

Institution: University of Manchester		
Unit of Assessment: 17 (Business and Management)		
Title of case study: Improving Public and Organisational Policies on Health and Wellbeing in an Ageing Workforce		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2009 - 2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Sheena Johnson	Professor of Work Psychology and Wellbeing	21/08/2006 to present
Helge Hoel	Professor in Organisational Behaviour	11/05/1998 to 31/07/2018
Lynn Holdsworth	Research Assistant	05/02/2018 to 31/07/2019
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2015 - 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>Professor Johnson's research at the University of Manchester has improved local and national government understanding of the need for greater workplace protection for ageing workers. This has resulted in new strategies and policies at the Department for Work and Pensions and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority. Collaborating with the Health and Safety Executive, Johnson established an industry-wide network for the UK logistics and transport sector and produced best practice guidelines that are used by haulage companies, delivery drivers, unions, and the DVLA to improve the health and wellbeing of an ageing workforce. The guidelines and network have resulted in a significant number of changes to organisational understanding, policies, training and practices.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>Professor Johnson's research into health and wellbeing in an ageing workforce started in 2009. Her work has addressed three major policy-related issues that form the focus of this impact case study.</p>		
Age, Burnout and Older Worker Competencies		
<p>Older workers are often associated with a decline in skills and abilities. However, Johnson's research supports an alternative understanding of the relationship between age and work, by demonstrating that older worker competencies can lead both to health benefits [1] and commercial benefits [2]. This alternative perspective emerged from research conducted as part of a 3-year project (2009-12) she led between the Alliance Manchester Business School and Frankfurt University. The research team analysed how service sector workers of different ages managed stress, conflict and emotion regulation, as well as the impact these feelings had on participants health, for example work related burnout. Their findings showed that older workers possess skills beneficial to customer service organisations and so they should be seen as valuable resources [1]. In particular, they found no evidence to suggest that older workers are less productive (or less competent) than younger workers. On the contrary, the research found that older workers were seen to have specific strength in handling social conflict compared to younger colleagues [1].</p>		

Older Worker Needs

In 2015 Johnson was invited to author a Government Foresight Evidence Review commissioned as part of the UK government's Foresight Future of an Ageing Population project [3]. This report drew on and informed Johnson's age related research into older workers' competencies and health [1, 2, 4, 5]. The Review looked at how organisations are reacting (or not) to the changing age-based demographic composition of the workforce. Findings on the likely future impact of these workforce and related organisational changes included:

- Older workers increasingly need to be protected against age discrimination by policies and practices.
- Older workers have the skills needed to respond to the trend towards reduced manual and increased people work but may be deterred by low pay.
- Stereotypes change slowly and older workers may continue to be negatively affected in the near future.
- There will be increasing older worker demand for part-time and flexible work.
- Training demand will increase to enable workers to meet changing work environments.
- Uncertainty relating to changes to retirement practice will reduce over time. By 2040 retirement decisions should be driven by employee choice, or be performance-related, and be less influenced by expectations of a 'normal' retirement age.

Older Worker Health and Wellbeing in the Logistics and Transport Sector

Johnson's recent research (2017 onwards) focusses specifically on protecting the health and wellbeing of older professional drivers in the logistics and transport sector (which employs 1,700,000 people in the UK). Johnson is Principal Investigator on two collaborative projects exploring the sector challenges and needs of an ageing workforce [6]. In order to answer these questions, data was gathered via a series of interviews with HGV and light-goods vehicle drivers between 2017 and 2019. Drawing on this evidence base, she identified a number of industry specific challenges, such as inadequate working conditions and scheduling factors. She also found that these practices negatively impacted on older drivers' work-life balance, caused wear and tear on the body, and led to difficulties in eating healthily and taking exercise breaks whilst on the road. The research culminated in the creation of the 'Age, Health and Professional Drivers' Network' (AHPD) [A] established and led by Johnson, along with the production of Health and Wellbeing Best Practice Guidelines.

3. References to the research

- [1] **Johnson, S.**, Machowski, S., Zapf, D., **Holdsworth, L.** (2017). Age, emotion regulation strategies, burnout and engagement in the service sector: advantages of older workers. *Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 33 (3), 205-216. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.rpto.2017.09.001>
- [2] Beitler, L., Machowski, S., **Johnson, S.**, & Zapf, D. (2016). Conflict Management and Age in Service Professions. *International Journal of Conflict Management*, 27 (3), 302-330. <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/IJCMA-10-2015-0070/full/html>
- [3] Johnson, S. (2015). *Evidence Review E18: How are work requirements and environments evolving and what will be the impact of this on individuals who will reach 65 in 2025 and 2040?* Future of Ageing: Evidence Review. Foresight, Government Office for Science. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/461437/gs-15-25-future-ageing-work-environments-er18.pdf
- [4] Zapf, D., **Johnson, S.**, Beitler, L.A.. (2019) *Lifespan Perspectives on Emotion, Stress, and Conflict Management*. In *Lifespan Perspectives on Working*. Editors Boris Baltes, Cort Rudolph, Hannes Zacher. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/B9780128127568000232>
- [5] Johnson, S., Holdsworth, L., Hoel, H., and Zapf, D. (2013). Customer Stressors in Service Organizations: The Impact of Age on Stress Management and Burnout. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, special issue *Age in the Workplace: Challenges and Opportunities*, 22 (3), 318-330. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432X.2013.772581>

