

Healthy retail

Hints and tips for a healthy workforce

**Retail
Order:**
60/60



healthyretail.org

Sales receipt

Welcome more customers.....	££££s
Small change makes a big difference.....	££££s
Map the customer journey.....	££££s
Keep customers loyal.....	££££s
Increase net profit.....	££££s
Doing the right thing.....	££££s
More than just a shop.....	££££s
Total savings:	££££££s



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UKRI Healthy Ageing Challenge



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ILC retail guides

This guidance on **Healthy retail: hints and tips for a healthy workforce** should take approximately **6** minutes to read. It gives you the basics on why it's important to help your staff stay healthy, and how everyone can benefit: customers, workers and retailers.

We've created these guides to help retailers understand how they can respond to an ageing population, and why being inclusive makes commercial sense. Welcoming a wider range of customers and workers opens up new opportunities for businesses.

Everyone's entitled to a healthy, happy and long life - but the ageing process affects us all differently. Retailers have a key role to play in enabling customers and staff to live healthier, more active later lives. Making shopping environments more accessible supports independence, helps us stay fit, and ensures that people who have a health condition, disability or caring responsibility can maintain access to the products and services they want.

This guide suggests ways to minimise the current barriers to work faced by older retail workers, with helpful real-life examples and signposts for further information.

ILC has created these guides to help transform the way the retail sector sees and serves older people. We believe that encouraging inclusive shopping spaces is better for everyone, **no matter our age or ability**.



The facts


Workforces are changing




Across the G20,
1 in 3 workers are aged 50+




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More people are unemployed due to **long-term health conditions** now than for the last 30 years



More than **1 in 7 working adults** are also **carers**

Retail Order: 1237 | 

They're on the front line




850+ retail staff face violence or abuse every day

Retail Order: 1237 | 

The hospitality industry has a job turnover of **30% within a year of starting** (double the national average)



UK businesses could increase profits by **£2,700 per employee per year** by investing 10% more in staff engagement



Volunteers support the economy



Across Europe, **each person volunteers for 124 hours each year** on average

48% of Scottish adults volunteered in 2018, contributing **£5.5 billion** to the Scottish economy



In the UK, **17% (2.5 million)** of those aged 18-34 plan to volunteer in 2023

Retail is changing

- Brexit has changed the way we trade, our imports and exports, our workforce, our transportation costs, and our supply chain
- The COVID-19 pandemic meant many employees left the workforce early and fewer are entering - plus it's led to increased stress, anxiety and burnout
- The cost of living crisis has doubled energy bills and pushed inflation to a 30-year high for people and businesses alike

Why does this matter?

Retail is the second biggest employment sector in the UK after health, with 2,972,300 workers. To allow the retail sector to thrive in an ageing society, employers will need to support workers throughout their lives. Replacing staff is costly, and high turnover makes it harder to keep customers happy. And many charity and attractions rely on older volunteers for support in areas like shops and cafés – for these organisations, taking care of older workers is vital.



“The absurd cost of energy has seen our gas and electricity bills rise by more than 1,000% in each location! Brexit has created a significant shortage of hospitality staff, especially in the kitchen.”

Sign at Wags 'n' Tales, a small chain of independent cafés in Surrey - now permanently closed

Helping workers helps employers



“Your staff are your superpower”

Dame Fiona Kendrick, former chair
and CEO, Nestlé

Replacing staff is costly

Retaining staff should be a priority for retailers. Replacing a worker who earns £25,000 pa costs £30,614 on average – including hiring, onboarding, training and loss of productivity. Customers value seeing the same staff members from day to day, and systems run more smoothly.

Everyone's under pressure

The Retail Trust has recently identified an **'intolerance epidemic'** among customers.

Customer attitudes and behaviours are changing for many reasons: frustration at shops not having enough staff or checkouts (62%), rising prices (62%) and items being out of stock (55%). At the same time they're under pressure themselves: Tower Hamlets' most shoplifted item in 2023 was the children's medicine Calpol. Baby formula is another target - and shops now have security tags not just on steak, but on basics like cheese.

Soaring expectations

Expectations are rising too: customers can now expect groceries on their doorstep within 25 minutes of ordering. Designer clothes can be tissue wrapped, gift packaged and delivered in chic vans within hours. Advances in technology are reducing access to 'real people' on phone lines and in stores, increasing the pressure on those that remain.

Staff need support to manage these new pressures. We need a **kinder, healthier way of working** where workers feel supported to help them stay healthy.

Back for good?

When looking to attract older workers back, it can help to consider why some left the workforce during the COVID pandemic. A Government study found workers aged 60 to 64 more likely to retire altogether, but those aged 50 to 54 gave "stress" and "lack of support" as reasons for leaving, especially in the public sector. 18% of leavers aged 50 to 65 were also on an NHS treatment list – and this figure rose to over a third (35%) for those who quoted "stress", "mental health", "illness" or "disability" as a reason for leaving. Of those who said they'd consider returning to work (58%), the most important factors when choosing a paid job were "flexible working hours", "good pay", and "being able to work from home".

Access to support may be a key factor for retention, as those who never left the workforce were more likely to have access to employer support than those who left.

