



Acas Age Audit Tool

A guide on how to use it

Acas Age Audit Toolkit **Employers/Users' Guidance**

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Acas Age Audit Toolkit

Employers/Users' Guidance

What is the Age Audit Toolkit?

The Age Audit Toolkit is a free interactive diagnostic tool to help an organisation explore whether there are any age related issues within the workplace. Also, it can be used to indicate whether the organisation is compliant with the Equality Act 2010. This can help minimise the risk of any Employment Tribunal claims. The toolkit can be used to help maintain an age-diverse workforce and help address any age-related issues within your business.

The tool has been developed in partnership with Coventry University, it is anticipated that at some point the tool will also be used to develop a benchmarking system to allow employers to compare their results with others in their industry. There are no hidden charges with the toolkit and Acas will not contact you unless you are happy for us to do so.

Why should it be used in a business?

➤ The abolition of the Default Retirement Age means employees are now able to work on for as long as they wish. From a business point of view this can be hugely beneficial as you do not have to lose your employees as soon as they reach a certain age. The tool can be used to ensure that all employees feel they can stay on after 65 and still receive the same opportunities to progress and develop. The working population is also getting older and a recently published report by DWP¹ stated that the number of people aged over 65 living in England will increase by 50% by 2030. The tool can be used to help identify talent and succession issues to ensure an organisation is still able to be productive.

➤ The Equality Act 2010 gives individuals protection from being discriminated against because of their age. The Age Audit Tool can help ensure that nobody is at a disadvantage because of their age by highlighting any perceptions or behaviours which could be considered to be unlawful.

➤ The Age Audit Tool can help protect your business' reputation by showing that you have taken reasonable steps to prevent discrimination against employees should it occur. The tool can also be used as a way of evidence gathering to demonstrate how your business actively deals with potential age-related issues. For example, it can be used as evidence to contribute to receiving an Investors in People accreditation.

➤ Having an age diverse workforce can be hugely beneficial to businesses; a recent study completed by the CIPD² found that 55% of respondents felt age diversity was good for knowledge sharing within the business which can also help with succession planning. Failure to plan could mean that the organisation suffers a loss of skills and knowledge when a long-standing employee decides to leave. Our tool can be used to highlight areas where succession planning may need to be considered in the future to avoid losing extensive knowledge.

The combination of these factors makes it likely that each organisation will have to deal with age related issues at some point. It is, therefore, important that even if you do not feel that there are currently any age related issues in your workplace, it is better to be prepared for if/when any arise. It also sends a positive message to your employees that you take age seriously.

¹Fuller Working Lives- A Framework for Action, Department of Work and Pensions, 2014

²Managing an Age Diverse Workforce- Employer and employees views, CIPD, 2014

Getting Started

Introducing the toolkit to your workforce

The tool can be used to get an in-depth look at age-related issues in the business or it can be used as a quick indicator to assess if there are any potential risks. However you decide to use the tool, an important way of ensuring that you get the most out of the software, is to come up with a plan for project managing the audit. Also, by developing a detailed plan, you can be sure that the tool has less of an impact on the daily running of the business. For further guidance on planning your audit see Annexe 1.

Once you have planned how to use the tool, you may want to consider taking steps to get a level of commitment from those at the top of the organisation. This may include the board of directors, a senior management team or any relevant committees. By planning in advance how you are proposing to carry out the audit, you will be able to put forward a stronger case that will help get them on board. The implementation of the tool may take up time and resources and so it would be beneficial to gain their support which in turn would make the implementation of the toolkit easier.

Once you have been given backing by the key figures it is important to start clearly communicating with your employees. It would be useful if all managers and supervisors are well-briefed and fully informed about the software to allow them to answer any of the employees' issues and concerns. The employees should be given enough information so that they not only understand what the tool is but also are able to appreciate what the potential benefits are for them. It may be worth giving the employees an opportunity to ask any specific questions they have. Allowing them to do so will help alleviate any anxieties they may have.