[6] Beers, H. Day, N. **Johnson, S.** (2018). *Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Research Report 1104. Occupational Health and Extended Working Lives in the Transport Sector*
<http://www.hse.gov.uk/research/rrhtm/rr1104.htm>

4. Details of the impact

Changing National Government understanding and strategies

Based on her ageing workforce research expertise, Johnson was invited to contribute to a review for the Government Office for Science called *The Future of an Ageing Population*. Johnson specifically contributed critical evidence to section 2.1 in the 2016 report [B] which drew extensively on her 2015 Foresight evidence review [3]. Previously, an ageing workforce was seen to be detrimental to employers but Johnson's evidence provided a new perspective "particularly to employers and wider society". This research highlighted the many benefits of older people in the workforce and acknowledged that an extended working life had "non-financial" benefits, such as improved cognitive and health related benefits for individuals. The report uses Johnson's evidence to develop specific policy implications which enabled the UK Government to expand its understanding of the potential benefits of longer working lives. This included: 1) the necessity for a range of adaptations and approaches to overcoming barriers to working longer and enhancing productivity in the ageing workforce (including addressing negative attitudes, health needs, workplace design, technology and adaptations in HR policies and working practices); 2) the need for lifetime learning and training of an ageing workforce to prevent skills gaps; 3) a need to address the causes of varying employment rates among older people across the UK population.

The report has been used by policy-makers to formulate future-proof policies for an ageing workforce. In particular, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has used the report to directly feed into its *Fuller Working Lives* strategy (2017) which encourages businesses to retain, retrain and recruit older workers and presents the benefits of a fuller working life. As the Lead for Employer Engagement and Trials on the *Fuller Working Lives Strategy* at the DWP [C], states: "Johnson has contributed to our understanding of the ability and needs of older workers ... Johnson's work on the '*Foresight Future of an Ageing Population*' evidence review directly fed into and contributed to the development and promotion of the *Fuller Working Lives* strategy and the Industrial Strategy". The strategy commits to five government actions, including new legislation to support *Fuller Working Lives* and developing the evidence base for further action.

Informing Local Government Strategy and Policy in Greater Manchester

Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) has directly used Johnson's research on ageing and well-being to inform its understanding of age-friendly workplaces. Johnson disseminated her research findings via extensive policy-focused engagement, including becoming an invited member of both the Greater Manchester Ageing Hub (since 2016) and the Manchester City Council Ageing Hub Work and Economy Group (since 2017). She also presented at the GMCA Economy Scrutiny Committee (March 2017) on age discrimination, gender and race and the Workshop for Age Friendly Employment in Manchester (May 2019).

Her dissemination and engagement activity subsequently influenced the creation of three new GMCA policies: 1. The city's Ageing Strategy, 2. The GM Local Industrial Strategy, and 3. GM Ageing Hub's Economy and Work Strategy and Action Plan. The Programme Lead for the Age Friendly Manchester initiative at the City Council's Manchester Health and Care Commission, states [D]: "*Johnson has made a sizeable contribution to the City's Ageing Strategy... her work on the 'Foresight Future of an Ageing Population' evidence review directly fed into and contributed to the development and promotion of the Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy*". Subsequently, the GM Local Industrial Strategy has a significant focus on an Ageing Society and has pledged to honour the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter, which includes a commitment to promote decent and safe work opportunities for older people. The Assistant Director - Employment (Policy, Strategy & Delivery) at the GMCA, states that [E]: "*Johnson's research has informed the development of GM Ageing Hub's Economy and Work Strategy and Action Plan, in particular the 'test & learn' locality pilots sponsored by Department*

for Work & Pensions Fuller Working Lives unit, Centre for Ageing Better (CfAB) and GMCA". He comments that as a result of this work, the GMCA has been better able to "target our research, projects and other activities in order to benefit the older workforce in Greater Manchester".

Johnson's research has benefited employers in the Greater Manchester region by helping them to understand the needs of their ageing workforce. In 2018 and 2019, she provided key evidence concerning the ageing workforce and their health and wellbeing needs to a GMCA and CfAB initiative called the 'Age Friendly GM Employer Handbook' which will be available and promoted to all companies and employers in the Greater Manchester area. AHPD guidelines directly contributed to Section 3 'Ensure everyone has the health support they need', with a link included from the handbook to the guidelines. The handbook was produced as a result of GMCA and CfAB prioritising future-proof policies, which is a key issue Johnson recommended to these organisations. This is the first handbook of its kind and the Assistant Director at GMCA states that [E]: "*[Johnson] made a significant contribution...thus assisting employers in the Greater Manchester region in understanding the needs of, and supporting, their ageing workforce*".

