

NHS Working Longer Group

Initial findings and recommendations

What do they say about older women at work?



Background



The Working Longer Group (WLG) was established to address the impact of a raised retirement age on NHS staff, employers and the provision of health services.

The WLG is a tripartite partnership review group including representatives from:

- national recognised NHS trade unions
- NHS employers
- health departments.

The WLG reports directly to the NHS Staff Council and its Executive.



Context



How will the raised retirement age affect your staff?

- Up to 70 per cent of NHS Pension Scheme members now have a pension age of between 65 and 68 as a result of the Normal Pension Age (NPA) being set equal to State Pension Age (SPA)
- The new 2015 NHS Pension Scheme will reflect this change from 1 April 2015.

Demographics of the current NHS workforce

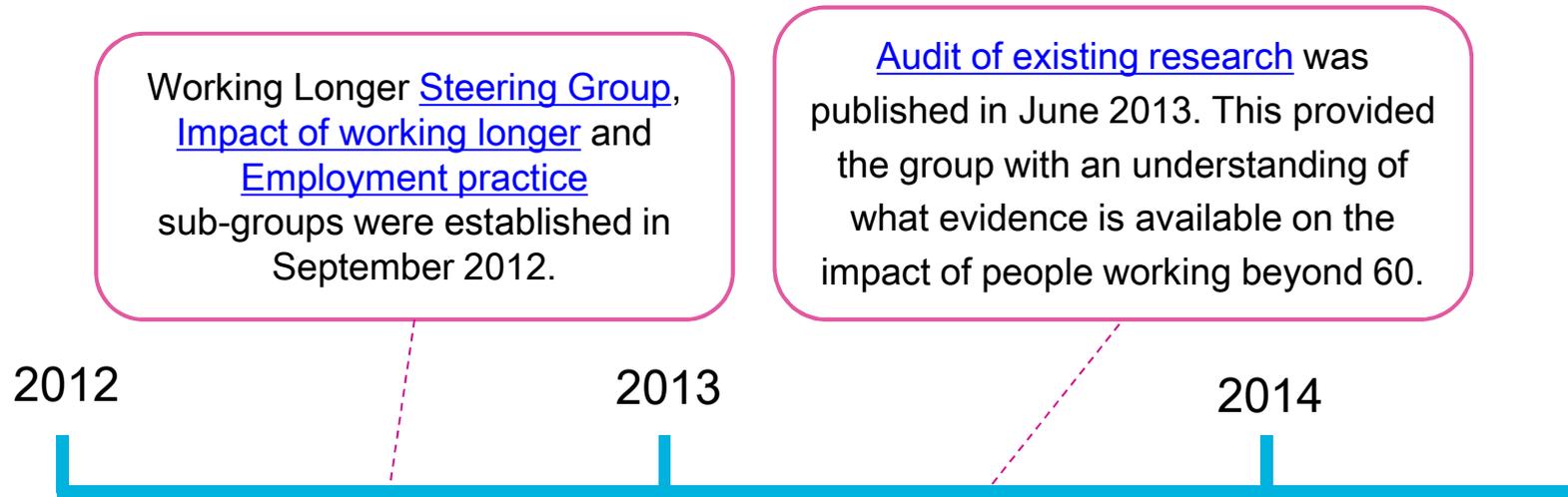
- The average age of NHS staff is 43.7 and is rising
- It is projected to rise to 47 by 2023
- With over half of the NHS population over 40 years old and a third over 50, the NHS workforce is ageing.

What does this mean for women?

- More enter the workforce at a later age and more will expect/need to work longer



WLG work to date



Working Longer [Steering Group](#), [Impact of working longer](#) and [Employment practice](#) sub-groups were established in September 2012.

[Audit of existing research](#) was published in June 2013. This provided the group with an understanding of what evidence is available on the impact of people working beyond 60.

National call for evidence launched by the WLG from June - September 2013 to identify issues that may make working to a higher retirement age in the NHS more difficult and to capture examples of good practice that enable staff to continue working. The [Interim findings report](#) was published on 3 March 2014.

The [preliminary findings and recommendations](#) report from the group was submitted to the health departments on 3 March 2014, detailing 11 recommendations for suggested future work.



