

OLDER, WISER, STILL WORKING

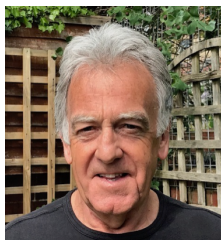
A new look at working in later life and managing your transition into and through retirement

This programme has been produced by Work & Learning Opportunities, a not-for-profit community interest company formed in 2010, with funding from the National Lottery Community Fund.

Retirement is no longer a fixed point when people simply stop working. Demographic change means that, despite the Covid-19 crisis, older people make up a large proportion of the workforce and they do have skills that employers need. This can be a time of positive transition when you could:

- Change direction and try something new, full-time or part-time
- Reduce your commitment in your present job
- Combine paid and voluntary work
- Consider self-employment

About us



Chris Baker – chrisbaker@workandlearning.co.uk – 07572 077340

Chris has been a director of WLO for five years. He is committed to the idea of lifelong learning which has been his primary motive for co-developing our programmes to enable older people to think differently about their lives. He has over 35 years' experience in higher education with a particular focus on adult learning.

Five years' ago he retired from full-time work at Brighton University where he was the Director of Economic and Social Engagement involved in developing ways to enable a deeper engagement with external communities at a local, national and international level. His in-depth knowledge of open and distance learning comes from working at The Open University for twenty years, latterly as the Director of Widening Participation. He continues to deliver programmes in entrepreneurial leadership for universities.

Chris is based in Hove, Sussex, where he combines his work as a Director of Work & Learning Opportunities with voluntary work, making time for exercise, learning new things and spending time with his family that now includes 7 grandchildren



Maureen Haywood – maureenhaywood@workandlearning.co.uk – 07771 623973

Maureen is a founder director of Work & Learning Opportunities which was formed in 2010 after her retirement from full-time work at the University of Brighton where she had focused on lifelong learning and advice and guidance for both young people and adults.

As well as many years' experience as a College and University Lecturer, she has specialised in supporting people in their work, career and education decisions. Having worked for The Open University she has designed learning materials and delivered advice and support in different ways, both face-to-face and at a distance. Since creating Work & Learning Opportunities, Maureen has added to her knowledge by developing strategies that enable people to develop their employability skills as they move between education and employment throughout their working lives.

Maureen combines being a Director of WLO with voluntary work in her local community, indulging her interest in Art History, covering up her grey hairs, and spending time with her extended family and grandchildren.

WELCOME TO OLDER, WISER, STILL WORKING

Introduction

Welcome to this unique new programme which has been created to support people who already have many years of work experience under their belts. It's been specifically designed with you in mind if you're:

- retired but now want to consider working or returning to work.
- approaching retirement and leaving mainstream work but want to do something different in the future.
- an older worker who has been displaced as a result of organisations downsizing or closing altogether.
- experiencing limited options in your area of work because Covid-19 has badly affected your sector and you want to try something different
- doing a job that is simply too physically demanding for you to do until state pension age.

We'll support your aspirations for work that is paid, voluntary, part time, fulltime, self-employment or any combination of these, including a complete change of direction.


In these six modules we will cover the steps you need to take to plan, prepare and practise the skills and approach you will need to successfully obtain work. We expect you to finish the programme with a clear idea of your personal needs, a plan of action and a toolkit of information, skills and ideas. As well as one to one coaching support from us, you'll have the opportunity to gain a new set of contacts and friends as a result of on-line contact with other members of the group.

How does the programme work?

You may be part of a face-to-face group where you will get the benefit of discussing your ideas with others in a similar situation. Alternatively, you may have opted to follow the programme on your own with additional support provided on a 1 to 1 basis. This has the benefit of being more flexible and allowing you to set the pace.

How long will it take?

- The programme has been planned to run for **6 weeks. However, depending on your circumstances, you may take less or more time to complete it. It's not a race.**
- We've assumed that working through these materials over the 6 weeks will take you **15 to 20 hours** in total – so that's **around 3 hours a week.** This is just a guide though. It'll depend on your experience and aspirations so some modules will take longer than others.