There are a variety of different methods that can be used to communicate information about the software with employees.

- **Written:** Departmental bulletins, notice boards, intranet and email.
- **Verbal:** Team meetings, large-scale meetings, one-to-ones and cascade networks.

Also carefully consider whether the information is being communicated to all appropriate employees, ensuring no member of staff is missed out, such as field-based staff, homeworkers, part-time/term-time workers and those absent from work (due to sickness, annual leave or maternity leave etc.)

Launching the tool - answering questions from employees

As mentioned previously, it is likely that your employees may have some reservations about filling out the tool which is why good communication is important to put their minds at ease. Below are a few answers to questions that your employees may have.

Q. Can I get into trouble for my answers?

A. Employees are likely to be concerned about the confidentiality of their answers. It would be worth emphasising to your staff that all answers are completely anonymised and it is not possible to search individual inputs into the tool and, therefore, it is very unlikely that their answers will be traced back to them. The key thing to make employees aware of is that they may inadvertently allow themselves to be identified if they make very specific comments in the narrative text boxes. However, in order for the tool to be effective, it is important that they give honest answers and mention any concerns they have in relation to age in the workplace.

Q. How will I find the time to answer the questions?

A. Answering the questions should take approximately 10 minutes. To encourage staff to fill out the survey, it would be useful if you are able to arrange allocated time away from their normal duties to answer the questions. Alternatively, the tool can be accessed via smartphones and tablet devices allowing employees to fill it out whilst on the go or even at home.

Q. I am not very good with forms or writing, will I find the questions difficult?

A. A good thing about the Age Audit Tool is its accessibility to all so even those who are less confident, will still be able to answer the questions with ease. The majority of questions are multiple choice and very often there is an option to select if the employee is not sure of their answer. This allows the employee to withhold their opinion if they wish.

You may also want to consider if it would be appropriate to make any reasonable adjustments for particular members of staff.

Q. I don't have access to a computer at work, how will I fill the tool out?

A. The software has been specially adapted so that the tool can be filled out using any android or iPhone device. The staff member can fill out the form from their home computer if they wish to, as long as they know the hyperlink they are able to do so. Alternatively if you wanted to carry out a paper based survey please contact Coventry University as they can assist you to do so.

Involving employee representatives

Now that you've decided to use the tool, the next step to consider is whether to engage with any employee representatives or recognised Trade Unions. By successfully gaining support from employee representatives, it is likely to increase the amount of employee engagement and have a beneficial impact when trying to encourage staff to fill out the surveys. If your organisation does not recognise a Trade Union, you may want to consider giving employees the opportunity to elect representatives.

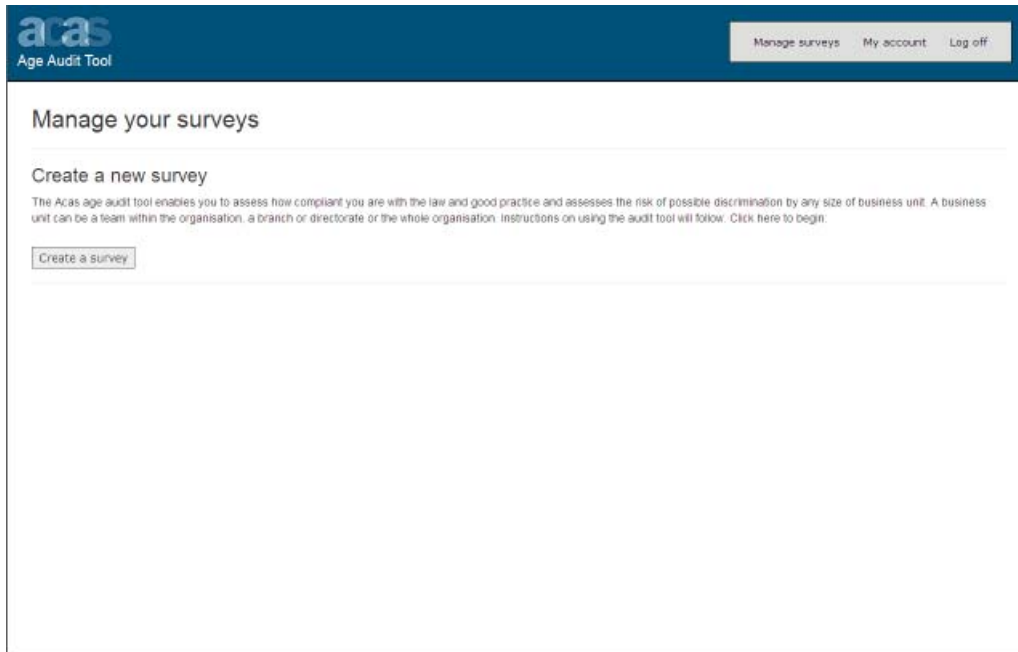
A crucial part of engaging with any representatives is ensuring that communication is clear and concise. Lack of communication can lead to misunderstandings and the loss of trust and confidence.

