





Increased awareness of HR risks linked to longer working lives



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Cohesive people strategies to mitigate the risks of the ageing workforce are not yet common, but they are firmly on the radar of chief human resources officers (CHROs).

The UK Census 2021 results show that the number of people in England and Wales aged 65 years and over increased from 9.2 million in 2011 to over 11 million in 2021, and the proportion of people aged 65 years and over rose from 16.4% to 18.6%. This ongoing demographic shift is starting to play through into workplaces.

Couple this with the rising drive to reskill and upskill workforces to meet the demands of an increasingly digital economy that is also striving to reach environmental targets, and it is clear that CHROs need to scrutinise the opportunities and pitfalls of longer working lives very carefully. This research shows that already there are two- and even threefold increases in the proportion of organisations working on discerning obsolete skills. reviewing extended employment strategies, assessing multiple careers and setting aside budgets to invest in new skills among their existing workforces.

Shifting pressures

For these strategies to work, CHROs need to work with their benefits teams to also support the health and wellbeing of older workers; as well as consider how pressures outside work will shift for a generation often responsible for elderly parents and other relatives who are living longer.

Caring responsibilities, the cost of health and risk insurance, as well as a greater emphasis on pensions outcomes will become bigger business continuity issues when trying to retain experience during ongoing demographic change. That said, this report shows that assessing the future cost implications linked to an ageing workforce is still rare. Few respondents have forecast costs for tricky-to-predict areas, such as having more carers in the workforce through to the impact of delayed retirements. To mitigate risks and rethink what will engage this growing age cohort, employers must act now.

Building blocks for younger workers

Planning for longer working lives is not just about older workers but also the building blocks being put in place for younger and mid-career employees. This research shows which benefits are likely to grow as employers instigate new types of support to appeal to workers thinking about multiple careers likely to extend over five or more decades - many of whom will have smaller pensions pots than their older colleagues and will have got on the housing ladder later in life, if at all. They will need to reskill more often and will have experienced huge social change in ways of working.

Lifelong learning programmes, social wellbeing support and recognition programmes are all emerging as benefits to engage younger cohorts facing, and planning for, longer working lives.

PURSUING BEST PRACTICE

Reward & Employee

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Please note that, as a result of rounding, graph totals may be between 99% and 101%

Transforming Engagement series

Report 1. People risk: why the need for change is urgent Published in May 2021.

Report 2. Aligning corporate culture and human values Published in July 2021.

Report 3. Technology change is business change Published in November 2021.

Report 4. Sustainability is driving business change Published in June 2022.

Report 5. Business transformation needs HR transformation Published in November 2022.

Report 6. Evolving EVP: meeting business and workforce change Published in May 2023.

Report 7. People risk strategies for successful business change Published in October 2023.

Report 8. Longer working lives: the future of people strategies Published in February 2024.

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Data at a glance: employers must create cohesive strategies to mitigate the risks of longer working lives

Employers are conscious of the need to better understand the long-term effect of longer working lives on their organisation, both from a talent perspective and in terms of employee benefits.

The impact of changing working lives in the workplace

Potential HR risks - see pages 6-8



382%



366%



244%

Increase in organisations discerning obsolete skills

Increase in organisations evaluating number of careers per employee

Increase in organisations reviewing impact of caring on retention

Planned reviews of HR strategies - see pages 6-8



211%



150%



132%

Increase in organisations reviewing extended employment strategies

Increase in organisations reviewing strategies to keep carers engaged

Increase in organisations reviewing their investment in skills

EVP design is changing in the face of longer working lives

There will be an increase in reviews of employee value proposition (EVP) design



39%

43%

Have reviewed EVP design

Will review EVP design

Data at a glance: benefits cost forecasting

Forecasting the costs of the ageing workforce is limited. Companies typically rely on data from products and providers to predict costs related to the ageing workforce, meaning broader risks are missed. More complex costs are not being measured, despite a good depth and range of data.

