

Case studies

T Shea Limited

Operating without a retirement age

Waste transfer company T Shea operates from a 5.5 acre site in Cross Green, Leeds. Using a modern fleet of tippers and on-site plant, the company takes in demolition and construction waste and converts it into reusable aggregate via a crushing and screening process.

The business benefits of removing the retirement age

The company knows that the skill and attitude of its workforce has been pivotal in its diversification and success, and its older workers are particularly valued. The fact that the business operates without a retirement age means that it has been able to retain the life experience and skills of three members of its workforce: Barry Coleman, 61 and John Keeling, 61 - both HGV drivers - and Mick Prince, 67.

Office manager Sue Passelow feels that the benefits older workers bring to the business can't be underestimated: "From our perspective, we find that many older workers not only tend to be particularly reliable; as well as having life experience and common sense to apply to a role, they also bring a stabilising and calming influence to the team."

"It's absolutely crucial that no risks are taken when you're dealing with machinery of this size and scale. Experienced people know the limitations of these machines and just as importantly, what they are capable of doing.

Sue Passelow, T Shea"

Sue is also quick to address some of the misconceptions about employing older workers in a physical industry, and training them. "We find that our older people absorb training particularly well as they apply their life experience and common sense to the theory."

Why employees stay

Mick Prince joined T Shea as a loading shovel driver in July 2005. He is now responsible for loading wagons, keeping the stock pile clear and making sure the plant is well-organised and accessible to other vehicles at all times.

Mick says: "I really enjoy my work here and the hours suit me. I've certainly never experienced any discrimination on the basis of my age. In fact I've found that T Shea and the industry in general seem to want to keep people who have experience as the trust is there."

Mick tried retirement in June 2006, but after two days he decided he wanted to return to work. He continues; "I've been about to retire but when it comes to

it I have second thoughts! You hear about so many people who don't enjoy their retirement or experience health problems once they slow down. It's good to have a goal and something to look forward to."

Mick agrees that older workers add considerable value. He said; "Timekeeping is always top notch and we just get on with what we're supposed to do; employees here are very hard-working, regardless of their age."

"I would encourage any business to tap into the benefits older people can bring. Not only are you paying for their skills and experience; this expertise is also passed onto other members of staff."

Sue Passelow, T Shea

Retaining older workers

As well as having no retirement age, T Shea do not consider a person's age when recruiting, instead basing their decision on their skills, experience and capability to do the role.

Says Sue; "I would encourage any business to tap into the benefits older people can bring. Not only are you paying for their skills and experience; this expertise is also passed onto other members of staff."

Sue concludes: "An employee can work at T Shea as long as they choose provided they are competent and capable of doing their job, the same as anyone else. We're also very easy going about allowing people who choose to work beyond retirement to change their role or work more flexibly. We'd rather be flexible and keep employees like Mick than lose them."