For further guidance on consultation see our 'Employee Communications and Consultation' advisory booklet or call the Acas helpline.

Opening, using and closing the Age Audit Tool

Manage your survey

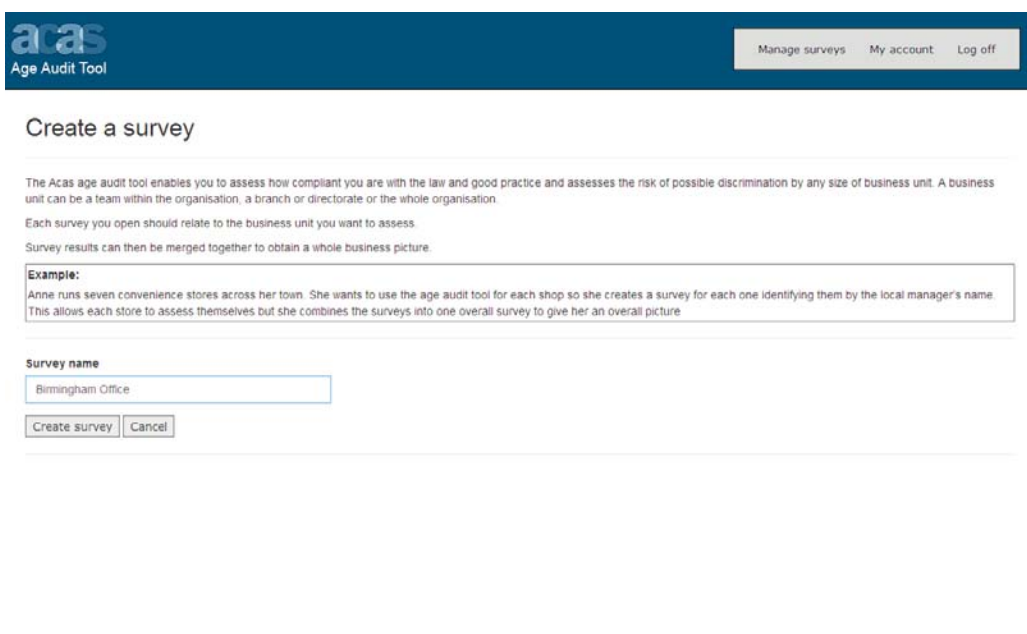
To use the tool you will need to register and set up an account with us, your details will not be passed on and we will not make contact with you unless you authorise us to do so. Once you have registered and logged-in you will be taken to our open page, click Create Survey to begin.



The screenshot shows the 'Manage your surveys' page of the Acas Age Audit Tool. At the top, there is a dark blue header with the 'acas' logo and 'Age Audit Tool' text on the left, and navigation links 'Manage surveys', 'My account', and 'Log off' on the right. Below the header, the page title 'Manage your surveys' is displayed. Underneath, there is a section titled 'Create a new survey' with a brief description of the tool's purpose. A 'Create a survey' button is visible at the bottom of this section.