Don't forget the volunteers

Many charities, as well as museums, galleries and other attractions, rely on volunteers to support their paid staff. As the majority of volunteers tend to be older people, these organisations should prioritise taking care of older workers and making sure their workplaces are inclusive for workers of all ages.

What can you do?



Age-positive employment

Age diversity is good for businesses. Helping more older workers enter and remain in the workforce will be vital to retailers as society ages.

The Centre for Ageing Better's [Age-friendly Employer Pledge](#) has lots of hints and tips to help you recruit and retain employees throughout their lives – including supporting them as they approach retirement.

In 2021 the ILC organised the 'Work for Tomorrow' competition, highlighting organisations that helped staff maintain good physical and mental health, that built knowledge, skills, and competence, and that addressed discrimination, supported diversity and supported flexible workplaces. Last year's winner was [Labora Tech](#), a Brazilian start-up that matches workers of all ages to jobs, and helps them re-skill. Also commended was [Brave Starts](#), which provides a community for older job seekers.

Best practice

B&Q have long realised the worth of a diverse workforce. They've successfully operated without a retirement age for over 15 years. They provide a range of contract types that offer hours to suit all individuals, with flexible working open to everyone, irrespective of age, length of service or caring responsibilities. [This 4-minute video explains why.](#)

Flexible working can be important for staff of all ages and can help them to work for longer. For older workers it can be helpful to avoid talking about retirement as a one-off event, but instead help them think about balancing work and other aspects of life. These might include looking after their health or caring for others.

A 'bridging' job policy can help. Bridging jobs are designed to help older workers transition to retirement, allowing them to mentor other workers and transfer key skills while they work.

Best practice

Age Scotland has created the [Age Inclusive Matrix \(AIM\)](#), a tool to help organisations review how an ageing workforce will affect their operations and to prioritise what actions they should take. Organisations can choose from an initial assessment of their workplace and expert consultation, or a more in-depth programme with 6 to 8 months of guidance and support.





Support for all ages

Helping your staff combine work and care is vital. Whether they're caring for young children, older relatives, or are part of the growing group of 'sandwich' carers doing both, it makes sense to ensure carers can still work. The Carers Leave Act will be introduced in the UK in 2024. You can [get a guide to the Act from Carers UK](#).



Support with life challenges

Helping staff thrive means supporting them with life's challenges while at work.

Best practice

Domestic violence can happen to anyone. 1 in 30 people aged 60-74 were subject to abuse in 2022.

Dunelm Homewares has created a policy to [tackle domestic abuse](#), working in partnership with the Retail Trust, and has joined the Employers' Initiative on Domestic Abuse (EIDA), which provides free resources for employers. The aim was to raise awareness in its workforce and make it easier for employees to speak out.



Healthy business

Different retail environments present different risks to their staff's health and wellbeing. Ensuring a **healthy workforce** means responding to the specific risks associated with your business and taking meaningful action rather than "wellbeing washing".

The term "wellbeing washing" was developed to align with the idea of "greenwashing" – it's used for businesses that talk about their employees' wellbeing in public, rather than really helping them. The [UK's Society of Occupational Medicine](#) has found that 1 in 3 workplaces are doing this, with 7 out of 10 publicly acknowledging mental health awareness days - twice as many as those that provide any support.

It's also important to be aware of jobs that carry additional risks; these include working in security, on building sites, in factories, in customer-facing complaints services, and serving alcohol.

"If you work a 9 to 5 office job, it wouldn't be normal to have a tequila shot three hours into your shift, but in hospitality it somehow is."

Davide Segat, Bar Manager

Supporting your workforce will help build a healthier team. Healthy Hospo is the hospitality industry's leading non-profit digital training programme on health and wellbeing. It covers topics like managing your bills and getting better sleep. [Find more details about the courses](#).



Small gestures can have big impact

There are plenty of small-scale changes you can make too. You can respect your staff and support their dignity by being mindful of the issues people from different age groups may face.



Placing free **period and incontinence products** and hygienic disposal bins in both **men's and women's** toilets is a helpful gesture.

Some companies are beginning to recognise specific life stages like menopause. GenM works with big retailers like Boots, Holland & Barrett and QVC to support workers and customers in menopause. [GenM's mission lays out the benefits to employers, employees and customers.](#)

These guides were written by Ailsa Forbes, Retail Impact Fellow at the ILC.

The Retail Impact project is supported by the [University of Stirling](#) and [UK Research and Innovation \(UKRI\)](#) as part of the UK Government's Healthy Ageing Challenge.

Healthy retail

We've put all the information about this ILC project online. You'll find more details about the information in this guide, along with further advice and the references for all our facts and stats.

It's all at: healthyretail.org

UKRI Healthy Ageing Challenge

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About the ILC

The International Longevity Centre UK (ILC) is the UK's specialist think tank on the impact of longevity on society. The ILC was established in 1997, as one of the founder members of the International Longevity Centre Global Alliance, an international network on longevity.

We have unrivalled expertise in demographic change, ageing and longevity. We use this expertise to highlight the impact of ageing on society, working with experts, policy makers and practitioners to provoke conversations and pioneer solutions for a society where everyone can thrive, regardless of age.



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