Preliminary findings and recommendations report



The [preliminary findings and recommendations](#) report was submitted to the health departments on 3 March 2014.

The report detailed 11 recommendations, which concentrated on four main themes:

- 1. The data challenge**
- 2. Pension options, retirement decision making and their impact on working longer**
- 3. The importance of appropriate working arrangements and the work environment**
- 4. Good practice occupational health, safety and wellbeing.**



Recommendation 1

Development of a national data set



Review findings

Data proved to be the biggest challenge faced by the group. While it is substantial in its quality and availability, it is currently collected for various reasons and in different ways making it difficult to analyse.

What the WLG recommended:

- A robust national data set to be developed in order to collect data that organisations and the wider service may use to monitor, benchmark and inform further workforce planning locally and service developments.
- Requirement established for all organisations providing access to the NHS Pension Scheme to provide information in line with this national data set.

What does this mean for employers?

- The ability to use data will assist you to put in place effective prevention strategies when staff are working longer and help you make informed decisions around workforce planning.



Recommendation 2

Data (SPA link)



Review findings

In 2015, the NPA for members of the NHS Pension Scheme will set equal to their SPA. The group's knowledge about the impact of working longer should be utilised to feed into the planned 5 yearly review into SPA increases.

What the WLG recommended:

- The work of the WLG should influence and inform wider Government work on the future of the SPA.
- This work should be ongoing to ensure the link between the SPA and NPA is still appropriate.

What does this mean for employers?

- It is important that the SPA changes that will impact NHS staff are kept under review.
- The NHS is the UK's largest public sector employer with staff across a vast number of occupations that may be affected by the ageing process.



Recommendation 3

Pension information



Review findings

The call for evidence and audit commissioned by the WLG showed that there are misunderstandings about the options available to staff in terms of their pension and retirement flexibilities. It is clear that further work needs to be done to help members understand the NHS Pension Scheme and the flexibilities available to them.

What the WLG recommended:

- An accessible and easy-to-use central portal should be created for organisations and staff which would provide easy-to-digest, up-to-date information on the NHS Pension Scheme, with calculators to model different scenarios for staff.
- A toolkit should be developed on the use of pre-retirement education.
- There should be access to a local expert who can offer face-to-face information.

What does this mean for employers?

- Helping staff to enable them to make informed pension choices is a major challenge. By gaining a better understanding of the pension scheme and the flexibilities within it, staff will feel more able to make informed pension and retirement decisions.



Recommendation 4

Delivery of safe and effective care



Review findings

It is clear that further work is required to fully understand the potential impact an ageing workforce could have on staff and service delivery. It is essential now that NHS-specific data is collected, monitored and maintained. We could see complex workforce issues or fail to provide adequate care if we do not act now to protect the service and staff.

What the WLG recommended:

The WLG should continue to analyse and investigate data and information that has already shown differences in the potential impact of working longer within staff groups and organisations. This should be done through in-depth research within organisations.

What does this mean for employers?

- Consider now how an ageing workforce could impact on the delivery of safe and effective care in your organisation.



Recommendation 5

Working practice



Review findings

There are many different work environments in the NHS. We need to understand more how the known impact of shift working, combined with staff preferences about working patterns and the ageing workforce could potentially impact on service delivery.

What the WLG recommended:

- Further national research on working practice, with a focus on the physical and emotional impact for different age groups and categories of staff to be commissioned or supported by the WLG.
- Emerging evidence to be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure consideration is given to recommendations relating to workplace safety, in particular ergonomics.
- Contribution to the Chief Nursing Officer for England's review of 12-hour shifts and develop guidance for NHS organisations from this review.

What does this mean for employers?

- What changes could you make to workforce planning, the work environment and culture within your organisation to be ready for an ageing workforce?



Recommendation 6

Supporting staff during working lives



Review findings

Employees want to feel confident in discussing their career plans but currently, other than the appraisal process, no opportunities exist in which to discuss their future, including retirement education and planning.

What the WLG recommended:

- All staff should be supported to make informed decisions about their employment arrangements and plans, throughout their working lives.
- A framework for development conversations, outside of but complementary to the appraisal process, should be developed, including guidance for line managers and staff.

What does this mean for employers?