Creating and naming your survey

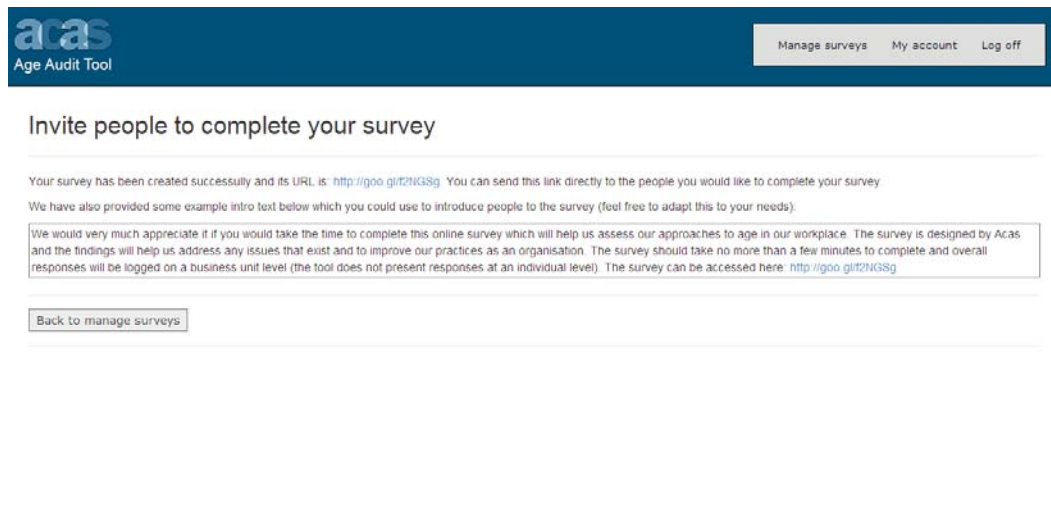
In order to manage your data with ease, you may find it useful to create a number of different surveys for each of your business units, departments or teams and name them accordingly. Please be aware that staff will be able to see what you have named the survey, so you may want to check it has been named appropriately. After the data has been collected you will be able to combine all the results to establish an overall picture of the business.



The screenshot shows the 'Create a survey' page of the Acas Age Audit Tool. It features the same header as the previous page. The main content area is titled 'Create a survey' and includes a detailed description of the tool. Below the description, there is an 'Example' section that provides a scenario for creating a survey. At the bottom, there is a 'Survey name' label followed by a text input field containing 'Birmingham Office'. Below the input field are 'Create survey' and 'Cancel' buttons.

Invite staff to complete your survey

Next, you will be provided with a hyperlink which relates to the survey you previously named. You can then send the hyperlink out to your staff via email or give them a note of it. In the text box is an example of how you may want to introduce the survey to your workforce. If you then wish to create other surveys for different areas of the business click on “Back to manage surveys” and carry out the process again.



