter and wife means it's more difficult to juggle everything – I'm torn in all directions.'

'I get less support as I get older. I'm the one who gives a lot of support to others but don't get it back.'

4. Being Themselves

Most people said they were relieved to have lost the pressure to conform that they experienced when they were younger. People mostly felt much more comfortable with themselves now and were more self-confident. Being older as liberation.

'I don't care what people think of me anymore.'

'I don't worry about what people think anymore.'

'I've got more time for me – but I feel guilty about it.'

'It's nice not to have to follow fashion – I can be myself and do as I please when I go shopping.'

'Not being influenced by peer pressure anymore – I can choose what I want to do.'

'I feel this is my time.'

'I have more confidence to confront people.'

'I accept who I am – it's liberating.'

'I don't have to prove myself anymore – it's just me.'

'I know myself and accept myself – warts and all.'

'I know where I'm at – I don't have to compete any more.'

5. Relationship to Time

A sense of time running out and awareness of their own mortality. A need to set priorities and make the most of their remaining time. This sense is making it easier to make decisions. The deaths of contemporaries and family members emphasises this sense of time slipping away. A need to reassess and set new goals. A need to 'get on with it'

'Getting details of my pension focuses my mind and sent a message that I didn't want to hear – I'm getting old.'

'Three years ago I made a major change and after 27 years in a high pressure job I got this job and am content to stay and do a good job but far less pressured.'

'It concerns me that I could work until 65 or 70 and then ask what I've done with my life.'

'It's a shame we don't know how much time we've got left as then we'd know what to do to fit it all in.'

'There is so much I still want to do, not enough time at the moment.'

'After 40 there's a fear of living on my own and my own mortality.'

6. Changing dreams and aspirations

Some people were now more determined to achieve their dreams and were planning to do so. (A lot of people wanted to travel more.) Others were bitter and resentful that they hadn't been able to pursue their dreams. A need to turn their cynicism and resentment into a positive energy by enabling them to think creatively about how to achieve their dreams or some altered version of them.

'I must have a sense of purpose in my life – it has to be a fulfilling role.'

'I want to leave something behind me – a legacy – my father was an architect and there are buildings he designed. What does an accountant leave behind?'

'I want to do voluntary work and make a difference.'

'Our parents retired to do nothing – not us. This generation are never idle, always doing things and helping others.'

'I'm planning to sell the house, move down market and enjoy myself.'

'I want more out of life – I've given to everyone and I want something back.'

'I had such dreams when I was younger but now they all seem to have faded.'

'Being 50 is like starting all over again.'

7. Financial concerns

Fears about pensions etc as outlined earlier. A need for factual information and encouragement to find an independent financial adviser. At the moment, there seems to be a lot of sticking heads in sand!

'I worry about older children still tapping me for money.'

'I'm working to add to my pension.'

'I thought I would have retired by now but crap planning on my part means I can't afford to.'

'I don't want to just keep working for pension rights.'

'The final salary pension means you have to stay working fulltime or else you lose out, big time.'

ISSUES FOR EMPLOYERS

Employers' attitudes varied enormously. Some were well aware of the demographics and their implications and were enthusiastic about offering development to older workers. One employer said; 'If you don't develop a new programme for older workers, we'll have to do it ourselves.'

Others were puzzled by the questions we asked and surprisingly complacent about the demographics and the need for change. Most employers were somewhere in the middle.

One common denominator was the short term aspect of employers' thinking. HR and training people were under such immediate pressures that it was often difficult for them to raise their heads to look longer term. Many of them had difficulty looking towards the age discrimination legislation coming into effect in October 2006.

General points from interviewing the employers are:-

1. Very few have given the issue of older workers any thought at all. There was a general awareness of the age legislation coming into effect in October 2006 but very few employers had thought through the implications of this or the implications of the demographics.
2. Most HR people were already under pressure and having to deliver short-term results. Some 'initiative fatigue'.
3. The private sector employers currently have about 10% of their employees over 50, whilst about 50% of the public sector employees are over 50.
4. Most employers were focussed on recruiting and training young people. The two private sector employers were more conscious of the demographic changes imminent and the need they will soon have to attract and retain older people. These two employers are currently employing fewer older workers than the public sector organisations.
5. Employers tended to see older workers in two categories (a) the person who is bored, out of date and stuck in a rut, whom the employer is keen to get rid of, and (b) the person who is energetic, embracing change and sharing their wealth of experience, whom the employer is keen to keep.
6. The over 50's group of employees tend to keep their heads down and do not make a fuss, so employers' mostly forget about them.

