Find out how graduate recruiters show their commitment to age diversity and how to disclose your age and market your experience.

**Finding age positive employers**

Employers are becoming more aware of the benefits of having an age-diverse workforce and they're demonstrating a positive attitude towards recruiting, training and retaining workers of all ages.

For example, the corporate human resources supervisor from Enterprise Rent-A-Car says, 'Mature applicants for us represent a great opportunity for our business to become more diverse and increase the pool of knowledge and experiences that will help drive our business forward for the future.'

The UK graduate recruitment manager from CGI also comments, 'We do get quite a number of applications from mature students and we're very keen to receive them from that group. We think they bring quite a number of qualities to CGI. They tend to have a better focus and a better direction as to what they want to do with their career. They've often taken a decision, fairly recently perhaps, to move from their career into studying for a new career. That means they can bring the benefits of the subjects they've studied and also, potentially, the benefits of the experience they gained before they went back to university.'

'Age neutral' application forms are now common and employers are making sure their publicity and recruitment material doesn't put off older or younger people from applying.

**How are employers meeting age discrimination laws?**

There are a number of ways that graduate employers can make sure they're complying with age discrimination laws and are promoting good working practice in the area. This includes:

- Removing terms such as 'recent graduate' or mentions of specific time limits between graduation and joining the scheme.
- Changing images on recruitment campaigns to reflect the diversity of graduates.
- Making sure graduate schemes are suitable for candidates of all ages.
- Changing traditional milk round routes to make sure they include universities that offer a higher proportion of part-time courses (which are traditionally favoured by mature students).
- Removing language that could be deemed ageist in recruitment campaigns, for example, phrases such as ‘young and enthusiastic’.
- Accepting equivalent qualifications so those from various age groups (who took different qualifications) aren't excluded.

**Diversity initiatives and activities**

There are many initiatives and networks in place which promote an age-diverse workforce. These include:

- **The Age and Employment Network (TAEN)** promotes an effective labour market, helping people in mid and later life, employers and the economy.
- **The Employers Network for Equality & Inclusion (ENEl)** incorporates the Employers Forum on Age and the Employers Forum on Belief and is the UK's
leading employer network that covers all aspects of equality and inclusion issues in the workplace.

**Disclosing your age when marketing yourself to employers**

**Be clear about your skills**

Employers are interested in the whole package of what you have to offer, not just your work-specific skills and qualifications. Being aware of the skills you have and explaining them properly can really set you apart from other applicants and allow you to shine.

**Older graduates:** you've had more time to develop and refine your personal skills. But employers often report that while mature applicants have valuable skills to offer, they're not very good at marketing them. So make this something you think about. Everyday activities that you carry out almost without thinking can provide you with excellent skills. The [Open University Employability Skills Activity](https://www.open.ac.uk/employability) can help you to think about the skills you have to offer.

**Younger graduates:** you've had less time to work on your personal skills meaning you'll need to show that the experiences you've had are relevant and substantial enough to meet the needs of employers. Make sure you're clear about this in your applications. To add extra weight to your skills profile, consider carrying out voluntary work, work experience, a vacation scheme or placement year.

**Younger or older:** whatever your age it's useful to produce a review of the skills you have and then decide how you can provide evidence of them to an employer. Include all the skills you've developed through your life, at university, work, home, in sports and leisure activities, through travel – in short, from all of your past experiences. Start with these skills below and add to them as you can.

- **Communication:** writing, speaking, listening when talking to colleagues at work and university, writing letters, academic writing.
- **Time management:** juggling and prioritising commitments at home, in your social life, and with family, work and study.
- **Flexibility:** handling change and mixed-age environments, including changes in jobs or your family situation, studying or working with younger/older people.
- **Organisation:** running a home, involvement in student societies.
- **Teamwork:** on your course, in the community, sporting teams, at home.

**Think about your CV**

Consider what type of CV will suit you best.

**Older graduates:** create a skills-based CV that allows you to focus on your experiences and show an employer you have the right skills for the job. Alternatively, use a chronological CV to your advantage. Group together similar experiences, create a relevant work experience section, and put any points an employer would find most interesting near the top of the page. Check that you've addressed any gaps in your career history.
Younger graduates: make the most of the experiences you’ve had by really pulling out the skills you’ve gained from them. Include skills-based sections to highlight your abilities. Format your CV in the way that most clearly shows the link between you and the job. Tailor your CV to target every role you apply for, don't use one standard CV for every job.

Consider the advantages you have
It's very easy to stereotype but, in some situations, playing to the strengths of a stereotype can be helpful to you. With that in mind, advantages for both groups of graduates include:

Older graduates
- You have more business awareness from previous work experience – paid or voluntary, at senior or junior level.
- You're more likely to stay with the job for a substantial period, especially if you're committed to getting into a chosen career and are settled in a particular city or region.
- You have more experience of workplace politics, fitting in with new colleagues, handling a wide variety of situations and the ups and downs of a working day.

