Improving Working Conditions: Contribution to Active Ageing, Ireland

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Situation of older workers in Ireland 1990 to 2010

Between 1990 and 2010:
- Population increase of 27.4%, second highest in EU
- Increase of 3.8% in ratio of 50 to 64 age group to working age population and total population, one of lowest in EU
- Lowest elderly to youth ratio in EU
- High dependency ratio, mainly due to high number in 0 to 14 age group
- Other EU countries ageing at a quicker rate than Ireland at present
Situation of older workers in Ireland 2010 to 2030

Between 2010 and 2030:
- 36% increase in population aged 50 to 64, 2nd highest in EU
- 83% increase in population aged 65 and more, highest in EU
- 5.2% and 2.45% increase in 50 to 64 age group to working age population and total population
- 4% increase in 0 to 14 and 15 to 49 age groups
- Increasing elderly to youth and dependency ratios
- Ireland ageing but still at a slower rate than many EU countries in this period
- Plan to increase state pension age from present 65 to 68 by 2028
In 2010 participation and employment rates for 50 to 64 age group in line with EU average but considerably higher than for some countries which indicates these countries have social and economic mechanisms in place to allow this group leave the workforce.

Employment rate has dropped in Ireland due to recession which commenced in 2007 but older workers are faring okay as many in 15 to 49 age group have emigrated.

Average exit age was 64 years in 2006 which is high compared with EU.
Policies and initiatives (health and wellbeing)

- Initial development by the Health and Safety Authority (HSA) with HSEUK of Work Positive organisational stress tool
- Subsequent development with the University of Ulster of online version hosted on www.managingwellbeing.com
- Implementation in over 150 private and public enterprises with support from the HSA
- Involves employees completing a 10 to 15 minute online questionnaire
Policies and initiatives (health and wellbeing)

- Can identify specific groups including older workers who may be experiencing organisational stress
- It identifies the cause of the stress using management standards (demands, control, support, relationships, role, change)
- Individual feedback to help improve health and wellbeing
- Organisational risk areas
Policies and initiatives (health and wellbeing)

HSA assisting Eircom (telecommunications) company with 7000 employees, many in older age category addressing employee wellbeing with completion of questionnaire and specific interventions for older men's health (male predominant gender group)

Similarly HSA assisting ESB (electricity) company with 9000 employees, many in older age category addressing employee wellbeing with production of employee wellbeing guide and organisation of training initiatives with a focus on mental wellbeing and health promotion. Previously ESB implemented Work Positive in many business units and identified need to improve mental health.
Policies and initiatives (health and wellbeing)

- Aughinish Alumina a refinery with 450 employees, male dominated with over 50% over 50 years of age
- Ageing workforce is an asset to be nurtured
- Objective to ensure employees reach retirement while performing their normal role and are fit and healthy when they retire
- Proactive health philosophy adopted
- Combination of supports and structures to achieve success
Policies and initiatives (health and wellbeing)

- Occupational medical service including 2 fulltime occupational health nurses
- Physical capability analysis for each job
- Musculoskeletal disorder prevention and case management
- Workplace health promotion activities
- Health articles in quarterly company magazine
- Cardiovascular health programme for all employees over 50 (identified 20 high risk employees)
- Annual health screening including PSA for over 50s
- Employee assistance programme (mainly non work issues)
- On site gym and sports hall
- 6km walk, jogging trail on site
Conclusion

- Ireland is ageing, albeit at a slower rate than many EU countries
- Online tools such as Work Positive are available to enterprises to enable them address work related stress and target interventions on mental health promotion for older workers
- Aughinish good example of proactive health management of older workforce