

Age Works proves success

A new London-wide work experience project aimed at the over-45s is proving a runaway success. Since its launch last summer **Age Works** has brought together scores of age-positive employers alongside dozens of older job-seekers.

Unveiled in June by **Wise Owls** – one of the UK's leading baby-boomer websites, employment agencies and campaign organisations – the scheme has attracted widespread interest far exceeding the organiser's expectations.

The employment-boosting scheme matches employers and baby-boomers from the seven central London boroughs of Islington, Camden, Westminster, Kensington & Chelsea, Wandsworth, Lambeth and Southwark. Older people seeking up to eight weeks work experience – alongside comprehensive employability training from accredited support agencies – gain valuable vocational skills while employers benefit from having free, motivated staff for nearly two months.

The ambitious programme provides a comprehensive, free employment-related service including an Equality and Diversity (E&D) Review undertaken by the UK's leading vocational arbitration service **ACAS**. The review assists companies in the process of unlocking the potential of a profitable and diverse workforce – as well as helping firms to identify new funding streams to strengthen greater workplace diversity.

New legislation – set to come into force from October of this year – will finally make it illegal to discriminate against older workers. While many employers are aware of the forthcoming changes there are still some who assume that their present policies / practices need little or no revision. This legal change represents a major challenge for Human Resources systems. Yet with the right systems and approaches in place companies can ensure they turn this challenge into a profitable opportunity.

Wise Owls Director, Chris Walsh, commented: "Age Works has come along at just the right time. Firstly, we are able to help companies understand the law to avoid claims by employees or candidates under the current employment legislation, as well as the new legislation due to come into force during 2006. Also, our service helps to ensure that companies can make the most of the funding opportunities which will be available as part of the 2012 London Olympics programme. By taking up our services, and acting on our recommendations, they can be confident that they will have fully robust systems which are anti-discriminatory and promote equality and diversity. As Britain's first and leading employment agency for the over 45s, Wise Owls is particularly proud to be involved in this, and is ensuring that the needs of older workers are fully taken into account."