- How could you make life course planning and retirement education available to staff in your organisation?
- How could you support your staff in making informed decisions about their employment arrangements?



Recommendation 7

Redesigning roles



Review findings

Older workers who are in good health and with up-to-date skills can perform as well as their younger counterparts. However, physical strength does diminish with age and older workers tend to require longer recovery periods following physical exertion.

What the WLG recommended:

Assessment tools and guidance should be developed to support managers in assessing how roles may need to and can change to enable staff to work safely effectively and productively and thus meet service delivery requirements.

What does this mean for employers?

- How will you support managers and staff to assess how roles and working environments need to and could be changed to enable staff to work longer?



Recommendation 8

Redeployment



Review findings

The WLG found that there is a cultural stigma attached to redeployment, but many older staff may stay in work longer if they are able to move to less stressful or physically demanding roles.

What the WLG recommended:

- Greater opportunity for deployment across and within the services should be facilitated.
- Guidance should be developed on redeployment including the assessment and development of approaches to redeployment across or between organisations, acknowledging that there are some roles and working environments that limit opportunities for movement. This guidance may include the promotion of flexible career pathways.

What does this mean for employers?

- How can you start to change the culture around redeployment in your organisation?
- How could you support staff through the redeployment process so that it is viewed as a more positive experience?



Recommendation 9

Learning and development



Review findings

The WLG found evidence that there is a decline in training opportunities for older workers, despite the importance of ongoing training, learning and development throughout an employee's working life.

What the WLG recommended:

- NHS organisations should monitor local uptake of learning and development to ensure that age is not a limiting determinant of access.
- Use should also be made of trade union learning reps and resources at local level.
- The WLG should develop effective working relationships with Health Education England and the devolved nations to ensure the education requirements of an ageing workforce are met. It should also promote the role of trade union learning representatives and resources.

What does this mean for employers?

- How can you ensure that all staff have access to appropriate and relevant education, training and development opportunities throughout their working lives?
- Monitor learning and development activity to ensure that age is not a limiting factor for access.
- Consider how to develop the use of trade union learning representatives.



Recommendation 10

Occupational health, safety and wellbeing



Review findings

Responses to the call for evidence from NHS staff identified a concern about their physical and psychological capability to undertake their NHS duties for a longer period of time. Employer evidence voiced similar concerns. The audit showed that where older workers are in good health and their 'job fit' is right, they can work just as productively as their younger counterparts.

What the WLG recommended:

- Employers should ensure that, by implementing all recommendations of the independent [NHS Health and Wellbeing Review](#) and [evidence-based workplace guidance](#) (i.e. NICE), age and a longer working life does not adversely impact an employee's health or their ability to work effectively and safely.
- Develop a risk assessment framework which can assist organisations to look at the cumulative impact of working longer.

What does this mean for employers?

- How will you will support staff with health, safety and wellbeing throughout their working lives? This is central to enabling NHS staff to work longer.



Recommendation 11

Continuation of the WLG



Review findings

The WLG has gathered a wealth of information and evidence, however, there remains a great deal further to consider. In a short period of time, the WLG has built up a level of expertise and evidence of great potential value to the NHS which should inform future policy.

