

Friday, 27 July 2012

Press release

### North East company aims to age-proof the workplace

A new national standard to help employers manage the challenges and unlock the potential of their ageing workforce has been developed in the North East.

The Age Inclusive Standards will be launched this autumn to help employers assess their age-related employment practices and policies, along with an award to recognise their achievement on reaching the Standards.

Age Inclusive Ltd was established with support from Newcastle Science City and Newcastle University's Changing Age for Business initiative after its founding members – experts in HR, training, development and coaching – recognised the challenges facing employers as workforces grow older and the employment landscape changes.

Age Inclusive director Cynthia Bartley said: "The ageing workforce is a huge challenge and opportunity for employers and employees, even if they don't know it yet. The abolition of the default retirement age last October, the need to fill an estimated 13.5million job vacancies<sup>1</sup> over the next 10 years, and the financial need for many of us to work longer means employers have to manage their older workers in new ways.

"Organisations are undergoing huge cultural changes and shifts in attitudes to all kinds of issues, such as flexible working practices. These are very interesting and challenging times from an HR perspective because the approach to managing a Baby Boomer compared to someone from Generation Y often needs to be completely different.

"Age Inclusive has been set up to help employers manage, in a positive way, the changed expectations of their older workers. The Standards allows employers to look at their workforce through the lens of the age demographic and to put policies in place to make improvements which really benefit the bottom line."

By signing up to the Standards, Age Inclusive anticipates that employers will benefit from improved retention and recruitment, improved morale and the culture of the organisation, and improved productivity and absence rates by ensuring the right person is in the right job at the right time of their career.

Signing up to the Standards involves an assessment to identify age-related challenges facing the organisation, followed by an action plan to tackle the issues and an assessment against one of the three levels of the Age Inclusive Award and becoming an Age Inclusive Employer.

The company recently moved into the new business facility at Newcastle University's Campus for Ageing and Vitality – an opportunity only afforded to businesses specialising in age-related products and services, who want to work closely with the university. The university's work at the forefront of research into age and ageing will help the company develop and Age Inclusive's work will inform future work by the university.

Matt Hindhaugh, business mentor at Newcastle Science City, said: "There are suppliers out there that provide some age-related services for businesses but these are very fragmented.

"By bringing together multi-disciplinary professionals to create Age Inclusive, we have created a complete solution to ensure businesses get the best from their staff and employ positive, productive workforces."

Filtrona Filter Products, a cigarette filter company which employs 190 people at its factory and R&D centre in Jarrow, is one of the pilot firms working with Age Inclusive.



#### Photo caption

**Protecting expert knowledge for the next generation: Filtrona machine technician Bobby MacIntyre demonstrates his skill to (left to right) Matt Hindhaugh, Newcastle Science City business mentor, Simon Thomas, Filtrona Filters HR manager, and Cynthia Bartley, Age Inclusive director.**

Simon Thomas, HR manager at Filtrona, said: “Our company has been established for 50 years and it is our depth of knowledge that gives us our competitive edge – so much so that we lend out our employees to other factories when they need advice.

“With the average age of our team being 40, we are acutely aware that we need to protect this expertise and future-proof the company by passing it on to the next generation.

“Age Inclusive’s new award provides a robust way for us to measure ourselves on the way we handle age-related employment policies and then highlights how we can manage any issues identified. It’s come along at just the right time for us because this is so high on our agenda and I imagine it is for most companies.”

Newcastle University’s Changing Age for Business project will benefit from £2.1 million of European Union investment from the ERDF Competitiveness Programme 2007-13, managed by the Department for Communities and Local Government. The ERDF Programme is bringing over £300m into the North East to support innovation, enterprise and business support across the region.

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<sup>1</sup>Figures provided by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD).

### About Newcastle Science City

Newcastle Science City is funded by Newcastle University and Newcastle City Council and to help the region realise the full economic potential of its science-based industries.

It delivers a range of activities including the development of a close-knit scientific community and encouraging more people to work in scientific industries. Key to its remit is creating innovative high-growth businesses.

### Newcastle Science City key achievements

- Created 23 companies that are now trading in the North East of England
- Worked with 446 regional companies to commercialise new insight-led ideas, helping them to innovate and grow
- Promoted Newcastle as a city of science on a regional, national and international level
- Reached over 6,000 schoolchildren across the city with the Science Education Innovation Partnership (SEIP) programme, which aims to make science more fun, engaging and relevant to students and offers support to teachers
- Reached 1,373 residents with its community engagement programme of events and activities designed to enable people to use science to help drive change in their communities. It has also assisted 142 residents with skills and personal development and has assisted 72 people with their efforts to get a job.

