

Getting

active!



A resource pack for union reps
to support mid-life development

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How to use this resource pack

Unionlearn delivers Supporting Mid-life Development briefings around the regions. To complement the briefings, this resource pack will help unions initiate and engage members in activities that will get them thinking and planning for mid-life development. Whilst the activities included in this pack are aimed at mid-life and older workers, they are equally useful for anyone in the workplace who would like to think about changing their lives, whatever stage they are at.

Reps will often find themselves in the role of facilitator of learning: listening to people in the workplace and finding out what they need, starting discussions, introducing complicated subjects and providing information and signposting. Quite often you have to think on your feet, test out ideas and ways of doing things, and signpost to experts for specialist information, advice and guidance (IAG). This resource pack provides a toolkit to help you to plan one-to-one interactions, meetings and events so that they are lively, interesting and result in everybody learning something new.

The activities you will find in this resource pack have been tried and tested at unionlearn events, and in a range of informal adult learning settings. You can adapt them to fit the way you want to carry out mid-life development reviews, or you can use them for exploring different themes and ideas in the workplace. You can use the resource pack to create a simple agenda of activities or an agenda for a full-day workplace event or a series of learning opportunities. Don't forget to take photos and videos to use in case studies and other activities.

The examples in the resource pack focus on these mid-life development themes: health and well-being, mental health, caring for others, flexible working, changing jobs or careers, learning, volunteering, personal finance and pensions. All the activities and resources can be adapted to other themes, and used in interviews, meetings and workplace events in any way you choose.



2

Icebreakers and conversation starters

Short activities at the beginning of a one-to-one or group encounter can be very helpful. It doesn't matter whether you know the people or not – it is a chance to relax, to feel comfortable and get to know each other, and to focus on the topic you are going to think about together.

Icebreakers can be fun, can get people moving, laughing, even singing, or simply introduce the topic or just get a conversation started.

Simple icebreakers are short activities like introducing everyone, giving everyone a chance to speak right from the beginning, checking that everyone understands why they are there, what is going on and for how long and setting ground rules for behaviour in the session (for example, keeping personal details about other participants confidential).

These activities can take up quite a lot of time, particularly the introductions, and it can be quite uncomfortable for some people to go round each person in turn to introduce themselves. It is often better to do this in pairs or small groups, or ask people to chat and then introduce each other.

Tip

When you choose an introductory activity, think about what you want it to achieve, how much time you have and how people will react to your choice of activity.

Don't just use the ideas in this section – you will find other activities in this resource pack which will work as icebreakers too: questionnaires; checklists and quizzes; or using a card sorting activity. You can also use the Timeline activity on p25 of unionlearn's companion guide *Valuing the Skills of Older Workers*. These activities work well for one-to-one sessions as well as with large groups, where you can split people into small groups or pairs.

Tip

When you go to an event, conference or course and you like the introductory activities, note how to do things and keep handouts so that you can use them yourself with groups in your workplace.

True or false?

This icebreaker helps people to get to know each other better. You will need some post-it notes and a container for this activity.

People can do this sitting around tables or split into small groups. Give everyone three post-it notes and ask them to write a statement about themselves on each note, but only one of them should be true.



Each person presents their three statements and the others vote on which one is true. You could also vary this by asking everyone to write just one true thing about themselves that nobody else knows and put these into a container. These are pulled out one at a time and everyone tries to guess who made the statement. Then the person talks a bit about themselves.

Find someone who...

This activity will give people in a group a chance to move about and introduce themselves to each other, as well as focus on a theme. You will need activity sheets and pens.

The example given here is about having a healthy lifestyle, so would be a good way to kick things off at a conference, workshop or workplace event on health and well-being, or as part of a day on mid-life challenges. You can adapt it for any topic, or just use general statements to help people to get to know each other (for example, find someone who has a birthday in the same month as yours).

Give everyone an activity sheet and encourage them to walk round the room and talk to each other about the healthy aspects of their lifestyle. If you find someone who can tick a box, ask them to write their name in it. Introduce a rule about how many boxes can be signed by the same person! If you think anyone might have trouble reading the sheet ask everyone to do it in pairs and help each other. This activity can be adapted to fit the number of people and the time available. A bit like Bingo, you can ask people to get a line, or a full house.

Has their five fruit and veg every day	Walks briskly for at least half an hour most days	Avoids salty foods or does not add salt to cooking	Takes daily exercise
Chooses fat-free or low-fat milk and dairy products	Avoids fizzy drinks with lots of sugar	Walks or cycles to work	Reads the labels on food products
Went swimming or running in the last week	Only has cakes, biscuits or puddings as a treat	Has a home cooked meal most nights	Has a good work/life balance
Prefers wholefood to processed food	Limits the number of alcohol units they drink in a week	Does housework or gardening most days	Plays outside with their children/ grandchildren, or in a team

Crosswords and word searches

A short fun written activity in pairs to introduce the themes of the day will get people thinking about the issues that may be important to them in a mid-life review. Here you can make up your own crosswords and word searches. If you don't feel confident to put together a worksheet with a word game on it, you can search for free internet sites where you can make your own printable handouts. You just have to say which words you want to include and the website constructs the word search or crossword for you.

