



Perspectives.
A leading look at healthcare by Bupa Global.

Bridging the generation gap: The power of age diversity

Insights from the latest Perspectives by Bupa Global event • March 2022

Over the past few years, diversity, equity and inclusion has risen to the top of the global business agenda, with many organisations realising that they need to prioritise the wellbeing of all their people.

For our 7th Perspectives by Bupa Global event we looked at why we need to have a new conversation about the power of age diversity and how to maximise the potential of a multi-generational workforce.

Of all the topics that are part of the diversity and inclusion agenda, age is the one that is possibly most overlooked, yet getting older is something that unites us all and deserves to be much higher up on the priority list of businesses around the world.

Now is the time to address the last socially acceptable discrimination; Ageism, and explore the crucial role healthcare must play in supporting the individual needs of people throughout their different life stages.

Whether it's helping children and young adults with better **mental health**; supporting women through key life moments including **maternity and the menopause**; or doing more to treat **chronic conditions** in older people, our industry has a crucial role to play in opening up the conversation around age longevity in the workplace. We must tackle the stigma surrounding ageism and help shift the focus to preventive care and wellbeing.



Dr Tatiana Rowson
Academic Social Psychologist and Gerontologist
Henley Business School

“We are ageing from the day that we are born. Once we connect that ageing is a biological factor, we start to understand the importance of age diversity at work.”

The opportunity for healthcare

Growing older is something we all do. Longer human lives, incredible advances in science and medical treatment, and declining birth-rates in many countries, mean that the world is collectively ageing at an unprecedented rate. In the past, healthcare products and policies have not gone far enough to recognise the unique needs of each individual and instead must reflect our diverse customer base.



“Regardless of generation, we must start to consider health as something that we invest in throughout our lives and different life stages.”

Dr Luke James
Deputy Group Chief Medical Officer and Director of Healthcare Transformation
Bupa Group



The role of workplaces

Living longer will have significant implications for workplaces of the future. Multi-generational teams will become the norm, retirement ages will be a thing of the past and most of us will have many different careers throughout our lives. Organisations need to plan now, and be open to new working practices, structures and behaviours to ensure each generation is actively supported and engaged.



Forward-thinking organisations are shifting their approach to better understand the workforce's unique attitudes and values, they have an opportunity to design and implement wellbeing strategies and programmes that are more targeted toward employees' individual needs. Helping to build a more productive, innovative, and loyal workforce – which in turn is great for the bottom-line.



“Organisations must learn how to deploy the older population”
Dame Stephanie Shirley CH
Technology Pioneer, Businesswoman and Philanthropist

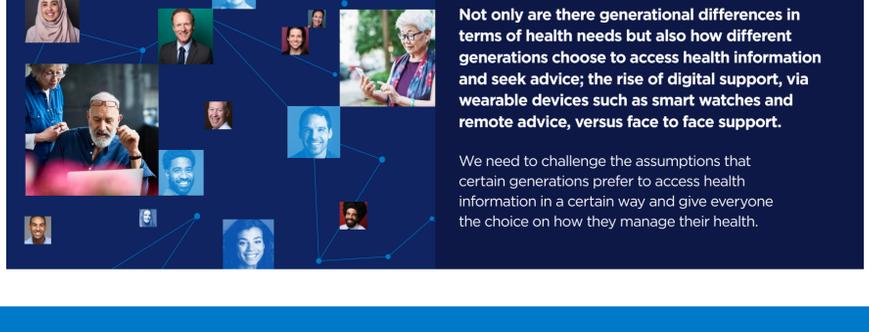


Dr Eliza Filby
Social Historian and Generations Expert

“The idea of fixed notions of retirement, when we enter the workforce or when a woman has children is now fundamentally outdated.”

Bridging the gap

Employers are certainly making a strong effort to create work environments that are more inclusive to everyone, but the importance of health and wellbeing benefits can be overlooked. We must take ageism and perceived generation gaps into account when designing international health and benefits plans, ensuring they go further to support a multi-generational workforce.



Not only are there generational differences in terms of health needs but also how different generations choose to access health information and seek advice; the rise of digital support, via wearable devices such as smart watches and remote advice, versus face to face support.

We need to challenge the assumptions that certain generations prefer to access health information in a certain way and give everyone the choice on how they manage their health.

“We have a unique opportunity to embrace the power of age diversity, where people are valued for their skills and expertise, and not defined by the length of their lives.”

Patrick Watt
Commercial Director
Bupa Global



Starting the conversation

We must realise that in the era of longevity, humans are redefining what it means to age. We're entering a new world of work that needs a rapid evolution in our thinking. Making healthcare more inclusive is not only about supporting individuals now; it is also about rethinking the healthcare system for future generations. Together, we can make a long-standing impact, and we need your help to drive this agenda forward within your own businesses and also those of the clients you represent.



1. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/workday/2019/09/12/generational-differences-and-the-shifting-workplace/?sh=57e20b4f53ce>
2. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/ageing-and-health>
3. <https://www.raconteur.net/healthcare/preventative-healthcare-tackling-challenges-ageing-population/>



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