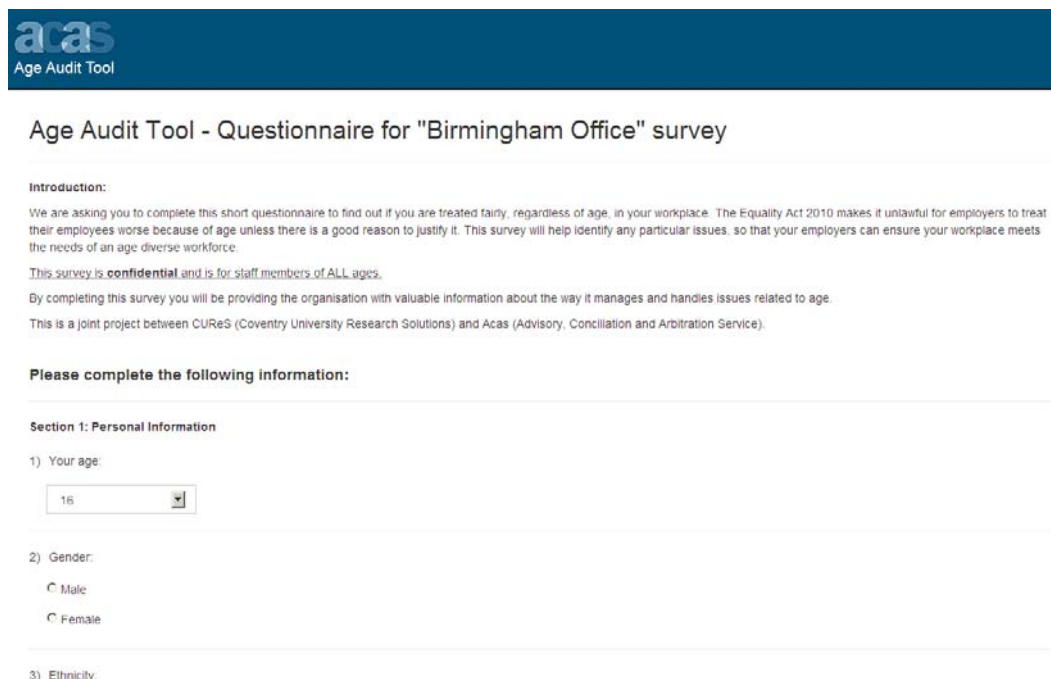
The screenshot shows the 'Invite people to complete your survey' page. At the top, there's a blue header with the 'acas Age Audit Tool' logo on the left and navigation links 'Manage surveys', 'My account', and 'Log off' on the right. The main heading is 'Invite people to complete your survey'. Below it, a message states: 'Your survey has been created successfully and its URL is: <http://goo.gl/t2HG38g>. You can send this link directly to the people you would like to complete your survey. We have also provided some example intro text below which you could use to introduce people to the survey (feel free to adapt this to your needs):'

An example text box is provided with the following content: 'We would very much appreciate it if you would take the time to complete this online survey which will help us assess our approaches to age in our workplace. The survey is designed by Acas and the findings will help us address any issues that exist and to improve our practices as an organisation. The survey should take no more than a few minutes to complete and overall responses will be logged on a business unit level (the tool does not present responses at an individual level). The survey can be accessed here: <http://goo.gl/t2HG38g>'

At the bottom, there is a button labeled 'Back to manage surveys'.

The survey

Once your staff have clicked on the link they will be taken to the survey and will be able to begin filling it out.




The screenshot shows the 'Age Audit Tool - Questionnaire for "Birmingham Office" survey'. The header is blue with the 'acas Age Audit Tool' logo. The title is 'Age Audit Tool - Questionnaire for "Birmingham Office" survey'. Below the title, there is an 'Introduction:' section. The text reads: 'We are asking you to complete this short questionnaire to find out if you are treated fairly, regardless of age, in your workplace. The Equality Act 2010 makes it unlawful for employers to treat their employees worse because of age unless there is a good reason to justify it. This survey will help identify any particular issues, so that your employers can ensure your workplace meets the needs of an age diverse workforce. This survey is confidential and is for staff members of ALL ages. By completing this survey you will be providing the organisation with valuable information about the way it manages and handles issues related to age. This is a joint project between CUREs (Coventry University Research Solutions) and Acas (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service).'

Below the introduction, it says 'Please complete the following information:'. The first section is 'Section 1: Personal Information'. It contains three questions:

- 1) Your age: A dropdown menu showing '16'.
- 2) Gender: Two radio buttons, 'Male' and 'Female'.
- 3) Ethnicity: A text input field.

Running the survey

As the survey is filled out by your staff you will be able to see the number of responses you have received from the “Manage your Surveys” page.


