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# How Can ESF Help Older Workers through the Recession?

24 November 2009, Birmingham

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## Some of the Key Messages from the Conference

### Why older workers ►►►

- ▶ **50+s face additional labour market barriers, made worse in times of recession.**
- ▶ The history of past recessions should make us expect further job losses and more difficult times for over-50s, even as the economy recovers.
- ▶ Once having been made redundant or already being unemployed or inactive, **older workers struggle to return to the employment.**
- ▶ People live longer and have substantial financial and caring commitments later.
- ▶ We must ensure that support is focused on young people and on people over 50 - support for both groups is important.
- ▶ **Age is a cross-cutting theme** which exacerbates any existing causes of labour market disadvantage - so don't think in equality silos. Women, ethnic minorities, lone parents etc....we all have an age!

### How the ESF-involved organisations can help older workers ►►►

- ▶ Government statistics show that adults aged **55-64 have the lowest level of academic qualifications** at all levels except Level 3 and are the highest group with no qualifications.
- ▶ **ESF programmes and projects have a key role to play in helping older workers through the recession** - especially when so much of the policy focus and additional funding is on NEETs.
- ▶ Using ESF activities to help make regional labour market fit for demographic purpose.
- ▶ **Retraining and re-directing careers in mid and later life is always possible** if people have a real desire and are given opportunities. Where older workers are given chances to re-train, examples suggest they gain a 'new lease of life'.
- ▶ Opportunities for 50+ workers include **volunteering to gain experience, intergenerational mentoring and self-employment**. Providers can structure support with them as an option in maintaining employability.
- ▶ **Helping 50+ workers to gain the skills, confidence and ability to remain in, or return to work, is crucially important** for the individual, their families, communities, their regional and national economies.

NB: The conference generated rich ideas both relating to what works and what does not and in regards to how could providers make their support to 50+ more effective. TAEN will share these over coming weeks.