

EU bans ageism from October 2006

On October 1st 2006 a European Union directive will make it illegal to discriminate against anyone in the workplace because of their age. Old or young.

Wise Owls - a London-based not-for-profit company specialising in combatting ageism through its over 45s employment agency - is aware of the implications this will have for older workers and is eagerly awaiting the legal changes.

"Older workers are still facing barriers to employment and recruitment" says Wise Owls Director, Chris Walsh. "With these changes employers will finally be obliged to take older workers seriously. Let's not forget that 2.7 million people in the UK aged 50 and over are registered unemployed - many of these people want to return to work but are simply not getting the opportunities".

Like many western countries the UK is facing the challenges of an increasingly aged population - according to the Office of National Statistics there are now more people aged 60 plus than there are aged 16 or less in Britain. "The important thing to remember is that older people have the experience, wisdom and social skills which many employers are seeking. While many employers complain of a skills shortage in the UK they are also failing to tap into the vast human resources which the over 45s / over 50s represent", explains Wise Owls Marketing Director, Jo Norman.

As part of its campaign to assist older people back into the workplace Wise Owls runs an employment agency matching employers with potential employees aged 45 and over. The group also operates a business advisory service giving enterprise-boosting information to older people starting their own firms. In addition Wise Owls hosts a regularly updated news and information service on its website which now attracts over 14,000 users a month.

"We are confident for the future" says Chris Walsh. "But we have also got to keep employers on their toes - older people are still languishing at the bottom of the careers ladder and we won't rest until that has changed".