Employers have not forecast for costs of:

92%

Working carers

85%

Changing age dynamics in the workplace

84%

Extended employment or delayed retirement

84%

Working parents

79%

Increase of average age of workforce

77%

Chronic physical ill health and disability

77%

Cost of mental health conditions in the workplace



Data at a glance: longer working lives behind demand for greater financial and caring support

Employers are largely relying on traditional, core benefits to support employees throughout their career. Although these are effective, shifting expectations and societal trends are highlighting the need for a broader range of benefits that can support longer working lives.

In the next two years, companies intend to introduce

Financial support



Financial literacy targeted at older employees



Pensions focused on good member outcomes



Access to mortgage advice and products



Pension top-ups during parental leave periods

Caring support



Paid time off for carers



Access to advice and

guidance on eldercare



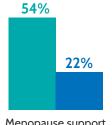
Benefits to cover costs of caring for adults



Benefits to cover costs of baby/childcare

Top benefits to support longer working lives

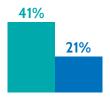
■ Currently offer ■ Intend to offer in the next two years



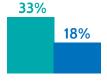
Menopause support



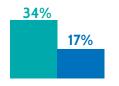
Fertility support



Financial literacy targeted at older employees



Paid time off for carers



Access to advice and guidance on eldercare



Influencer views



"I think most employers still have - for very good reason - a relatively static benefits package, regardless of an employee's age. Flexibility is really important."

Nick McMenemy

Partner and Digital, Strategy and Markets Leader, Mercer Marsh Benefits



"We've got some older, traditional machines that need to be maintained in the dairies, but we're also digitalising our production lines, introducing robotics and other new technologies. We need to ensure we retain and attract people with the right skill sets. We will support colleagues to retrain where necessary, ensuring they understand the rationale for change and feel supported to develop the right skill sets."

Catherine Kirkland

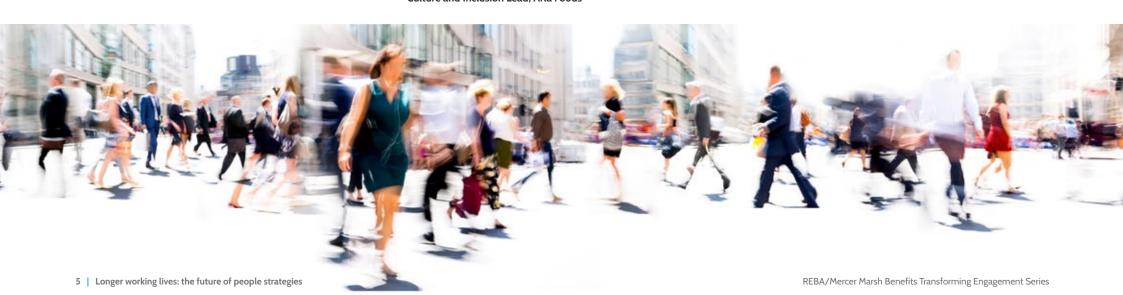
Culture and Inclusion Lead, Arla Foods



"One of my current projects is looking at measuring wellbeing internally and how we pull together different threads. As well as looking at internal data, I encourage people to look externally at sources such as the Office for National Statistics and the World Health Organization, which have some really powerful insights."

Paul Duggan

Global Health and Wellbeing Lead (Europe), Accenture



Although few employers are currently acting on the risks associated with longer working lives, many chief people officers are beginning to plan for the future, with a key focus on skills.

While 11% of respondents have already discerned which skills will become obsolete, 42% will review them, representing a 382% increase. And 27% have already identified emerging skills needed for future growth, with a further 52% planning to map this out in the next two years.

How employers are addressing changing skills requirements

Employers need to understand which skills are relevant and which are not. Our findings suggest that employers are more focused on the future, new innovations and the skills that will grow businesses, rather than what skills are going to become irrelevant.