Example age-friendly word search:

P	E	N	S	I	O	N	S	B	K	B	H	N	J	M
Y	F	W	H	E	A	L	T	H	H	Y	S	O	I	Q
F	L	E	X	I	B	L	E	W	O	R	K	I	N	G
V	B	P	Z	G	T	E	C	I	E	D	I	T	L	L
Y	O	Q	L	G	K	A	S	T	S	K	L	O	E	E
C	T	L	A	A	R	O	I	E	L	T	L	M	A	G
A	N	E	U	I	N	R	D	Z	S	B	S	O	R	I
R	R	I	N	N	E	U	J	I	T	P	S	R	N	S
E	H	G	Q	M	T	J	M	R	R	V	N	P	I	L
M	L	F	E	I	A	E	A	E	C	Q	F	M	N	A
U	U	N	T	G	N	I	E	B	L	L	E	W	G	T
N	T	T	O	P	N	R	G	R	T	Z	R	E	Z	I
X	A	I	B	I	A	B	M	S	I	E	G	A	O	O
V	Q	F	N	C	P	V	N	B	V	N	T	D	M	N
B	B	G	Y	C	A	R	E	T	I	L	G	M	V	A

AGEISM

ATTITUDES

CAREER

CARING

HEALTH

LEARNING

LEGISLATION

LITERACY

NUMERACY

PENSIONS

PROMOTION

RETIREMENT

SKILLS

TRAINING

VOLUNTEERING

WELL-BEING

FLEXIBLE WORKING

Getting in line



This is an active ‘getting to know you’ icebreaker, which can be adapted to fit the topic in hand.

Find a space where everyone has the room to line up. Then ask everyone to arrange themselves in a line in order, e.g. alphabetically, the year they joined the organisation or in the month of their birthdays, something that means they have to talk to each other to be able to do this.

If you can find a relevant topic you can quickly repeat this as a lead-in, for example the age they think they might retire.

Or

Starting from each end of the line, match people up and ask them to talk about what they would like to get out of the day. Provide participants with post-it notes and ask them to write down the most important issues that they want to get out of the day. When the allotted time is up you can then discuss the topics on the post-it notes with the group.

3

Quizzes

A great way to raise awareness and get people talking about issues and challenges for older workers and those who employ them is to have a quiz to start things off, or to get a discussion going. Mid-life development reviews incorporate lots of themes which lend themselves to quizzes, and you can find statistics on the internet, although you do have to be careful to use reliable sites, with up-to-date data and other information. Quizzes can be answered individually, in pairs or small teams.



Designing quizzes

Quizzes don't have to be in words. You can use pictures or photographs (for example, photographs of famous people who have achieved things later in life, or pictures of things that make up a healthy lifestyle).

Quizzes can have multiple choice options where you offer three or four answers for each question and only one of them is true.

True or False? Is a popular format for a quiz (for example myths about older workers; facts about pensions; healthy living, as with our example on the next page).

If you have open questions where the answer is a matter of opinion rather than hard fact, you can ask people to give answers on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being "I think this is true" and 10 being "I don't think this is true."

Design a mega mid-life quiz with questions on a range of issues. These could be divided into categories, and teams could select a category based on the roll of a dice.

Quiz questions could be combined with a games format such as Bingo to make the competition more exciting.

Add a scoring system and use other methods you have seen to work elsewhere, for example quizzes where your score, or the choices you make, tell you something about yourself. You have to remember to make up the text to give this feedback. For example, in a personal quiz, "Have you thought about your retirement?", there will be no right answers, but you might conclude by offering some signposting advice – if you scored all (a)s you might want to contact Pensionwise; all (c)s, you are very clued up and should become a ULR and help to offer others a mid-life review.

You can use PowerPoint for the questions and answers if you have the facilities for projecting. If not, providing a quiz sheet or someone shouting out the questions are just as good. You can also write the questions on cards, shuffle them and let teams choose their questions.

You can use survey monkey and social media apps (online tools for creating quizzes) and there are YouTube tutorials and websites like [WikiHow.Com](https://www.wikihow.com) which have ideas for making quizzes. You can get ideas from online quizzes, e.g. the Buzz Quiz which offers career ideas and tells you what kind of "animal" you are www.icould.com/buzz

Give the quiz a title – "How much do you know about...?", "Is your workforce a healthy one?"

Keep a notebook. If you come across interesting facts or quotes for your quiz questions, note them down. Collect pictures of older workers and articles about them so that you can do a picture quiz. Don't forget to check whether images are copyright or if you need permission to use them.

Think up interesting questions which people can be expected to have a personal view on, or be surprised or amused by. Think about whether the question will start a discussion, tell a story, or whether people will learn something new or see things in a different way. Make sure you have correct facts and can tell people what the source of your information was.

Keep the questions simple, even if answers are complicated. Keep the quiz short, but allow time when giving people the answers, for discussion.

Here is an example of a short quiz about health and well-being:

Healthy living – what do I know?

