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Supporting the employability of adults aged 50+ in the post Covid-19 era

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Abstract for a Workshop (45mins including Q&A)

Supporting the employability of adults aged 50+ in the post Covid-19 era

(Revised 20th December 2021, to reflect justification for emphasis on 50+ age group)

Older adults, aged 50+, are one of the groups bearing the brunt of the labour market crisis precipitated by the Covid-19 pandemic. They have lost their jobs, been furloughed and have experienced pay/hours reductions and increased job insecurity. Some even have altered their retirement plans (Crawford & Karjalainen, 2020). For those who lost their jobs, their future employment and health and wellbeing will be compromised not only in the short/medium-term, but also the long-term (Gallo et al., 2006; Gangl, 2006). Many older adults have returned to study, looking to gain new knowledge and skills to support their employability. Programmes of support and information for people in their 50s and 60s have been proposed, piloted (NIACE) (2013-15) and tested (Beach & Holden, 2020; Eurofound, 2016; Loretto et al., 2017; Watts et al., 2015). They cover key aspects of work including health, skill levels, work–life balance, personal finances, pension entitlement and knowledge management (Eurofound, 2016). These interventions are often costly and inconsistent in-person initiatives to support older adults with contemporary jobseeking and applications (Siegler 2020) and there is a need for age-specific, contemporary employability-focused activity. *Focusing only on the predominantly younger HE student population could overlook the needs of age diverse student groups who should not be overlooked in the creation of support programmes. A narrow definition of employability focusing on employment might exclude those older adults who might wish to return to university study, and the new reasons for this in post-pandemic society. In our workshop, a holistic career guidance approach will be taken which encompasses all life roles, offering practical proposals for employability support interventions for older adults.*

Authors

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Dr Emma Bolger is a Lecturer and Programme Leader for the MSc Career Guidance and Development at the University of the West of Scotland. Emma's research interests are in equality, diversity and inclusion in career decision-making and guidance practice.

Professor Valerie Egdell is Professor of Work and Employment at Newcastle Business School, Northumbria University. Valerie's research interests include age management in the workplace and the labour market transitions of older workers. She is convenor of the Sustainable Working Futures (SWiFt) Research Group at Northumbria University and member of the Executive Committee of the British Society of Gerontology.

Dr Louise Ritchie is Reader in Dementia Research within the Alzheimer Scotland Centre for Policy and Practice in the School of Health and Life Sciences at the University of the West of Scotland. Louise's background is in psychology and her research interests include experiences of dementia in the workplace. Louise is currently a member of the Executive Committee of the Scottish Dementia Research Committee.