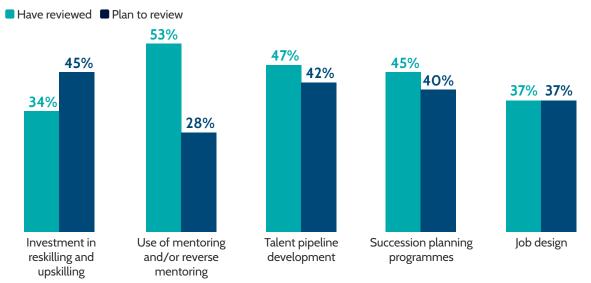


Have already or plan to identify emerging skills for future business growth



Have already or plan to discern which skills will become obsolete

To address these findings, employers are taking a number of steps to tackle skills needs within their HR strategies





Nick McMenemy Partner and Digital, Strategy and Markets Leader Mercer Marsh

Benefits

View from Mercer: next steps

- Treat your top-line people strategy as a stake in the ground that everything links back to.
- Benchmark your reward and benefits against competitors, other companies in your sector and any other relevant organisations. Use external sources of data and guidance.
- Undertake employee listening, gather real-time data from employees about what's important to them, concerns they have, what they would like if they could wave a magic wand.
- Understand what data you have - demographics, employees with dependants, retirement age patterns, average pension pot size by age, health and claims data from your insurance provider, flexible benefits provider data, and so on.
- Establish how data is used by the organisation and how it links to trends. For example, are people using their holiday entitlement to meet their caring responsibilities?
- Use this qualitative and quantitative information to inform the benefits you might need to change or introduce and review annually.



How employers are preparing for shifting age demographics

Understanding age demographics is becoming increasingly important, with fewer young people entering the workforce. This is reflected in the surge of employers reviewing their HR strategies for extended employment and delayed retirement.



56%





63%

Have already or plan to review the increased average age of the workforce

Employers are taking the following steps to address age demographics within their HR strategy

■ Have reviewed ■ Will review

employment and retirement

18%

38%

Extended employment and delayed retirement

30%

30%

Sabbaticals and long leave

How employers' strategies are changing to support working carers

Support for carers (of both children and adults) is high on employers' agenda, with 21% having reviewed this area and 46% planning to do so, an increase of 244%. Employers are keen to understand how to retain this cohort, while maintaining engagement.



67%

Have already or plan to review the impact of parenting and caring on retention rates

Employers are taking the following steps to mitigate the impact of parenting and caring responsibilities within their HR strategy

■ Have reviewed ■ Plan to review

26%

38%

Keeping carers and parents engaged in the workplace

How employers are meeting employee expectations

Employees' expectations and employment habits are shifting, too. Our findings show that 6% of employers have already reviewed the risks posed by employees having multiple careers, but a further 23% will review - a 366% increase - suggesting employers are thinking about the implications for their benefits offering. Higher-risk pension investments for employees with shorter tenures, timely benefits for life stages and responsibilities, and clear career progression pathways will be important recruitment and retention tools for the growing number of portfolio careers.



29%

Have already or plan to review the increase in the number of careers per employee



82%

Have already or plan to review the expectations of younger generations

To address these findings, there will be an increase in reviews of EVP design

■ Have reviewed ■ Plan to review

39%

43%

Design of EVP



Effective benefits to mitigate the risks of an ageing workforce

Some forward-thinking employers are already offering specific benefits to mitigate the risks of an ageing workforce. And others are hoping to follow suit.

Employers who have benefits to mitigate the risks of longer working lives and find them effective, compared with those who don't offer these benefits but believe they would be effective



The up-and-coming benefits linked to mitigating the risks associated with longer working lives relate to reskilling employees and improving engagement with real-time bonuses or incentives to help address skills issues. Guided retirement pathways are also becoming popular as a way of ensuring that employees are able to retire when they want, while maintaining productivity and engagement.

Despite these shifts, the picture remains complex. A fifth of companies with financial wellbeing programmes don't think they are effective, despite their growing popularity. And despite the importance of financial wellbeing support, less than half of companies (40%) are currently offering it.