7. Employers had a tendency to label anything for the over 50's as a pre-retirement course! The idea of offering employees any development for the final 10 or 15 years of work seemed to be a new idea to most.
8. Skills shortages were an issue which raised employers' interest in their older workers.
9. There was some interest from employers to tackle any 'psychological disengagement' of older workers.
10. All employers were dealing with budget constraints.
11. A definite need to inform employers about the skills shortages and demographic issues they will shortly face and to help them look at their older workers differently. After all, these workers may have another 15 to 20 years of work ahead of them and it is not in employers' interests to have them just ticking over for all that time.

OUR CONCLUSIONS

After pooling all our research findings, we have concluded that:-

1. There are sufficient issues that are particular to this group of employees to justify developing a new programme just for them.
2. There is substantial anecdotal evidence of the undeveloped potential of this group.
3. Employers will not be able to afford to ignore this undeveloped potential for much longer.
4. The new age discrimination legislation in October 2006 is likely to raise everyone's awareness of the needs of older workers (as well as younger ones also).
5. Older employees face two barriers to developing their potential: - (a) barriers placed in their way by others, including their employers and (b) barriers that they place in their own way – in their own heads. It is this second barrier that we can tackle through a new personal/work development programme.
6. As the UK workforce ages, with fewer young people coming in, employers will need to keep and attract older workers. Organisations who offer personal and work development opportunities to older workers will be more attractive as employers.

THE NEW PROGRAMME – ‘FRESH STEPS’

We have developed a new programme to tackle the issues for individuals identified through this research.

The new programme is called ‘**Fresh Steps**’, and is aimed at all older workers, enabling participants to: -

- deal with change positively
- assess their own positive attributes and experience and turn them into assets.
- identify what they want to achieve at work and at home
- plan the steps needed to make their achievements happen
- develop a support network
- identify new areas for their own development and training
- find out where to get advice on financial and health matters
- demystify some health matters
- examine attitudes to work, health and money
- renew their motivation and interest in work
- present themselves and their experience positively
- actively enjoy their mentoring role to younger colleagues
- improve communication skills
- enjoy their work more

The new programme does NOT: -

- give medical advice
- give financial advice
- give one-to-one advice
- be a pre-retirement course

The research revealed that people wanted: -

- to meet other people in the same age group
- hear how others had tackled similar situations
- practical help
- to enjoy themselves
- their experience to be valued
- their aspirations to be taken seriously
- to continue developing themselves at work

Participants were also clear about what they DON'T want: -

- role play
- a lot of theory
- anything academic
- a workbook
- exams or tests

Employers were clear that budgets would severely limit their ability to implement anything new. Anything residential was out of the question. One day workshops were greatly favoured, with the minimum of accompanying paperwork.

'Fresh Steps' is being piloted as a two day workshop with some handout material, followed by another one-day workshop 4 to 6 weeks later. The gap in between workshops is to enable information gathering and networking to take place which can be built on during the second workshop.

The workshops need to be participative, focussed and with crisp, clear input. A guest speaker would fulfil the requirement for a role model.

WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

A draft programme has been designed and brand new materials are currently being written.

The next step is to pilot the new programme and the new materials, so we are inviting employers to offer an in-house pilot programme to their staff – especially to those people who were involved in the consultations.

Meanwhile, The Springboard Consultancy is offering a 3-day ‘intensive’ version of **‘Fresh Steps’** at our residential training centre in Devon, on **17 – 20 October 2006**. This intensive version will enable HR and training people to experience the programme for themselves. Our intention is to continue to offer this intensive version of ‘Fresh Steps’ in further years.

Contact us on 01271 850828 to discuss any aspect of this report or these issues, with us further.

Liz Willis and Jenny Daisley
The Springboard Consultancy Ltd
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