- It's planned around a mixture of **activities** that you can complete either with others or by yourself.
- These activities are identified by the symbol . You'll benefit from doing them as they're your chance to think about important issues that impact on what you prioritise for your future.

One critical difference between you and younger people working through a programme of learning can be captured in a simple phrase, "life experience". That experience will be invaluable. Everything you have done to date is relevant and can be put to use in this programme.

What materials/equipment are needed?

Essential

- These programme materials – in hard copy or as an electronic version. If you have them in hard copy you can make notes in the booklet but you'll probably also find a notebook useful. If you have an electronic version it's easier to follow the hyperlinks that are included.
- Access to the internet – it's the best place to find up to date information and is essential if you want to search and apply for jobs and access the websites we've included. We'll also ask you to send us some activities via email.

Optional

- We can email you a Word document containing all the activities so that you can word process them if you want to.

We've said above that from time to time we'll ask you to send us some notes so that we can help you with the next stage of your work quest. For example, we'll need to know about your past employment to help you with your future plans. It should be stressed that **everything you send to us will be treated in the strictest confidence and we'll only keep it as long as you are working on our programme.**

So how do I get started?

Please get started as soon as you receive the materials. By then you will have received a welcome phone call/email from one of us. Either Chris or Maureen will contact you. (Our contact details are on page 2.) When you've completed everything, these materials, together with any notes you've made, will provide a useful reference point for the future.

Good luck – we hope you enjoy your time with us.

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- MODULE 3 Finding and applying for new opportunities
- MODULE 4 Successful interviews
- MODULE 5 Creating new opportunities
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MODULE ONE - THE NATURE OF WORK

On completion of this module you'll have:

- explored the value and benefits of working later in life for yourself, potential employers and society at large.
- identified any barriers that you might face when looking for work.
- shared your experience of work with us.
- decided what you want to get out of the programme.
- undertaken a quick audit of your use of digital technology.

1.1 Why is work important to you?

It may seem strange to pose this question to an audience who probably see themselves near the end of their working lives. If you're considering the option of continuing work in some form or other you need to address this question. For some of us the experience of work has not always been pleasant, fulfilling or rewarding. Indeed, we may want to put it well behind us. But even negative experiences can help us realise what we value most.

Here is the first example drawn from the Internet. It is clearly American and written as a blog that's intended to provoke a response.

<http://matragland.com/the-value-of-work>

The second example is closer to home, so now read this research report from the Centre for Ageing Better.

<https://www.ageing-better.org.uk/sites/default/files/2017-12/What-do-older-workers-value.pdf>

Apart from the obvious connection between employment and income, 'work' comes in many shapes and sizes and it can be paid, voluntary, full-time, part-time, seasonal, done at home or in a specific work environment, day or night. It can provide a basis for friendships, a sense of identity and the personal fulfilment of a job well done. It can involve constant creativity or a regular routine and be a source of personal satisfaction or dis-satisfaction and frustration, depending on its nature and the working environment. What the Covid-19 crisis has shown is that some jobs have to be done on the front line in the workplace. Other jobs can be adapted and completed at home, raising questions about the importance of contact with others both in terms of aiding creativity and teamwork and providing social contact.



Activity 1

WHAT DO YOU VALUE ABOUT WORK? Now you've read the blog and research report above, make a list of five benefits of continuing to work in later life that are relevant to you. (Use the Activity Book in Word or your notebook if you prefer and need more space.)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

We had a go at this activity ourselves and here's our list:

1. Keeps us connected with people.
2. Enables us to work flexibly and have other interests.
3. We get feedback from others that we need and value.
4. We feel the work we do is helpful to others.
5. We work in a very different way now when compared to what we've done in the past 45 years.

We're sure that our list would have been different had we still been in our 40s and raising a family. For us, now is the happiest part of our working lives. It could also be yours. Our current pattern of work is part-time and a mix of paid and voluntary. That leaves enough time for friends and family but also for exercise and hobbies because they're important for our physical and mental health and part of having happy and fulfilling lives as we get older.

This week's focus is mainly on **paid work**. In the Introduction above we touched on future projections for the age of the working population. Changes to the retirement age have pushed up the age of the working population and the number of people doing paid work beyond state pension age (often to supplement small personal pensions) has increased.