Employers may appear aware of the risks of an ageing workforce, but few are specifically preparing for them yet. This could be for any number of reasons - not least, the shortage of time, bandwidth or budget facing reward professionals.

Top strategic HR areas employers plan to review

Across the strategic changes employers are making to address longer working lives (seen on pages 15 and 16), the statistics below highlight the biggest shifts in employers reviewing their approach to:



Extended employment and delayed retirement 18% have reviewed > 38% will review

211% increase



Keeping carers and parents engaged in the workplace 26% have reviewed > 38% will review

150% increase



Reviewing investment in ... reskilling and upskilling 34% have reviewed > 45% will review

132% increase



Design of EVP 39% have reviewed > 43% will review

110% increase



Regular pay reviews linked to performance / progression



Steve Walsh Reward Manager, **Gatwick Airport**

Case study from Gatwick Airport: benefits for a multi-generational workforce

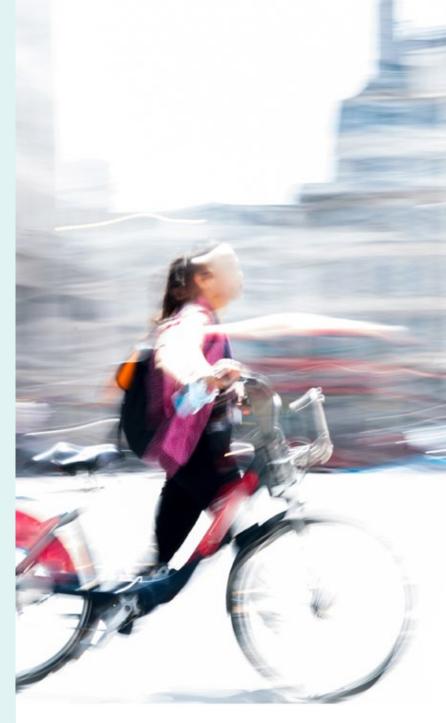
Our workforce ranges in age from 17 to over 70. We employ older workers across the business, in technical, operational and management roles. We make clear to our more mature workers that they can take advantage of our flexible working options, including working fewer hours each week.

But what has been critical in our approach to reward over the past 18 months has been the consideration of our multi-generational workforce in our benefits offering. I remember being 27 and having a huge life insurance policy and family private medical insurance (PMI) when I really didn't need it - I was single and living in a one-bedroom flat.

It's not just about demographics, though; it's about lifestyle. Our society has always been made up of people with varying lifestyles and relationships, Today, when we think about diversity, equity and inclusion, people are more open about their relationships, whether they have children, pets and so on.

Our flexible benefits platform has been designed to ensure that people can choose the benefits that are appropriate to them. We used to give managers family PMI; now, if they want PMI just for themselves, they can flex and take the cash. We're working towards flexing other core benefits in the future, including life assurance.

I'm very clear that high take-up of a benefit isn't necessarily a sign of success. I want the benefits to be worth providing, of course, but the point is that people can choose what they want, rather than the business spending money on benefits that our colleagues don't want or need.





Despite the growing understanding of age-related issues and needs, many employers aren't forecasting the financial impact on their organisations.

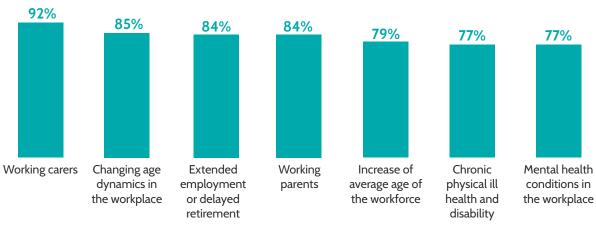
Significant majorities have yet to predict what working carers, parents, changing ageing dynamics, extended employment or delayed retirement and even chronic physical and mental health conditions will cost their organisations.