Improving Organisational Policy and Practice for Older Workers in the Logistics and Transport Sector

Professor Johnson's research [6] with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), the national regulator for workplace health and safety, has provided them with an evidence base from which to formulate policy and practices. In particular, she has focussed on the needs of an ageing workforce within the logistics and transport sector – including its below average record for health and safety performance [6]. Johnson worked with the HSE to identify emerging health risks within the sector's ageing workforce, before developing novel ways to better prepare for and deal with these risks. The work documented the significant adverse health consequences for older workers, such as musculoskeletal disorders, stress, fatigue and obesity, as well as increasingly harder physical demands on ageing bodies when performing loading and unloading tasks. Previously, the HSE had little data on these specific risks and thus Johnson's report directly informed HSE's priority science area under its 'demographics hub'. The HSE's Chief Scientific Advisor commented that Johnson has directly informed "new perspectives" on the risks of an ageing logistics workforce and stated that her report increased the HSE's capacity to carry out the "*assessment and control of health risks and the identification and development of novel ways to deal with existing risk*" [F]. The HSE has subsequently used Johnson's recommendations to operationalise age-friendly policies. For example, it is now policy that professional drivers must have access to welfare facilities, such as toilet and refreshment facilities, at any company to which they are delivering goods.

Johnson's work with the HSE led to the development of the AHPD network [A]. The AHPD was set up by Johnson in 2017 and currently has over 70 member organisations. This includes transport and logistic firms and representatives, unions, as well as the DVLA. The network acts as a forum to exchange knowledge and best practice and reaches over 20,000 employees.

In 2019, Johnson produced the first industry-led guidelines (funded by an ESRC Impact Acceleration Account grant) for best practice relating to age and wellbeing in the logistics and transport sector. The guidelines were officially launched at an event held at the GM Ageing Hub conference in February 2019 and are freely accessible via the AHPD Network website. They have been downloaded over 130 times to date by stakeholders in the logistics and transport sector.

Several organisations have used these guidelines to develop age-friendly wellbeing policies, such as Bibby Distribution, which employs 600+ drivers operational across 40 UK sites. Bibby's Driver Training and Telematics Manager states that [G]: "*key recommendations and ideas in the Guidelines directly resulted in a number of new initiatives and organisational investments being made at Bibby Distribution, including the establishment of a driver committee to improve communication to isolated older drivers and the creation of a Knowledge Portal which is linked through innovation in-cab technology so that drivers can access the company's health and wellbeing information in their downtime while they are away from the office.*" He further states

that the company has established a training programme and that the Guidelines have been “*an invaluable catalyst for restructuring training provision within the company and have provided a framework for ensuring that the wellbeing needs of ageing drivers are recognised and alleviated through increased understanding and awareness of the issues they face*”.

Clipper Logistics is another large company that has benefited from Johnson’s research. This organisation operates out of 47 sites across Europe with a turnover of GBP450,000,000 per annum. Its National Driver Training Manager has commented [H] that the AHDP guidelines have “*created a better understanding of the health and wellbeing needs of older drivers. At Clipper Logistics, we have paid particular attention to the guideline’s recommendations around the mental and physical challenges older drivers face when undertaking duties such as night driving and extended periods spent driving alone*”. The AHPD Guidelines have triggered a change in attitude towards ageing drivers in the company, and encourage a more proactive approach towards improving the working lives of ageing drivers where previously information on how to make appropriate provisions for older drivers was very limited. The research and guidelines have also prompted alterations to the firm’s HR strategies and employee training, such as changes to materials within the Driver Certificate of Professional Competence (DCPC) course delivered to all drivers. Furthermore, the guidelines prompted the company to take their training provision ‘in-house’ to better tailor the training to the needs of their ageing workforce. The National Driver Training Manager states that [H] “*The guidelines provided a rigorous, evidence-based framework when making the decision to restructure the training courses with a view to placing more emphasis on the physical and mental wellbeing of older drivers. The course will be delivered to all 455+ drivers in 2020*”.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[A] Age, Health and Professional Drivers Network website, <https://sites.manchester.ac.uk/ahpd/>

[B] Report: The Future of an Ageing Population (2016), the Government Office For Science

[C] Testimonial Letter: Dept for Work and Pensions, Employer Engagement and Trials, Fuller Working Lives Strategy, December 2019

[D] Testimonial Letter: Programme Lead, Age Friendly Manchester, Manchester Health and Care Commissioning, December 2019

[E] Testimonial Letter: Assistant Director, Employment (Policy, Strategy & Delivery), GM Ageing Hub Work and Economy Group, January 2020

[F] Testimonial Letter: Chief Scientific Advisor, Health and Safety Executive, April 2019

[G] Testimonial Letter: Driver Training and Telematics Manager, Bibby Distribution, March 2021

[H] Testimonial Letter: National Driver Training Manager, Clipper Logistics, March 2021