(A True or False? quiz adapted from *The Rainbow Years* by Barrie Hopson and Mike Scally)

1.	Men can safely drink up to three pints of beer, or four shorts, or two large glasses of wine a day and women can drink up to two pints of beer or cider, or two large glasses of wine or four shorts or cocktails a day.	T	F
2.	The UK recommended daily calorie intake is 2,500 for men and 2,000 for women.	T	F
3.	Being overweight or obese is very likely to be damaging to health and well-being.	T	F
4.	Being overweight is all due to our genetic make-up.	T	F
5.	We should all know our Body Mass Index (BMI) to recognise whether we are overweight.	T	F
6.	To stay healthy we should all eat at least five portions of fruit and vegetables every day (not including potatoes).	T	F
7.	Saturated fats (found in dairy products, red meat, palm oils) and hydrogenated fats (found in fast food, types of margarine, commercial cakes and biscuits) should be avoided; monounsaturated and polyunsaturated fats (found in olive oil, some nut oils and oily fish) can be beneficial.	T	F
8.	As long as we keep below the recommended daily calorie intake, it doesn't matter much what we eat.	T	F
9.	Some carbohydrates (potatoes, especially fried, pizza, refined cereals, sugar, soft drinks, white bread, and white rice) are to be eaten sparingly, while others (brown rice, whole grains, whole fruits, legumes, whole wheat products) are much more beneficial.	T	F
10.	Protein is best obtained from fish, trimmed poultry, lean meat, eggs, beans, nuts, grains and a variety of vegetables.	T	F
11.	Taking vitamin and other food supplements is essential.	T	F

Answers to the healthy living quiz

1. False – using government advice in the UK, but safe limits vary depending on which country you live in.
2. True
3. True – obesity is linked to a range of health problems and can reduce life expectancy.
4. False – most cases of obesity are caused by eating too much and moving too little.
5. True – a BMI calculator is available on the NHS website to check whether you are the right weight for your height (see [nhs.uk/tools/pages/healthyweightcalculator.aspx](https://www.nhs.uk/tools/pages/healthyweightcalculator.aspx)).
6. True
7. True
8. False – look at The Eatwell Guide on the NHS website to see what makes up a balanced diet – see www.nhs.uk/Livewell/Goodfood/Pages/the-eatwell-guide.aspx
9. True
10. True
11. False – if we have a balanced diet we should not need to take vitamin or mineral supplements unless they are prescribed.

Detailed information about all of these aspects of healthy living, together with calculators and other tools, can be found on the NHS Choices Livewell website – see www.nhs.uk/Livewell

4

Questionnaires

Questionnaires that people fill in individually can be very helpful to get people thinking, and clarify ideas. You will find some questionnaires to download from the union learning Climbing Frame website – see climbingframe.unionlearn.org.uk which are intended to provide the first opportunity for people to identify their priorities for discussion in a mid-life development review. You can adapt these in any way you wish. There are lots of other examples online.

The Supporting Mid-life Development pre-review questionnaire (p14) can be used in one-to-one or group activities. This resource can help you identify common issues and areas of importance for colleagues. This resource can also help form the basis of future activity, e.g. if many colleagues identify finance as important you may wish to organise a lunch and learn session with human resources, pensions advisors or run pre-retirement workshops.

Supporting mid-life development: pre-review questionnaire

Name _____

Union _____

Employer _____

Age group

☐ Below 40

☐ 40–44

☐ 45–49

☐ 50–54

☐ 55–59

☐ 60–64

☐ 65–69

☐ 70 or over

Mid-life issue

Rank 1–15

1 = most important;

15 = least important

Finding a new job _____

Changing career _____

Keeping current job _____

Getting promotion with current employer _____

Flexible working arrangements _____

Developing new skills for paid work _____

Better work-life balance _____

Developing new skills for leisure or voluntary work _____

Learning for its own sake _____

Retirement _____

Finance _____

Caring responsibilities _____

Health _____

Relationships _____

Making a difference to society _____

A photograph of two men in an indoor setting. The man on the right, wearing a blue and green plaid shirt, is smiling and looking towards the left. The man on the left, wearing a grey shirt, is looking down at a document. A large teal circle with the number '5' is overlaid on the top left of the image.

5

Checklists

You can develop your own checklists to encourage people to think about a range of personal issues and to get their thoughts in order. The book listed in the resource section, *The Rainbow Years* has some good examples, including one about what people spend money on so that they can plan for their retirement, and the example on page 16 (*Do transitions make us ill*) about the impact of changes in life on mental and physical health in the future.

This particular checklist was originally developed as an assessment tool by Holmes and Rahe, and it is very useful to kick-start a discussion about reducing stress and taking into account the impact of life changes when making action plans for the future. It can be used one-to-one, in pairs and in groups. Ask people to fill it in, and add up their score. You might need to provide a calculator.

Do transitions make us ill?

Look at the list of life changes (transitions) outlined in the table below. Ask yourself how many you have experienced over the last twelve months and tick them. Each life change has a score.