Forecasting these kinds of costs - and keeping them updated - requires human resources, skills, tools and deep analytics from a wide range of sources - not least, HR and payroll systems and employee surveys.

Concerningly, 8% and 14% of respondents are not using internal HR and benefits data respectively. Whether this is because this information feels inaccessible, or they don't have the resources or the skills to analyse the data, is something companies will need to address.

The sixth report in the Transforming Engagement series found in 2023 that, while high-value data is a key driving force behind HR and benefits decision-making, many sources are still difficult to access. For example, 35% said it was hard to get data on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), despite 59% of people recognising its high value.

There are many costs associated with longer working lives. Employers are not forecasting for the following costs



Forecasting costs based on benefits products is an easier task. The core age-related benefits that employers are forecasting for are both traditional and have data that is readily supplied by providers: group risk insurances, pensions (contributions and management costs) and private medical insurance. These also represent employers' biggest benefit costs. However, this doesn't mean that forecasting costs is without challenge, not least the impact of medical inflation (see page 11).



Catherine Kirkland Culture and Inclusion Lead. Arla Foods

Case study from Arla Foods: managing an older, manual workforce

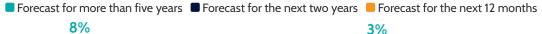
Arla Foods employs nearly 3,800 people, just over a fifth of whom are over the age of 50. The average age of our workforce is 43, and 44 in the supply chain. Our oldest employee is 75, and the average length of service is 16 years.

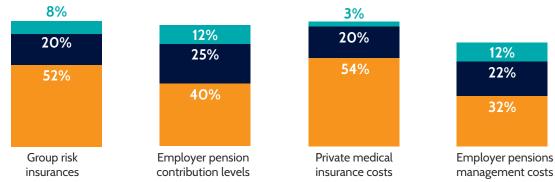
Most older workforce members are frontline workers in manual roles such as delivery driving or on production lines. Longer-term absence issues tend to be musculoskeletal.

We want to support the wellbeing of all our colleagues, and are very conscious of the ageing demographic. To understand more about our organisational health, we have put health kiosks on every site. These give us an overall picture of the wellbeing age across the organisation, as well as data on other aspects of health collectively, which is helpful for identifying hotspots. Next year, we will focus on raising awareness of heart health. We also gather internal HR and external provider data to understand our demographics.

People aren't retiring predictably. We try to be as flexible as possible, but the manual nature of many of our roles means that we need to think about how to really support people later in life. Like many manufacturers, we are thinking about how we can be more innovative about our ways of working, such as shorter shifts, flexible working and split shifts.

The majority of employers have forecast costs in four major areas



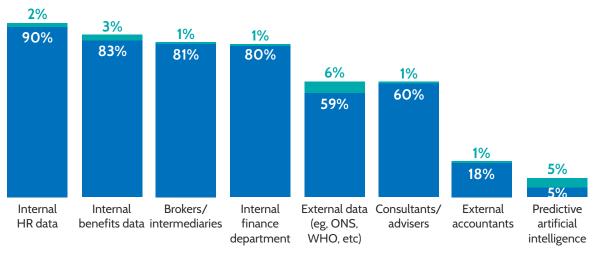


A broad range of data sources

It's clear that more forecasting needs to happen, particularly for a wider range of benefits. Those employers who are forecasting are using multiple data sources.

Services, advice and sources employers use for benefits cost forecasting

■ Plan to use within the next two years ■ Currently use





Employee data is also being used to inform strategic decisions in many areas. In 2021, the fifth report in the Transforming Engagement series found that skills issues loom large over businesses, but, at the time, only 19% had mapped their existing skills over the previous two years, and only 21% had mapped potential skills requirements. In the seventh report in the series a year later, 51% were currently implementing talent and skills mapping for future business needs. The direction of travel is clear.