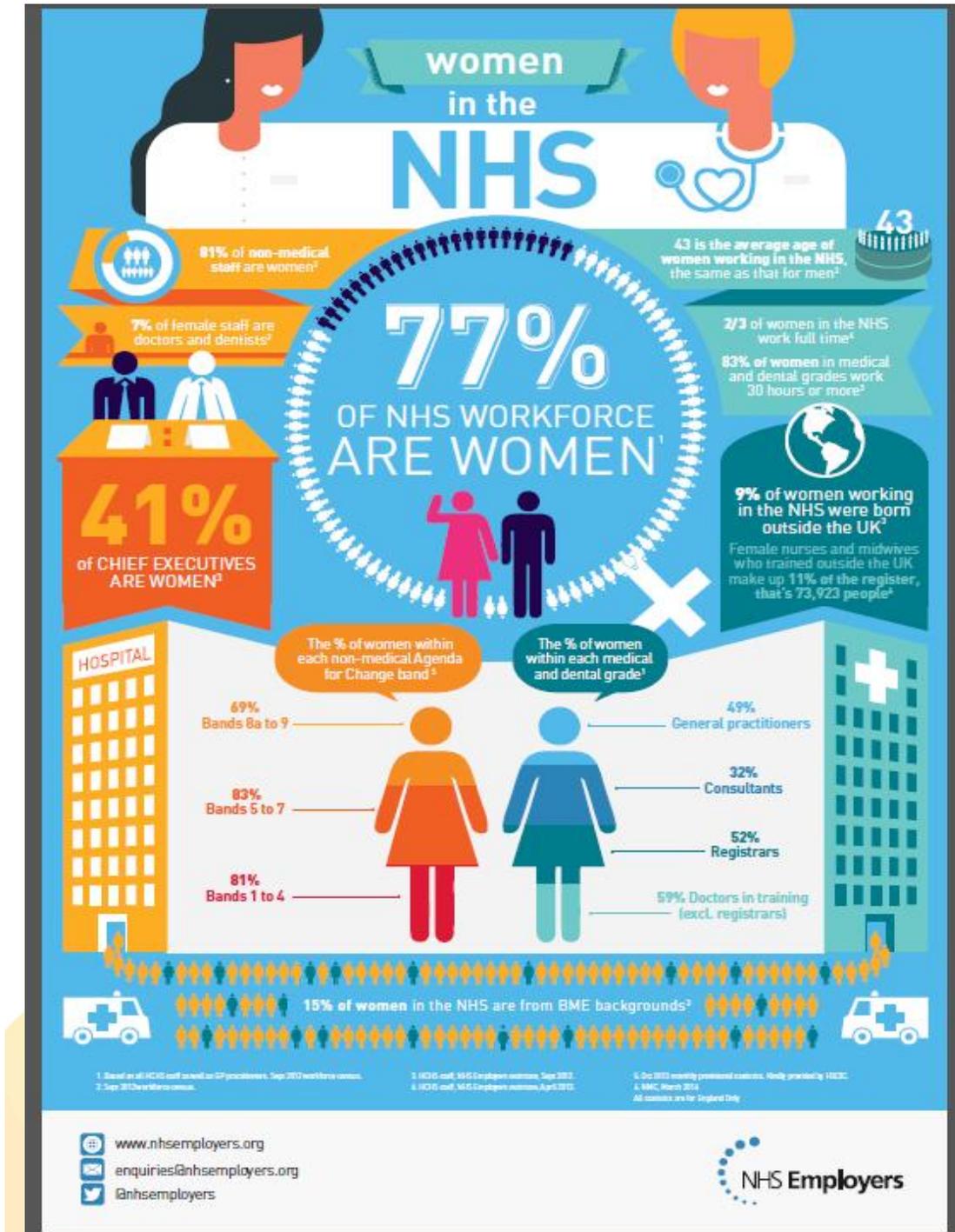
What the WLG recommended:

- The WLG should be established on a continuing basis as a sub group of the NHS Staff Council, maintaining the momentum of its work to date
- The group should also continue to develop and deliver innovative ways, approaches and activities to support organisations to highlight and normalise this important issue in every aspect of their business planning and service delivery.

What does this mean for employers?