Age Audit Tool

Manage surveysMy accountLog off

Manage your surveys

Existing surveys


Survey name	Invitation link	Number of responses	Close / Results
Birmingham Office	Invitation link	2	Close survey
Manchester Office	Invitation link	1	Close survey
Newcastle Office	Invitation link	3	Close survey

Create a new survey

Create a survey

Closing your survey

In order to be able to begin analysing the results you need to close your survey. At this point it is worth reviewing whether there are any additional staff members who you wish to include in the audit, as it is not too late to add them in. Be aware that once you have closed the survey it is not possible to add in any more responses from employees. Finally before you close it, you may want to give employees one last opportunity to fill out the survey to ensure that you receive as many responses as possible.


Age Audit Tool

Manage surveysMy accountLog off

Close survey

When you have received enough responses to the age audit tool, you should close the survey. It will be your decision at what point this occurs however the more responses to receive the more accurate the survey findings will be.

If you are considering closing the survey and still have numbers of employees who have not responded, you should consider encouraging them to take part. It might be a simple discussion at a team meeting to address concerns over confidentiality or to what purpose the information will be used. It is good practice to encourage employees to complete the survey although it would be counter productive to compel employees to complete the survey.

Once you have closed the survey, you cannot reopen it.


Are you sure you want to close "Newcastle Office"?

YesNo

Understanding your results and moving forward

Once you have closed your survey you can either look at the results individually, or you can merge your results to get an overall picture of the organisation. This page will give you an indication through our scoring system of how compliant you may be with the Equality Act. This page will also give you a run down of your businesses score in each of the different sections.

At the bottom of this page are some links you may find useful in terms of moving forward. You can contact us for further advice or help, or you can read up on our relevant guidance.



Age Audit Tool

Manage survey My account Log off

Your scores

Guide to scores

This guidance is intended to help you understand section/team or organisational feedback. The guidance below refers to the section/team or organisation you have surveyed. If you've distributed the questionnaire across different sections/teams you can also use the guidance to analyse and compare each section/team to see if there are any 'hot spots' in your organisation that need urgent attention.

The main aim of the survey is to raise awareness of age discrimination in the workplace, your organisations compliance with the Equality Act 2010 and the removal of the Default Retirement Age in October 2011.

It is important to look closely at what the scores from the responses mean, and then read the guidance we have provided closely. This will help you to reflect on practices, procedures and attitudes in your workplace.

We would recommend that you discuss and share results within your organisation to help effect positive change.

The information and guidance here is designed to be practical and easy to use. We hope that you find the information helpful and that it encourages you and your colleagues to find out more about the subject to help create a better working environment for all.

Score boundaries

The scoring zone boundaries are as follows:

Take Credit

 - for scores less than 25%

Take Care

 - for scores between 25% and 75%

Take Action

 - for scores higher than 75%

Your overall score

From 7 completions your overall score is 5.16%

GREEN ZONE – TAKE CREDIT

High scores in the **Take Credit** zone indicate an environment where there is a good attitude and approach to age issues; however it is important not to become complacent. Age is a complex area and can be a source of conflict between co-workers. If you have formal procedures in place such as a policy statement, then you've made a really good start. If you have good supportive equal opportunities policies and these are well known and are backed up by regular training that is a positive sign. Consider the areas in the survey where you have done particularly well and see how these areas of good practice can be communicated to the other areas.

You can find out more by looking at the [Age Employment Network](#) website and the [Employers Forum on Age](#). It may be that your organisation could be even better by picking up some ideas from other organisations.

Section scores

Your score for Section 2, 'General' is:

Your score for this section could not be calculated as there were too many zero responses (i.e. 'Don't know'). Please review the text answers section for more information.

Your score for Section 3, 'Perceptions, Attitude and Experience' is:

Take Credit 5.95%

Your score for Section 4, 'Training and Development' is:

Your score for this section could not be calculated as there were too many zero responses (i.e. 'Don't know'). Please review the text answers section for more information.