The employee data primarily used to drive strategic decisions

63%	52%
Future employment costs	Succession planning
60%	50%
Employee performance	Flexible working

Data associated with longer working lives that is less likely to be used in strategic decision making

44%	32%
Skills mapping	Impact of shifts in workforce diversity
43%	26%
Future employment risks	Impact of changing age demographics
39%	21%
Job redesign	Impact of increasing average age of the workforce

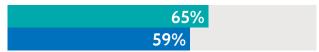
More employers are analysing data to drive efficiency and strategic decisions. However, HR issues associated with longer working lives are analysed to inform decision-making by fewer than half of respondent organisations.

The remainder may recognise the risks of the ageing workforce, but not all are using data to tackle them. There appears to be a disconnect.

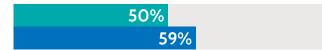
Larger companies analyse more employee data in areas related to longer working lives than small to medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). This isn't surprising, given the often greater resources available to them. SMEs tend to analyse more data in relation to succession planning and flexible working - issues likely to have a bigger impact on companies with smaller workforces without economies of scale (see righthand column).

Larger employers are more likely to analyse data in relation to longer working lives than SMEs





Future employment costs



Succession planning

Flexible working



Skills mapping



Future employment risks



Job redesign





Paul Duggan Global Health and Wellbeing Lead (Europe), Accenture

Case study from Accenture: meeting diversity aspirations

The proportion of our workforce in the over-50s age group is starting to increase, and we are seeing multiple careers within time with one company. Our age diversity has also increased as we have diversified the ways we bring skills into the company, with acquisitions complementing the more traditional graduate recruitment route.

These changes intersect with our broader diversity aspirations. We have set bold goals to accelerate gender equality, and we are well on our way to achieve gender parity - for those whose gender is binary - by 2025. This means we need retention strategies that are relevant to the full spectrum of working ages and must consider how we support people in the later stages of their career (for example, returning to work after a career break).

In the UK, to support older workers, we have removed menopause exclusions and added neurodiversity support to our insurance as we see incidents of adult diagnosis increase. We have a partnership with Carers UK to provide support for both people with a non-standard parenting responsibility and those who manage them. We also have back-up care for parenting and caring needs.

Globally, when rolling out new benefits, we look to ensure that support is available for loved ones as well as employees themselves - something that is more likely be a consideration for older workers. Our financial health offering is available to up to five friends or family members. One of the drivers for launching this was the absence of formal financial education in most countries and the risk this presents if people do not plan for later life.

In terms of engagement, we take a mixed approach, incorporating blanket communications as well as engaging people based on their communities or projects. Rather than just giving people homework, we recently had success using available time in people's diaries to walk through signing up for the benefits that work for them, so they come away from sessions feeling they got meaningful value.



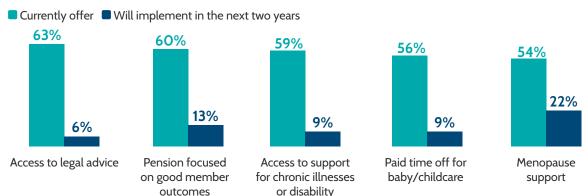


The appetite for wellbeing strategies that address the ageing workforce has been growing steadily for some time.

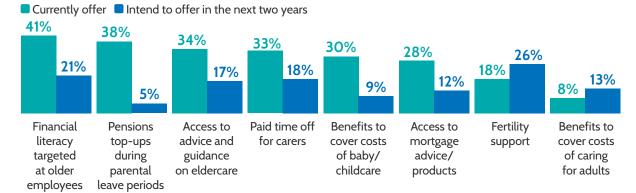
In 2022, REBA's Employee Wellbeing Research revealed that age-related issues were among the top five areas of growth in wellbeing. Back then, 28% of respondents said they already addressed age-related physical wellbeing in their strategies. This rose to 38% in 2023.

Now, when we ask employers what benefits they offer to support employees through their key life stages, it's clear there is a wide range available across our respondent organisations.