Life experience	Score	Life experience	Score
Death of a spouse	100	Son or daughter leaving home	29
Divorce	73	Trouble with in-laws	29
Marital separation	65	Outstanding personal achievement	28
Time in prison	63	Spouse begins or stops work	26
Death of a close family member	63	Begin or end school or college	26
Personal injury or illness	53	Change in living conditions	25
Marriage	50	Revision of personal habits	24
Loss of job	47	Trouble with boss	23
Marital reconciliation	45	Change in work hours or conditions	20
Retirement	45	Change in residence	20
Change in health of a family member	44	Change in schools or colleges	20
Pregnancy	40	Change in recreation	19
Sex difficulties	39	Change in religious activities	19
Gaining a new family member	39	Change in social activities	18
Business readjustment	39	Small mortgage or loan	17
Change in financial state	38	Change in sleeping habit	16
Death of a close friend	37	Change in number of family get-togethers	15
Change to a different line of work	36	Change in eating habits	15
Change in number of arguments with spouse	35	Holiday	13
Large mortgage or loan	31	Christmas	12
Foreclosure of mortgage or loan	30	Minor violations of the law	11
Change in responsibilities at work	29		

Add up your total number of points. Write your total here:



This is how the results might be interpreted – you could put this on a flip chart or PowerPoint slide:

0–149	Very little life change – no impact on health
150–199	Mild life change – risk of minor ailments, occasional depression
200–249	Moderate life change – risk of depression
250–299	Serious life change – risk of lowered resistance to disease
300–999	Major life change – risk of serious illness

You need to allow time for discussion as some people may be very concerned about their results. People react differently to stress and may be in better health if there is a lot going on in their lives, and some changes listed here can be good or bad depending on what is going on in people's lives and how much control they have over it.

6

Body mapping

Checklists do not have to be in words. You can use photographs, diagrams and drawings to get people thinking. A good example of this is body mapping, used to raise awareness about illness and injury which may be work-related or can affect an individual's ability to work. Workers can use a diagram to indicate health problems (with coloured pens or stickers) and think about causes and solutions in the workplace.

You can use this activity as part of a health and well-being session to identify common patterns of health problems amongst workers in a particular workplace or doing the same job. Whilst it is not certain that any such common ailments are work-related, it highlights areas for further investigation.

Body mapping

There is nothing difficult in body mapping. You start with the front and back body outlines. You could provide everyone with a small body map or, alternatively, you could enlarge it either for use in a meeting with several members or for display on the union notice-board.

Members are then asked to put a sticker, or a coloured mark onto the body map to show any symptoms that they may have.

It is a good idea to use different colours to identify different symptoms, for example:

Red – Aches and pains

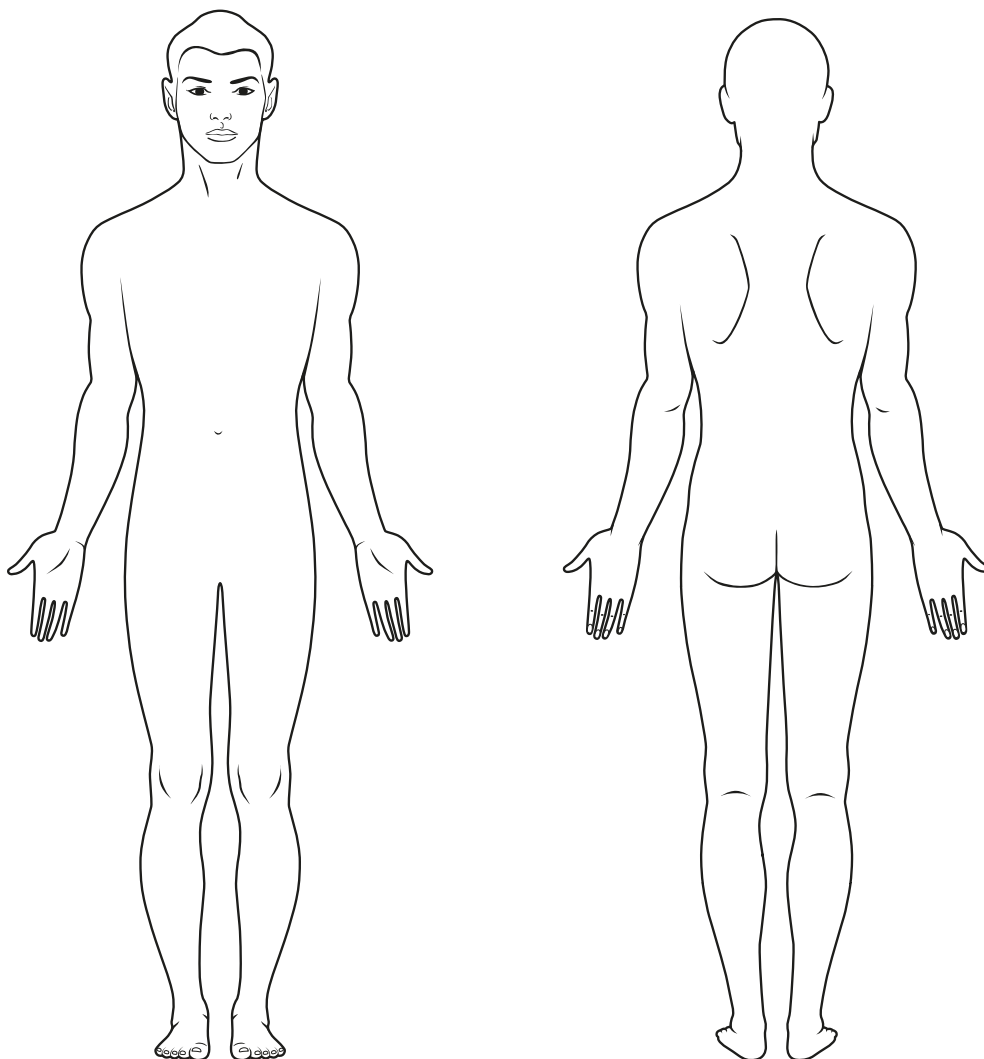
Blue – Cuts and bruises

Green – Illnesses

Black – Anything else

By comparing the different symptoms of members working in the same area, or doing the same tasks, you can identify common themes.

