

Ethics Approval Number: 2013/115

Study Title: Job characteristics and their effect on the work motivation and job satisfaction of older and younger workers

Researchers: Guy Curtis, Jane Eaton

Summary of the study: The retention of older workers in an aging workforce is a necessary strategy for addressing potential skills shortages that may occur in the future. Work motivation and job satisfaction have previously been found to have a significant influence on people's willingness to participate in work. Therefore, this study investigated age-related differences in work motivation and job satisfaction that may influence the retention of older workers, and the influence of the characteristics of jobs themselves on satisfaction. We surveyed workers with a range of ages and compared those who were older (over 55) with those who were younger (under 55). We found that older workers were more motivated by the inherent interest in and meaning obtained from the job, while younger workers were comparatively more motivated by external factors such as financial rewards and praise. We found that jobs which provide social connectedness, autonomy, and a sense of competence were more motivating for all workers regardless of age. These results suggest that designing jobs to include social interaction, autonomy, and personal achievement will potentially help with retention of workers of all ages.