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Paul believes recruitment is about more than just 'filling gaps' but rather, that the success of the business depends on finding the right people for clients. With this in mind, recruiters should see the new Age Discrimination legislation as an opportunity to utilise a wider pool of candidates. Here Paul looks at how the industry can do this.

### Recruiters have a key role to play in stamping out age discrimination

As the Employment Equality (Age) Regulations, which come into effect this October, sound the death knell for ageism in the workplace, recruiters across all sectors have a huge responsibility resting on their shoulders.

As an objective intermediary between employer and candidate, the recruiter should ensure 'fair play' at all stages of the interviewing and recruitment process. This means that all recruitment personnel – regardless of seniority and position – need to have a full grasp of the new legislation and its practical implications. It's never too early to begin raising awareness of the new regulations amongst all members of recruitment staff. Full details can be found at [www.rec.uk.com/rec/members/lrg-age-discrimination.aspx](http://www.rec.uk.com/rec/members/lrg-age-discrimination.aspx)

So what are the practicalities? And how is the new legislation going to affect recruiters and their clients/candidates on a day-to-day basis?

A fundamental consideration for recruiters is the way in which they present candidates to prospective employers. At a very basic level, it will no longer



## Out with old-fashioned ageism

Meeting the requirements of new age discrimination legislation is an opportunity for all recruitment agencies

be acceptable to provide date of birth details on a CV. At the other end of the spectrum, recruiters will have to encourage clients to change their mindsets, regarding what 'type' of candidate they are looking for.

Encouraging clients to adopt a competency and skills-based approach to recruitment, rather than focusing on employing a person who falls within a pre-determined age range, will be crucial, as will promoting the advantages of recruiting candidates who fall outside of the usual age range for specific jobs, or those who are typically not considered by certain brands or companies because of their culture or image.

Expansive sector experience, depth of industry knowledge, the propensity of more mature

employees to hold down a job longer than their youthful counterparts, the flexibility offered by young professionals and their ability – and willingness – to burn the candle at both ends...the list of benefits of employing candidates from both the younger and older generations is endless.

Recruiters must challenge age criteria outlined by clients to ensure there is a reasonable

justification. If not, then the act of recruiting becomes unlawful.

Making clients aware of the changes, keeping them informed and offering advice also provides recruiters with the chance to strengthen their 'consultancy' position with clients and develop business relationships, in addition to helping clients stay on the right side of the law. The introduction of the new regulations offers recruiters a prime opportunity to communicate with clients, whether via mailers, presentations or marketing initiatives.

Recruiters must also be cautious when making candidates aware of opportunities on offer. Practices in advertising, a key recruitment tool, must be reviewed to ensure the wording, and even imagery, doesn't imply that positions are only open to candidates of a certain age group.

Encouraging a wider pool of candidates to apply for positions they might not normally consider – perhaps because a brand or company culture has certain age connotations – will not only open new doors for candidates, but will also benefit employers, who will be able to select from a greater base of applicants.

Above all, recruitment agencies need to lead by example. By setting out, and adhering to, a clear and transparent equal opportunities recruitment policy, we must be unequivocal advocates for this overdue piece of legislation, which sends out a clear message to employers – discrimination on the basis of age will no longer be tolerated in the workplace.

### SIGN THE PLEDGE!

For recruitment agencies, diversity is not a compliance issue, it's about finding the best candidates from all walks of life. The REC has introduced a complete set of practical tools and support information. It is partnering JobCentre Plus to support agencies, especially smaller businesses, to apply best practice in diversity management throughout the recruitment cycle. All REC members are strongly encouraged to use these tools and to sign up to the Diversity Pledge. For more information go to [www.rec.uk.com/diversity](http://www.rec.uk.com/diversity)