

Copy for **Health Business Management** (August 2008)

'Fitness instructors - How old is too old?'

Pamela Holmes Healthy Ageing Programme, Help the Aged

The simple answer is that no age is too old. From a strictly legal point of view, one can't discriminate on the basis of age in the workplace. Since October 2006, it has been more difficult to use age as blunt tool for whittling down the workforce. Nor would it be advisable. The number of people aged under 50 will fall by two per cent by 2016, while the number aged between 50 and 69 is set to increase by 17 per cent.

Even now, organisations are positioning themselves to take advantage of the grey pound. To date, the fitness industry has been guilty of ignoring a potential market, which is growing and has money to spend. This risks leaving many older people excluded and unable to take part in the growing health revolution.

It is also vitally important for the health industry to engage with older people creatively. It has been proven that exercise is good for body and brain, prolongs life and increases well being all through life. Older fitness instructors can help to engage older people. Take the example of one of the exercise instructors Help the Aged has worked with previously, now 92 year of age, over 65 years in the business and still teaching today. She can modify exercises and to judge the capacity of participants so that classes are both safe and enjoyable. While someone is still capable of teaching safely, why not let them teach?

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