You can find out more about body mapping from the TUC and unionlearn websites or from PCS at www.pcs.org.uk



7



Card-sorting activities

Unionlearn has produced two free packs of cards to be used for a range of card-sorting activities. They are called *Value My Skills*, and *Match Up!*, and both can be ordered from the unionlearn website. Each pack has an instruction card about how to use them, one-to-one, in pairs or in groups. Both are useful as part of mid-life development reviews.

Value My Skills cards *(transferable skills card game)*

An interactive card game to help you and your colleagues identify your transferable skills. If you are interested in a new job, a course, a promotion or some voluntary work, use these cards to help you and your colleagues to think about the skills you've already developed. You can use the cards to start a discussion, plan for the future or provide the right words to describe your skills in a CV, application form or covering letter. The cards can be used by individuals or in a group, where everyone helps each other to think about their skills.

To order your pack visit <http://bit.ly/1UictNT>



Match Up! cards *(qualification progression game)*

An innovative progression card game has been designed for reps to use with learners to help them gain a better understanding of the range of qualifications on offer and where they sit in the qualification framework. The game will assist reps and learners to look at the different progression routes available as well as help learners in navigating their way round the many qualifications that have been developed. This fun and engaging activity can be used for Adult Learners Week, taster sessions or as part of a workshop or meeting.

To order your pack visit <http://bit.ly/1pxaUeE>

What is important to you?

Life values cards

There is another card sorting activity, originally designed by Barrie Hopson and Mike Scally, and included in their book *The Rainbow Years*. The activity is “Life Values” but you could re-name it, “What is important to you?” Mid-life is a good time to think about what is important to people and whether or not their paid work has been a good fit with their personal values. Values are different to goals, they underpin all our actions, and they can change throughout life. Trade union activities, voluntary work and other community-based activities can be an opportunity to get the balance right. This card sort activity would make a good starting point for a mid-life development review.

The simplest way to use the cards is to set out the five headings cards (on page 24), and ask people to put each values card (pages 23 and 24) under a heading, then to discuss what issues this activity raises for them, and, if they want to, to record their thoughts.

The cards can also be used as “flash cards”, working in small groups – one person takes a values card and shows it to the group and a discussion can take place about whether it is important or not.

The cards can be spread out randomly on a table and each person can choose one that has a meaning for him or her. Then each person can talk about their thoughts and get some feedback from others in the group.

Tips

Use them as part of a one-to-one interaction or in pairs or small groups.

Produce enough sets of cards so that people have one each.

Give everyone the cards with the four headings on as well as the values cards.

Make sure there is enough space to spread the cards out on a table or to stick them on a wall or flip chart.

Allow enough time for the activity, and time to swap over if people are in pairs or groups.

People will do this at their own pace, so have some questions ready for discussion if some people finish early.

Think about using a simple recording sheet so that people can note down their own results – this might just have two headings, “what is important to me” and “what is not important to me”.

Encourage people to ask if they don’t understand some of the words used to describe values.

Have some blank cards and pens available so that additional cards can be made for other values, or to use other words to describe them.

The life values cards

Please photocopy and cut out these 'life values' statements, together with the 'importance' statements that follow. In discussion with the group ask members to allocate each statement to a level of importance. Compare the results across the group members.

Ambition You aspire to high achievement, status or standing	Communication You enjoy being able to express ideas well in writing or in speech
Helping society You like to be involved in things which will make a contribution to the community, society or the world	Community You like being in a place that gives you ready access to activities and people you value
Work-life balance You want a balance between your paid work and all the other areas of your life	Competition You like competing against other people or groups
Stability You value permanence and continuity in your relationships and your activities	Integrity You are committed to honesty and high moral standards
Health and well-being You are committed to a lifestyle which best ensures your physical and mental well-being	Security You like to live free of fear or anxiety with few financial worries in a safe, unthreatening environment
Physical challenge You enjoy doing something that is physically demanding	Artistic You appreciate art, music, design, books, theatre, film etc.
Making Decisions You like making decisions about how things should be done, who should do it and by when	Independence You like being independent, a free agent, in charge of your own life and options
Being expert You like being known as someone with special knowledge or skills	Wealth It matters to you to have a healthy bank balance and significant assets
Helping others You like to help other people individually or in groups	Risk You like to take physical, financial, emotional or intellectual risks