Younger graduates
- You have more desire for new challenges and experiences.
- You're more likely to be open-minded and embrace change.
- You're likely to bring a fresh perspective to the workplace and look in a different way at old problems or ways of working.
- You're more adaptable because you're not 'set in your ways’.

Finding age positive employers
The Equality Act 2010 brought together all of the existing regulations that gave protection against any kind of discrimination. The aim of this was to make the law simpler and remove any inconsistencies. It also strengthened protection in some situations.

This is now the main law relating to age discrimination. It provides the right to not be disadvantaged or treated badly at work or in education because of your age.

What the Equality Act does
The Equality Act makes it unlawful to:
- Discriminate directly on the grounds of age, i.e. treat you less favourably than others because of your age (unless it can be objectively justified).
- Discriminate indirectly on the grounds of age, i.e. use any practice or requirement which disadvantages someone of your age (unless it can be objectively justified).
- Subject you to harassment on the grounds of age, i.e. unwanted behaviour that offends your dignity or creates an intimidating, hostile, humiliating or offensive environment for you because of your age.
- Victimise you because you've made, or are going to make, a complaint or allegation of discrimination on grounds of age, or you're supporting someone who is.
Discriminate against you on the grounds of age after the working relationship has ended (in certain circumstances).

In addition to the above, the default retirement age has been abolished. This means an employer can’t force you to retire because you’ve reached a certain age and they can’t set a retirement age themselves unless it can be justified objectively.

You can also complain to your employer if a member of their staff has discriminated against you because of your age, as employers can be made to be responsible for the actions of their employees who discriminate against others. Because of this, employers are encouraged to train staff about the regulations in the Equality Act to avoid any discrimination.

Detailed technical advice about the Equality Act is available from the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Graduate recruitment schemes
Graduate recruitment schemes aren’t mentioned specifically in the Equality Act, but graduate employers are still expected to comply with the legislation. If they want to set an upper or lower age limit to a scheme, they need to be able to provide an acceptable business argument within the legislation to be able to do so.

The resource, Age and the Workplace: A Guide for Employers, produced by the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS), gives this advice to graduate recruiters:

‘If you limit your recruitment to university milk rounds only, you may find that this is indirect age discrimination as this practice would severely restrict the chances of someone over, say, 25 applying for your vacancies. If challenged, you would need to objectively justify this practice. Consider enhancing any milk round programme with a broader recruitment strategy, using other avenues to capture a wider pool of applicants of differing ages.’

Employers using age limits
In certain circumstances, it’s acceptable for employers to apply an upper or lower age limit in their recruitment, if they can use specific business needs to justify why it’s required. For example, they might argue that there should be a reasonable period of employment after training and before retirement. Or it can be justified that a 19-year-old wouldn't be able to apply for a job as a driving instructor, as a minimum of four years' driving experience is required to qualify.

What to do if you think you’ve been discriminated against
If the discrimination happened in the recruitment process:

- Ask the employer why your application wasn't successful and ask for information, such as the ages of those who were interviewed and the age of the person who was offered the position.
- Seek advice from the Citizens Advice Bureau or the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). For Northern Ireland, contact the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.
- Complete the Equality Act 2010 questionnaire. This will help you decide whether you've been discriminated against, particularly if you don't have any firm evidence.
If you believe you've been discriminated against and haven't received a satisfactory outcome by talking to the employer you can take the case to a tribunal.

If the discrimination happened at work:

- Express your concerns to the person you feel is discriminating against or harassing you.
- If the behaviour continues, or you feel unable to speak to that person, talk to your manager or trade union representative about the situation and the Equality Act.
- Use your company’s grievance procedure to take the matter further if necessary.
- If the problem remains unresolved seek further advice from ACAS.

**Extra Information**

**Association of Graduate Recruiters (AGR)**  
http://www.agr.org.uk/

**workSMART**  
http://www.worksmart.org.uk/

**Age Positive Publications**  
https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/age-positive

**Equality Act 2010**  
https://www.gov.uk/equality-act-2010-guidance

**Summary of the Law on Age Discrimination**  
http://www.thompsons.law.co.uk/ltext/age-discrimination.htm

**The Age and Employment Network (TAEN)**  
http://taen.org.uk/

**The Employers Network for Equality & Inclusion (ENEIF**  
http://www.enei.org.uk/

**Open University Employability Skills Activity**  
http://www.open.ac.uk/careers/employability-skills-activity.php

**Citizens Advice Bureau**  
http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/

**Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC)**  
http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/
Equality Commission for Northern Ireland.  
http://www.equalityni.org/

ACAS.  