Your score for Section 5, 'Promotion and Career Progression' is:

Take Credit 5.10%

Your score for Section 6, 'Internal Communication and Documentation' is:

Take Credit 4.76%

An employers/users' guide

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Interpreting your results

Based on the responses the software receives from your employees, your result will be put in to one of three categories. These are as follows:

➔ **TAKE ACTION** - This score indicates that it is quite likely there may be some age-related issues within your workplace. This could signify that you may have discriminatory policies, behaviours or perceptions held within the organisation.

➔ **TAKE CARE** - This score indicates that you may already have practices within the workplace that actively work to support an age-diverse workforce. However this score also highlights there are still some age-related perceptions or policies which could be considered to be discriminatory.

➔ **TAKE CREDIT** - This score indicates that there does not appear to be any age-related issues within the organisation. It appears the business has the necessary policies and procedures to support an age diverse workforce.

Be aware that age management is a work in progress; it may be that when you first carry out the audit you receive a range of indicators from “Take Action” to “Take Credit”. This is to be expected as age can be a complex issue for employers, however, by regularly reviewing and revisiting the audit the results should improve over time with the indicators all moving into the green. For more detailed information on your results please refer to the guidance on the software itself.

Considering your next steps

Once you have received your results and found out which category they fit in to, the next thing to review is what changes or what steps you think are appropriate to take to avoid any further age-related issues. If your results have highlighted particular hotspots within the organisation you may want to consider whether to undertake further investigation into the reasons for these particular hotspots. It could be beneficial to discuss your results with the employee representatives as they may be able to shed some light on the reasons for some of the results. You may want to present your findings to the key figures at the top level of the business; this allows them to get a clear illustration of any age-related issues in the business and provides an opportunity for them to make suggestions on how best to deal with any issues arising.

When you are deliberating the best ways to move forward it can be useful to use different problem-solving techniques to help consider ways of dealing with the different issues such as SWOT analysis, brain-storming and cause and effect analysis. Once you have created a plan of how best to improve policies or behaviours within your organisation you can then develop an action plan using SMART objectives to ensure that these changes are effective.

You also have the option of revisiting the tool within a timeframe, for example 6 months or 1 year. This allows you to assess the situation within your organisation and consider if your changes have been effective or if you need to make further alterations. For further guidance please refer to our advisory guide on “How To Manage Change”. Sharing results with staff.

Sharing results with staff

In order for any changes within your organisation to be successful, it is important to get employees engaged with what you are trying to achieve. It is crucial that they understand what you want to change and why.

To get them on board it would be worthwhile sharing your results from the tool and explaining possible risks or disadvantages to the business if certain policies or behaviours continue unchanged.

This can either be done by showing them the results you received or you could write a report giving an overview of the issues and points the tool raised and how you are considering resolving them.

If you think it would be appropriate to change policies or practices due to your results, it may be beneficial to consult with your employee representatives to get feedback and decide the best way to initiate the changes.

How data is used in terms of benchmarking

As the tool has been developed in partnership with Coventry University's Research Solutions team, it is perceived that eventually the toolkit will also be able to be used as a benchmarking tool. This will allow organisations to compare their own results with averages from other businesses in the same sector or industry. All of your organisation's details will be kept completely confidential and it will only be the data that gets passed on.

Assistance from Acas

Acas offers a variety of services which you may find helpful to use for further information or guidance on dealing with age-related issues.

Guidance

Some of our guidance may be useful to help you implement the tool. See below:

- Employee Communications and Consultation
- Communicating with your Employees
- How to Manage Change
- Asking and Responding to questions of Discrimination in the Workplace
- Age and the Workplace

Training

For further information on our courses please go to our website **www.acas.org.uk**. We also have Acas Senior Advisers and, if appropriate one of our highly-trained advisers may be able to give you further guidance on how to deal with age-related issues or how best to implement the tool.

Customer Services Team

For any further information on what services we offer, contact the Acas Customer Services Team on 0300 123 1150.

Acas Helpline

For advice and guidance around workplace issues, please call our helpline on 0300 123 1100.

Annexe 1. Project Managing the Age Audit Toolkit