Excitement You need a lot of excitement in your life	Learning It is important to you to continually learn new things
Spirituality You have a commitment to a “greater good”, a better world, a common humanity, a just and healthy society, a planet at peace	Pleasure The “good things of life”, fun and enjoyment and time for them matter a great deal to you
Time freedom You prefer to be able to choose your own times for doing things	Peace You prefer to have few pressures or uncomfortable demands
Variety You like to have lots of different things to do and frequent change	Reputation You prize being held in high esteem for your qualities and achievements
Relationships You place high importance on the quality and maintenance of relationships with friends and family	Challenge You like being stretched, adventure, new ground, responding to the unexpected
Contact with people You enjoy having a lot of contact and interaction with people	Teamwork You like working with others and collective achievement
Persuading people You enjoy persuading people to change their minds, buy something, volunteer for something etc.	Creativity Thinking up new ideas and ways of doing, expressing or representing things is important to you

Very important This is very important to me and drives many of my decisions and actions
Important This is important to me and definitely affects what I decide and what I do
Quite important This is quite important to me and shapes some of my decisions
Of little importance This is of little importance to me
Not important This is not one of my values and has no influence on what I do

Adapting a card-sorting activity

Instead of life values you might want to concentrate on work values. Or it may be, if you are using the Value My Skills cards, that you can think of lots of alternative words to describe skills. Here is a list of words that could be used to describe values in a different way to the set included here.

What's important to you? Additional cards might be:

Respect	Personal development
Using my abilities	Power
Being busy	Serving others
Good living conditions	Social justice
Good working conditions	Citizenship
Promotion	Environment/conservation
Appreciation	Shared values/beliefs
Recognition	Loyalty/trust
Being a leader	Financial independence
Having authority	Freedom
Friendly co-workers	Order/tidiness
Fairness	Solidarity
Equality	Simplicity

8



Activities for groups



Lunch and learn

This is a great way of setting up and recording discussions, particularly with a large group. It is adapted from an activity called The World Café. For more ideas, visit theworldcafe.com for a useful guide *Café to Go!* This would be a great activity to use at a union conference or Learning at Work Day event. It keeps everyone together, but allows for small group discussion and for everyone to record their own thoughts. No need for just one person to volunteer to write on a flipchart.

What you will need

- a large group of people
- tables and chairs
- large paper tablecloths with spaces to write or draw on
- felt tip pens in legible colours to write with – make sure they will not mark the tables
- refreshments for each table
- a menu for each table with the questions or theme of the discussion, and instructions about how the activity works; alternatively, you can write the question or theme directly onto the table cloth.

Choose a discussion theme for each table

This might be:

- flexible working
- retirement planning
- caring responsibilities
- valuing my skills
- mid-life career planning
- finance and pensions
- transferable skills
- health and well-being.

or each table might have a question, or questions, to think about

These might be:

- How could flexible working work for me and my employer?
- I want to retire in two years' time – what do I need to think about?
- How can I change my career at 50+?
- What financial issues do I need to address as an older worker?
- How can I balance work and caring responsibilities and still have time for me?
- How do I develop and use my skills at mid-life?
- What health issues do I need to think about as an older worker?

How to do it

1. Set up the tables, writing the theme or questions on the menu or table cloth for each table.
2. It is helpful if one person volunteers to be in charge at each table, and to stay there when everyone else moves round, so they can keep track of the range of questions being discussed. They can also start the discussion going and keep it focused.
3. Ask everyone to choose a table to start with so that there is a group at each table. Tell them they will then be able to move round to any table they choose during the activity.
4. Tell everyone how much time they have before moving on (10-20 minutes), and that you will tell them when to move. Then get started.
5. Each person records their ideas and comments on the tablecloth in words or pictures and discusses their thoughts with the group.
6. Call time, and ask everyone except the table host to move to a new table – they can stay together or try a new group.
7. Repeat as many times as you want to. You could have everyone who comes to the table discussing and recording thoughts on the same theme or question, or you could write different questions on the menu for each table move. You could also encourage people to link ideas on the tablecloth by mind-mapping or using arrows to create a flow chart.
8. Then give people time to return to other tables to see what others have written or drawn, or put the tablecloths up on the wall. Photograph the tablecloths to keep a smaller record of the event.

Information market

This is a lively activity for large groups, which can be combined with other ideas in this resource pack, such as the Lunch and Learn activity. The length of this activity can vary depending on how many stalls you have and the time available.

You will need:

- a large group of people
- tables for stalls or flip chart stands for people to gather round – one for each group
- chairs for everybody arranged round the tables or flip charts, unless people are willing to stand.

How to do it

1. Small groups discuss a theme, or a set of questions, e.g. careers advice, volunteering, courses, training, useful websites etc. Each group summarises their key points on a single piece of flip chart paper or poster.
2. Set up the tables and flip chart stands as far away from each other as possible so people can hear.
3. Each group is allocated a table and/or a flip chart stand where they can set up their stall to share their key points with everyone.
4. Each group leaves one or two people to cover the stall, and the others go to visit the next stall.
5. Every 5–10 minutes, signal to the groups to move on to the next stall, until they are back at their own.
6. Each group shares what they have learned and change their flip charts if they wish.
7. Everyone goes for a last walk round the stalls, and if anyone wants to comment on something to the whole group, they can do that, or you can summarise key points.