Paid employment right now has to be viewed in the current Covid-19 context which shows that as early as March/April 2020 the number of job vacancies had started to decrease (by 42% according to the Institute for Employment Studies) and unemployment is rising as the year progresses. Remember many people were on the furlough scheme at this stage. We're therefore going to start by addressing head on what you might see as barriers to work so that we can address the best ways to overcome them as we progress. We can then focus on what you do bring to the table rather than what you don't.

1.2 Barriers to work

In 2020 many of our lives were changed by the pandemic. We don't know whether these changes will be temporary or signal a longer lasting change to which we all have to adapt. One obvious impact is on jobs and employment. As yet we don't know what will happen to the economy. This, on the surface, can make life more challenging particularly for older workers. The latest report from the Centre for Ageing Better published in early July 2020 is entitled Back on Track.

<https://www.ageing-better.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-07/back-on-track.pdf>

It looks at the impact of COVID-19 on the employment of older workers.

“As of April, 2020 there were 3.27 million people aged 50-64 out of work in the UK, of which 251,000 were ‘unemployed’ – meaning that they were actively seeking work (ONS 2020, a). These figures only take into account the very start of the COVID-19 lockdown and will now be substantially higher. In the period between March and May 2020 – when COVID-19 and the lockdown took hold – the number of people aged 50 and over in the UK claiming benefits more than doubled.” (ONS 2020, b)

To put this in the local context, the number of people seeking work and on Universal Credit (UC) in Brighton and Hove increased by 158% between January and August 2020. For the over 50s the number seeking work and on UC increased from 1143 to 2621 or by 129%.

This research shows there is a need to address complex and inter-related barriers for this cohort of over 50s, which include but are not limited to the following:

- A **lack of confidence** both in their own ability and their perceived employability.
- **Changes to the way that jobseekers are expected to find and apply for jobs**, which require new skills – for which training is rarely provided.
- **Unsuitable training** that fails to consider and utilise an individual's experiences and existing skills.
- **Underdeveloped digital skills** that are commonly needed to complete work-based tasks – these are often particularly necessary for office-based roles.
- Lack of access to **flexible working**.


Reports like this tend to generalise and treat all older workers as basically the same when clearly we are not. None of you undertaking this programme will have an identical work experience or have the same skills, so some of the barriers referenced in the report may not be applicable.

You'll have your own experience of work as well as a particular set of skills that you've used at work. You'll also have a range of skills that you've used in your personal life but haven't necessarily used in the workplace. You might be thinking that your aspirations are all very

fine and good but surely, with high unemployment, employers will automatically be favouring younger people? Employers appreciate workers who are:

| | | |
|------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| Punctual | Committed | Focused |
| Loyal | Approachable | Dependable |
| Experienced | Committed | Well organised |
| Have an eye for detail | Good communicators | Positive role models |
| Good problem solvers | ... and so on | |

We think some of these attributes might actually be a more difficult fit for younger workers. It's not helpful if all members of a work team are ultra-ambitious and looking for frequent job changes as they seek promotion and higher salaries. There's a lot to be said for being a dependable, committed and positive role model. (Later in the programme, we'll talk about voluntary work, that army of volunteers, often mature, that is so essential to everyday life. For example, school governors, charity trustees, parish councillors, charity shop workers, people running food banks, fundraisers, National Trust guides, museum workers, political campaigners – the list is endless as is the variety of high-level skills that they use.)



Activity 2

WHAT BARRIERS TO WORK DO I FACE?

Think about your own situation and list the barriers you think face you personally in continuing to work. Make your list in order of priority with the most difficult barrier first. (Don't forget, you can use the Activities Book, your notebook or write here.)

There aren't any right or wrong answers to the above activity and we'd like you to come back to your notes later on in the programme to see how far the barriers you've identified can be overcome.

We'll discuss your work background in our 1:1 meeting by phone or video call, so **Activity 3** is designed as preparation for that. Please write a summary of your work experience to date, nothing detailed, just an overview in 100-150 words and in chronological order. At this stage, don't worry too much about whether it's in bullet points, continuous prose or note form.

SAMPLE