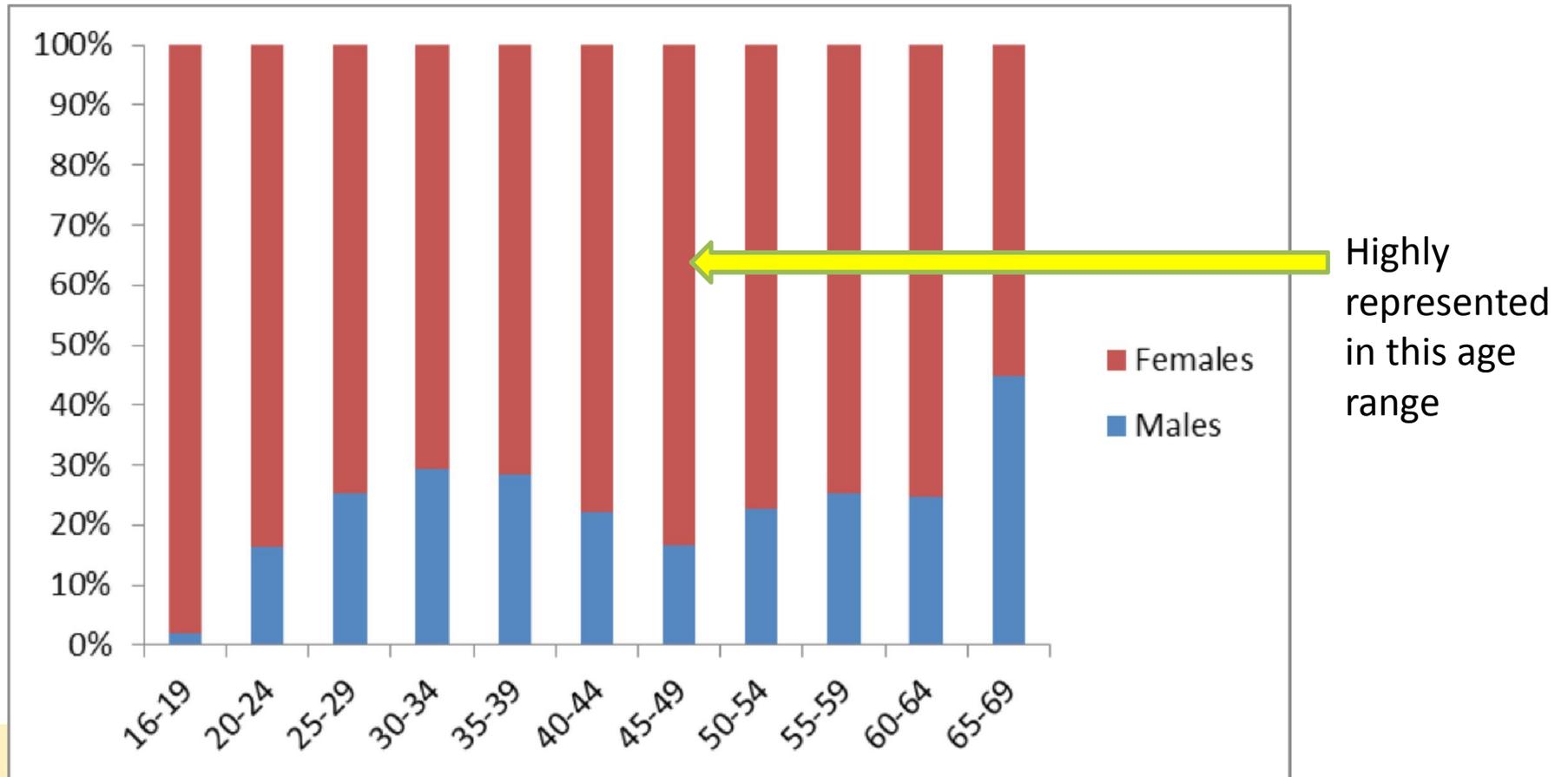
- You will be able to access a range of tools, resources and good practice guidance from the work undertaken by the WLG.





- Predominantly female workforce - Women make up around 80% of the NHS workforce
- Ave age of newly qualified nurse is 29
- Nearly 2/3rds of all nurses are over the age of 40

Age and gender in the NHS



Age and gender issues



ISSUES

- Caring responsibilities
- Impact of chronic ill health
- Menopause
- Cumulative impact of shift work
- Cumulative impact of physical burden e.g. lifting and handling
- Cumulative impact of emotional burden e.g. exposure to trauma

RESPONSES

- Flexible working
- Retirement/ pension information and support
- Job redesign and redeployment
- Appropriate occupational health support
- Age appropriate risk management
- Promoting wellbeing at work



Next steps



Response from the health departments

The health departments welcomed the [preliminary findings and recommendations report](#) submitted on 3 March 2014 and recognised the importance of this work.

They have now commissioned WLG and other stakeholders to undertake work on each of the recommendations and each work stream is progressing.

What does this mean for employers?

- With a greater number of staff working into their later 60s, you will need to consider what steps you can take now to ensure motivation, engagement and productivity of the whole workforce is maintained.
- The WLG will be producing a range of guidance and tools over the next 12 months to assist you.



Further information

www.nhsemployers.org/wlr