Speed activity

This is a great way of making sure that everyone gets a chance to talk to everyone else. You could use the questions in the Lunch and Learn activity, or you could do the whole activity on a particular theme, such as health and well-being. Whatever you choose to do, you need a list of topics or questions for people to discuss, e.g. if the theme of the activity is to raise awareness of health and well-being issues in the workplace, the list might be:

- health and safety issues for older workers in your workplace
- common health problems for older workers
- ways of keeping fit as you get older
- ways of giving up things that are bad for you
- what happens in the menopause and how might it affect women at work?
- what do you know about mental health issues?
- what activities might help colleagues with mental health issues?
- how to raise awareness in your workplace.

You will need:

- chairs arranged in two lines with pairs of chairs facing each other and as much space between the pairs as you can allow, so people can hear each other – this activity gets very noisy
- something to make a loud noise to start the activity, to signal the half-way point and to move people on.

How to do it

1. If you can use PowerPoint at your meeting, make a presentation with one question or topic to each screen. If not, write them on cards or post-it notes, one for each pair.
2. Arrange the chairs, and seat everyone in pairs facing each other.
3. Explain to everyone how the activity works, telling them to make sure that they give each other equal time to speak, and that you will give them a signal to swap over.
4. Either put the first topic on the screen or pass the post-its or cards round.
5. Blow the whistle or ring the bell to start the activity, giving people 5 minutes total. Signal to them at the halfway point to swap over and allow the other person to speak.
6. Signal to them again to stop and move on. One row of people moves up one chair so that everyone has a new partner.
7. Then introduce the next topic, and start the process again.
8. Keep going until you have run out of topics.
9. Ask the group about any interesting points that were made.



9

Organising external advisory sessions

There are many areas of concern to older workers where a union rep can provide an opportunity to talk about themselves and their families, and to explore their hopes and fears for the future. The role of the rep is to listen and give feedback, and help people to formulate the right questions to ask an expert, but unless they have the relevant skills it would be inappropriate to give advice on subjects such as health, finance, legal matters, caring responsibilities, or careers. Even helping someone to find information on the internet has its pitfalls because the internet is not regulated and you cannot always believe what you read. You also may be putting yourself at risk if you reveal any personal details on an interactive website which is not secure.

So what is the answer? Many working people cannot afford to pay for confidential advice, and much of the free advice available, for example from GPs or the National Careers Service, is limited by timing and scope. You can refer people to free telephone helplines, email and online enquiry services and local face-to-face services run by voluntary organisations like Citizens Advice.

Unionlearn has produced a new set of pocket-sized signposting guides to help reps to find reliable web-based, local and national services on a range of topics.

What you can also do is to arrange for external advisors to come to you, or for you to arrange a visit to or from your workplace. There may be a cost implication but many priced services will regard it as an opportunity to market their services, and may run a workshop, do a presentation or host a breakfast or lunchtime Q&A session for free.

If your employer cannot run, for example, a pre-retirement information session for older workers, your union could support you in setting one up. It could be a course, running part-time over a series of evenings in a learning centre, or lunchtimes, or a weekend, or a single full or half day session, using some of the activities in this resource pack. Pre-retirement is just an example, you could arrange sessions on career planning for older workers (including flexible working, self-employment and career change) or health and well-being in mid-life.

Pre-retirement topics

Here are some topics which you might want advisors to cover. Your union may be able to help you organise these events or put you in contact with the relevant union advisor. You may find these activities particularly useful as a learning at work activity.

Icebreakers

- Getting to know people
- Why forward planning is needed
- Identifying needs and issues about retirement
- Deciding when to retire

Managing change

- Psychological changes
- Emotional upheaval
- Relationships
- Caring responsibilities
- Self-esteem and status
- New interests and networks
- Paid and unpaid work – the removal of the default retirement age

Health and well-being

- Physical health
- Mental health
- Menopause
- Disability
- Lifestyle choices
- Keeping fit and well, physically and emotionally

Pensions and benefits

- Occupational pensions
- Private pensions
- Statutory state pension
- New pension freedom – lump sums, annuities and drawdown schemes
- Expression of wish – who receives your pension when you die
- Other state welfare benefits
- National Insurance

Personal finance

- Independent financial advice and risk assessment
- Financial decisions to be made
- Living expenses
- Budgeting
- Paying off debts
- Savings
- Investments
- Income
- Taxation of income and assets
- Helping family members financially

Legal considerations

- Wills and trusts
- Power of Attorney

A man with glasses and a blue work shirt is working on a machine in a workshop. He is holding a tool and looking towards the camera. The background is slightly blurred, showing industrial equipment.

10

Case studies and scenarios

Case studies and scenarios can be used to bring a range of topics to life, and can lead to people feeling comfortable about going on to discuss their own situation in a group. They can be about individuals, groups, workplaces or other settings and can be completely imaginary or based on real people and situations.

You can make them up yourself, draw on examples from your union, or use case studies from unionlearn publications such as the TUC Education workbook, *Mental Health and the Workplace*, or from the Climbing Frame learning themes. Some other examples are included in this section.

Once you have chosen or written the case studies or scenarios, you can use them in different ways to get people thinking and talking.

Exploring issues and solving problems

Get people into small groups or pairs and give them a handout with one or more case studies or scenarios to choose from. Include some questions for them to discuss and give feedback on. You can allocate a different one for each group, or everyone can do the same one, or they can choose from a selection.

