

Diversity
enriches
business

the inclusivity project

People are living longer, working longer and retiring later. Only 58.4% of people in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly are aged 16-64: We have more older people who are still working than most other Local Enterprise Partnership areas in England



Covid-19 has forced many older people who work, and people with health conditions or disabilities, to shield themselves and work remotely. So now is a crucial time for businesses to reassess how to protect the health, maintain the productivity, and retain the experience of their older or more vulnerable staff.

The Inclusivity Project, part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund, launched 18 months ago with the aim of helping employers, jobseekers and policymakers all adapt to how Cornwall's working population is evolving. The three-year project is led by the University of Exeter, in partnership with disAbility Cornwall, Age UK Cornwall, and the Local Enterprise Partnership.

The project works by connecting local businesses with university researchers who are specialists in health and business. The aim is to assist small and medium sized businesses in becoming more inclusive – whether that's by improving their own employment processes, or by launching new digital products or services that boost others' inclusivity.

Laurie Magowan, Project Manager at the Inclusivity Project says: "We try to understand the challenges that local businesses have, make available grant funding, expert knowledge, and cover the costs of people's time for the research and development of their new wellbeing products too."

Hug International Limited is one of the businesses working with the Inclusivity Project to develop a product specifically aimed at supporting the older workforce. Hug was founded by Richard Doig after his experience developing employee benefit programmes for businesses offering perks like gym memberships, dental insurance, healthcare and pensions.

Richard Doig says: "The issue was that there wasn't really a clear rationale behind what businesses were implementing for their employees – despite the fact that the motive was good".

"To provide a return-on-investment business case for a tailored programme, we've developed a series of complimentary mini-surveys. Businesses can check in with how their employees are feeling, across mental health, financial health and lifestyle. Then we're offering employees tailored user guides to support their specific needs, along with advice and recommendations for the business."

We evolved the
existing survey
tools so that we
could capture
bespoke data
from employees
aged 50+

Despite success with the new survey tool, Hug was missing an opportunity to support employers in being a more inclusive workplace. Richard approached the Inclusivity Project, and working with a researcher from the University of Exeter, he created an add-on for employees aged 50+, called Hug50+.

"We evolved the existing survey tools so that we could capture bespoke data

from employees aged 50+. The Inclusivity Project put us in touch with Dr. Daniel Derbyshire at the University of Exeter, who specialises in Health Economics. They also granted us funding to allow us to develop additional clinical-based questions, and supportive self-help interventions, which specifically focused on the ageing workforce," says Richard.

"We want to understand what different challenges older people might face in the workplace. With this information, businesses can tailor the benefits they offer, and even consider the impact of day-to-day operation, working environment and culture."

Research is another key element of the Inclusivity Project.

"We're mapping the whole system surrounding employment of older people, or those with a disability or long-term health condition. We want to know what the barriers are, what knock-on effects certain changes might have, and identify possible interventions," says Laurie Magowan.

Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly's older population puts it ahead of the curve in learning to support older people to have healthier working lives. Laurie adds: "Our healthy ageing initiatives could help other parts of the country in the future. So, any solutions we develop in collaboration with businesses could go a lot further than just helping our own residents."

For more information about the Inclusivity Project please visit:
www.theinclusivityproject.co.uk