The majority of employers are already offering or planning to offer benefits that support established employee needs



The proportion of employers who provide or plan to offer benefits that support the emerging needs of different age ranges





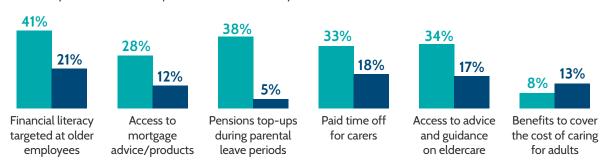
Longer working lives are leading to new emerging needs

In 2022, REBA's Employee Wellbeing Research found that 29% of respondents offered support for employees experiencing menopause. Today, this benefit is well established, helping to better support this cohort of employees. This shift suggests that employers are thinking more actively about employee needs at different life stages.

With different employee needs now materialising, our data shows two clear groups of benefits aimed at supporting these needs: financial support and caring support that addresses caring for adults specifically.

Emerging need for financial support

■ Currently offer ■ Plan to implement in the next two years



Supporting working carers is on the national agenda

Currently, one in five people in the UK are giving unpaid support or care to someone, according to Carers UK. The charity estimates that there are now 10.6 million unpaid carers in the UK.

The Carer's Leave Act, which will come into force from 6 April 2024, gives UK employees the right to take a week of flexible unpaid leave every year to care for a dependant with a long-term care need.

The Act also includes provisions for parents of children in neonatal care and an extension to existing redundancy protections for pregnant women and new parents.

Find out more about the Carer's Leave Act.

Employers must adapt to future workforce needs

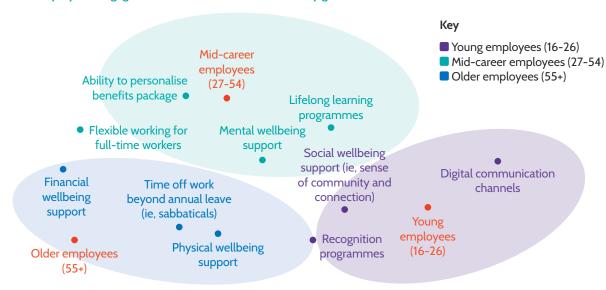
Some employers are leading the way in supporting emerging needs for longer working lives, be it through pension top-ups for parents, or acknowledging the impact that caring responsibilities can have on employees in the workplace.

Analysis by the Office for National Statistics shows that as the UK population gets older (see page 3), an increasing number of workers are providing care towards the end of their own working lives for family members. One in four older female workers and one in eight older male workers have caring responsibilities, highlighting the need to consider the differing needs of this cohort.

However, many employers are still not considering potential future needs. Former pensions minister Sir Steve Webb told REBA's Future of Pensions Summit in 2023 that we can no longer assume that people will have paid off their mortgage and own their home outright by the time they retire, especially now that younger people find it harder to get on the housing ladder than previous generations. This highlights the emerging need for greater financial support.



How employees' engagement with certain benefits shifts by generation



The points on this correspondence graph and their distance from one another represent how strongly related they are in different age groups. For example, 'digital communications channels' are closest to young employees, because more of this age group engage with digital communications channels. But the point 'financial wellbeing support' is further away, because fewer of this age group engage.

Generational splits in benefits engagement

Notwithstanding stereotypes of different generations, this research highlights the risks of a lack of benefits engagement. Reskilling and upskilling are critical as both a retention mechanism and to ensure organisational sustainability. Yet our analysis shows that older employees are less engaged in lifelong learning, while younger people appear less engaged with financial wellbeing support, even though they are at a crucial stage for building good financial habits for the future.

Recognition programmes, which are crucial for supporting engagement, are similarly popular with younger and older members of the workforce. However, those in the middle of their working lives show less interest in recognition, which could hinder employers' ability to engage and ultimately retain talent.



Nick McMenemy Partner and Digital, Strategy and Markets Leader Mercer Marsh **Benefits**

View from Mercer: understanding increasing longevity in the workforce

Employee demographics are continuing to shift, mirroring changes in employee expectations and needs. Here are four questions to consider when assessing reward and benefit practices in the light of longer working lives.