Below are some examples of case studies which have been used in unionlearn Supporting Learners events, and are particularly good for exploring issues that might come up in a mid-life development review.

There are no “right answers” to the questions, and everyone can contribute good ideas, which they can share with the group afterwards. You need to let people know when they start this activity that they will be asked to give feedback so someone can note down their ideas. You can add spaces on the case study sheets for people to make notes, or they can write it on a piece of flip chart paper using marker pens.



Adele is 54 and works for an international engineering company as an office manager. There are rumours that the company she works for is going to make redundancies and her department might be affected. She wants to be ready in case her job is to go and is open to the possibility of a career change. She feels anxious about leaving as she has worked for the same company for 25 years and feels some of her skills may need updating.

What questions would you ask Adele?

What organisations, resources and websites would you signpost her to?

What advice would you give her?



Magda is a mother of three who works in retail. She would like to progress within the company she works for but is worried that her lack of IT skills will hold her back.

She wants to keep up to date with her children and their school is encouraging parents to access information like paying for school dinners and accessing their homework online.

Magda has experience of using a keyboard in a previous job but has never really used the internet. She is keen to know ways in which using the internet could help save her time and money and help her get on at work.

What questions would you ask Magda?

What organisations, resources and websites would you signpost her to?

What advice would you give her?



Dev works as a lorry driver. He has done the same job for over 20 years and is looking to try something new. He did well at school but has never really had the time to take his studies further. He now feels he is ready to take on a new learning challenge.

What questions would you ask Dev?

What organisations, resources and websites would you signpost him to?

What advice would you give him?



Conrad is planning to retire next year. He hasn't decided what to do when he retires. He is keen to try some new things but also recognises that he needs to budget and wants to get his personal finances in order. He is worried that he will get bored at home so wants to make sure he keeps both his mind and body active.

What questions would you ask Conrad?

What organisations, resources and websites would you signpost him to?

What advice would you give him?

Mock review using a simple case study



Maria is aged 59. She is divorced, and her children have grown up and moved away from the area she lives in. She successfully ran her own business, a café, for 25 years. She was forced to close the business down when she developed a serious health problem linked to working in a kitchen.

She has no self-confidence, and thinks she has no skills, but actually she has a lot. She is good at dealing with the public, and has skills in customer service, marketing, promotion, recruiting and managing staff, dealing with complaints and financial skills.

She is currently working in a hotel, serving breakfasts. She thinks that her ideal job would be to be a tourist guide, but the only jobs available locally are in catering and hospitality, the care sector and security services. Maria is also worried that she might be too old to start a new career. What should she do?

Mid-life career review (Maria)

Personal details and experience

Including age, personal situation, level of confidence, current and previous jobs, union involvement, qualifications, transferable skills, voluntary work or interests.

Work

Does Maria want to find a new job, change career, get promotion, keep current job, develop new skills for new opportunities, change work-life balance or make more flexible arrangements?

Learning and skills

Has Maria any ideas about developing new skills for paid work, voluntary or leisure interests, learning for enjoyment, up-skilling, re-skilling or moving on to higher learning?

Retirement

Note here any areas Maria wants to think about in more detail: retirement, pensions, health and well-being, caring responsibilities, leisure and voluntary activities.

Action points

Note here the three most important actions you think Maria should take now:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

11

Resources

Resources to help you with every stage of the mid-life development review process can be found in the Supporting Mid-life Development learning theme at <https://climbingframe.unionlearn.org.uk>

They include:

- how to order the Value My Skills cards
- Value My Skills activity recording sheet
- a mid-life quiz
- pre-review questionnaire
- post-review questionnaire
- overcoming barriers resource sheet
- guide to registering people on the Climbing Frame
- links to eNotes
- ULR transferable skills sheet
- the Age and Employment Network (TAEN) *Challenging Age* Guide
- how to order Match-Up! cards
- *50+Works: a guide for older jobseekers* (TAEN).

Other resources for supporting learners can be ordered or downloaded from www.unionlearn.org.uk including:

- *Valuing the Skills of Older Workers: How to do a mid-life development review*
- *Supporting Learners – Guides for union reps (2013 edition)*
- *Delivering Better Learning Agreements – a guide for union reps and officers*
- *Making Learning And Meetings Accessible To All*
- *Working for Learners*
- *Supporting Mid-Life Development Mini Guides*

Useful websites to help with mid-life development reviews are:

- www.unionlearn.org.uk
- www.tuceducation.org.uk
- The Age and Employment Network (TAEN) www.taen.org.uk
- Download the pdf of *50+ Works – A guide for older jobseekers* www.taen.org.uk/uploads/resources/50+Works_Older_Jobseekers_Guide_Web_Version.pdf
- The National Careers Service (NCS) <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>
- The Buzz Quiz www.icould.com/buzz/
- Fifty Plus Works www.50plusworks.com
- TUC Worksmart www.worksmart.org.uk
- PRIME (The Prince's Initiative for Mature Enterprise) www.prime.org.uk
- Gov.UK www.gov.uk

Books

- *The Rainbow Years – the pluses of being 50+* by Barrie Hopson and Mike Scally
- *The Groupwork Toolkit* by Ann Reynolds and Julie Cooper

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