

## AGE MANAGEMENT IN THE CITY OF NAANTALI: FINLAND

### 1. Organisations involved

- City of Naantali
- Occupational health care services contracted from the City of Raisio

### 2. Description of the case

#### 2.1. Introduction

The City of Naantali is the local government organisation of a municipality (population 18,900 in 2012) located some 180 km west of Helsinki. The city employs 1,241 employees, of whom 354 are over 55 years of age.

Because of the age structure within the organisation, the city expects approximately 3–4% of its staff to move into retirement every year between 2014 and 2020. With the older generation outnumbering the younger, the city sought to offset the potential future worker shortage by improving its age management practices.

From 2003, the city has implemented an age management programme.

#### 2.2. Aims

The City of Naantali's age management programme aims to maintain the work ability of employees of all ages by, among other things, reducing the rate of sick leave and increasing the average retirement age of older employees.

#### 2.3. What was done, and how?

'Seniors' aged 55 years or more are covered by Naantali's age management programme, which comprises the following elements:

##### 2.3.1. Performance review

Once an employee turns 55 years of age, the employer must discuss any age-related considerations. This discussion forms part of the employee's annual performance review, but is documented separately. During the meeting, the individual needs of the employee are discussed, as well as any physical or mental restrictions that might be experienced. This allows adjustments to be put in place where necessary, helping to ensure that the employee remains motivated and productive until retirement.

##### 2.3.2. Organisational changes to work

Following the performance review at 55 years, the employer must consider ways to reduce the workload of senior employees, including finding alternatives to working patterns and working time. The ergonomic aspects of the worker's everyday tasks must also be examined. If the employee has become incapacitated and cannot continue his/her current work, the city may temporarily assign the employee to other tasks in order to increase his/her skills for other, more suitable work. In practice, such internal movement within the organisation has been implemented through fixed-term apprenticeship contracts.

### 2.3.3. Mentoring and employee education

Valuable tacit knowledge (that is knowledge gained from experience) held by older workers is effectively transferred to younger workers through unofficial mentoring in which new recruits are partnered with a more senior employee as part of their induction. Partnering different age groups is advantageous to both. Such tacit knowledge includes experience of the history and values of the workplace, the methods of working and expected standards of behaviour. This knowledge helps younger workers to integrate faster, while the fresh perspectives and up-to-date knowledge often provided by younger recruits, in turn, benefit older workers.

The city believes that all employees should maintain the capacity to learn and develop throughout their careers. Training plans are prepared annually for all staff regardless of age. All staff may choose to take part in educational training programs and seminars.

### 2.3.4. Enhanced occupational healthcare services

The occupational healthcare service contracted by the city includes additional services for senior employees. A comprehensive health check is available every 2 years up until retirement, involving screening for particular conditions that may occur in older age, such as cardiovascular problems or the occurrence of musculoskeletal disorders. The aim is to identify potential risks and take early measures to prevent or mitigate their impact on work ability. Where medically justified, employees may avail themselves of physical rehabilitative treatments in the form of different types of physiotherapy. The cost for these treatments is covered by the employer for up to 10 visits.

### 2.3.5. The senior team

The 'senior team' forms part of a wider company committee dedicated to employee engagement. The nine members of the senior team are dedicated to the organisation of events and information sessions to maintain the wellbeing of older workers. The senior team is granted an annual budget of EUR 14,500, which is used to arrange cultural excursions such as theatre trips, as well as subsidising the use of sports facilities.

### 2.3.6. Training of management

To deal effectively with an ageing workforce, management must recognise and understand the changing nature of individual work ability. Most of the managers at Naantali have undergone JET (Specialist Qualification in Management) training. This is a general management qualification aimed at improving leadership skills. It is complemented by regular seminars and projects to ensure that the theoretical knowledge is applied and updated.

## 2.4. What was achieved?

Sick leave days have decreased among senior employees. At the same time, the average retirement age has increased from 59.4 years in 2012 to 61.5 years in 2013.

About 50% of senior employees have benefited from physiotherapy as part of the enhanced occupational healthcare services. Several examples exist of employees remaining in work past the official retirement age.

## 2.5. Success factors

The following factors contribute to the ongoing success of the programme:

- *Legal basis:* legislation and policy in Finland which promote age management, adding weight to the programme;
- *Company culture:* a management culture trained to recognise different people's varying levels of work ability, and a mentoring process which demonstrates the value of older workers;
- *Involvement of managers:* training and awareness-raising for managers;

- *Project visibility*: a committed and enthusiastic senior team to maintain a focus on age awareness;
- *Coordination of stakeholders*: open discussion of age-related issues between management and workers during the performance review process;
- *External support*: use of the expertise of external occupational healthcare practitioners;
- *Diversity of measures*: a systematic approach and the use of a variety of measures, including human resources, occupational safety and health, and rehabilitation.

## 2.6. Transferability

All other organisations should be easily able to transfer the elements of this programme, in particular:

- discussions of specific senior issues during performance reviews with the employer after the age of 55;
- enhanced occupational health care service provision; and
- training of management in work ability issues.

## 2.7. Further information

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## 3. References and resources

- City of Naantali (2013), Henkilöstökertomus 2013 (*HR Report 2013*). Retrieved 30/10/2015 from:
- [http://www.naantali.fi/Kunta-info/naantali\\_tyonantajana/fi\\_FI/etusivu/\\_files/91703882272016048/default/Henkil%C3%B6st%C3%B6kertomus%202013.pdf](http://www.naantali.fi/Kunta-info/naantali_tyonantajana/fi_FI/etusivu/_files/91703882272016048/default/Henkil%C3%B6st%C3%B6kertomus%202013.pdf)
- Virnes-Karjalainen, A. (2013), 'Naantalin kaupungin ikäohjelma', *Oma Aika*, 4/2013, 19 June. Retrieved 30/10/2015 from: <http://www.omaaikalehti.fi/tyoelama/saan-jaada-jaksavana-elakkeelle>
- Interview with Laura Saurama, HR manager at the City of Naantali.