- 1. Review HR policies and procedures. Is there sufficient capacity and flexibility in teams to allow genuine flexible working and the ability to take leave at short notice, for example?
- 2. Is job and team design sustainable to allow for longer working patterns? Can employees work in different ways, or change from manual to non-manual work if necessary?
- 3. Consider what benefits are available to **support carers.** These might range from emergency back-up care and emotional and practical support to help with being a carer to savings vehicles that target the cost of eldercare, or financial advice for retirement planning and access to pension funds.
- 4. Does your workforce have the right **skill set?** Are the right skills in place for the business as it is now, however long an employee has worked at the organisation?





Manesh Patel Senior EMEA Financial Wellbeing Program Manager, Adobe

Case study from Adobe: regenerating skills

We are seeing a momentum shift. Some employees, when they get older, are thinking about changing job roles. Those in sales may be looking at something more consultative. Engineers might be shifting to something research-based. The specialism remains but the type of role becomes focused on sharing that knowledge with others.

As a way of retaining and expanding our skill set, we have a very generous education and learning fund, which allows people to regenerate their roles with different skills in the same or a different environment.

We also map skills and jobs, undertake succession planning and actively promote internal mobility, allowing employees to move into different roles in different parts of the business. Alumni groups are becoming more prevalent, too. Some age groups want to still be maintained in the business but not in a fully working capacity.

Employees are also focused on how the company's values and culture fit their own, rather than just thinking about what the job will give them. Benefits, wellbeing, culture, flexibility and the ability to progress become a real part of whether individuals can find a home at the company or not. Older employees are staying longer now, too, and they don't mind working longer because that balance is there.

We've moved towards a persona-based engagement model of reward. We give information to employees based on situations they are currently in, and what they need to navigate this stage of their career. Because it is now story-based communication, rather than a blanket approach, the reaction has been hugely positive.





About the survey

The survey had 146 responses from employers representing a total of 750,000 employees. It took place online during September and October 2023, and was carried out by the Reward & Employee Benefits Association among its circa 4,500 professional members and circa 20,000 subscribers.

How many UK-based staff does your company have?

1-50 employees7%	1,001-2,500 employees	21%
51-100 employees4%	2,501-5,000 employees	9%
101-250 employees11%	5,001-10,000 employees	9%
251-500 employees7%	10,001-50,000 employees	12%
501-1,000 employees18%	50,000+ employees	1%

What is your organisation's industry sector?

Professional services23%	Pharmaceuticals and biotech4	! %
Financial services14%	Transport and logistics4	! %
Manufacturing and production13%	Engineering and construction3	3%
IT, technology and telecommunications10%	Healthcare3	3%
Retail	Education1	1%
Utilities and energy6%	Media and entertainment	1%
Leisure, travel and hospitality5%	Other (please specify)5	5%

Thank you to our respondents:

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Reward & Employee Benefits Association

What is REBA?

REBA is the only dedicated professional networking community for reward and benefits practitioners. Through sharing experience, ideas, data and insight with each other, we support members in their challenges and triumphs in the reward and benefits sector.

We help members to pursue best practice, increase professionalism in the industry and prepare for upcoming changes. We also lobby government on members' behalf.

What does REBA do?

- Hosts regular conferences and networking events, both face-to-face and virtually through webinars and online platforms
- Produces benchmarking research, insight and data reports on key reward and benefits themes
- Creates and distributes online content, including industry insights into best practice, case studies and thought-leadership
- Curates an industry-wide research library of reports, government consultations and best-practice guides
- Delivers focused content through daily emails and social media channels
- Supports professional members with supplier shortlisting and research
- Offers focused digital networking for professional members through our rebaLINK peer-to-peer forum, where members can also get supplier reviews from their peers.

Contact REBA

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Mercer Marsh Benefits

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