

Underlying issues affecting confidence

The feeling of loss affects confidence and can be triggered by a number of different events. Losing a job is a traumatic, life-changing event that can severely affect an individual's confidence, even more so in later life. Often, 50+ jobseekers think they are no longer of use, have no skills to offer or believe their skills are industry-specific.

Losing a job can also mean a loss of identity and status, particularly for individuals aged 50+. Many will be defined by their job and more likely than younger adults to have been in the same job/industry for a considerable number of years. This is particularly true for older men.

Dealing with significant personal change, such as being made unemployed, is a major event in an individual's life. There are other 'life' events that can also affect confidence, for example: bereavement of a spouse/partner or parent, a serious personal illness, divorce/separation, family growing up and leaving home, and generally coping with the thought of getting older.

Financial security may be a contributing factor impacting on 50+ jobseekers, with many uncertain as to how they will continue to 'make ends meet' in later life.

Learning needs, such as dyslexia and literacy/numeracy issues, can go undetected particularly for workers aged 50+ who have been involved in more manual or physical jobs. Over the years they may have developed coping mechanisms which have hidden these underlying conditions.

Mental health related illnesses, such as depression, can be triggered by a life-changing event, such as being made redundant. In some instances this can go un-diagnosed and may not be immediately evident to you as an adviser.

Health can deteriorate as we get older. There is, therefore, a greater likelihood of an underlying health issue emerging which affects an individual's confidence to continue working.

Job searching experiences are also likely to vary significantly. For some, it may be that the last job they had to apply for was 20 or even 30+ years ago (particularly 50+ jobseekers who worked in the public or financial sectors). For others, their experience may be more up to date. It is therefore important to understand the confidence issues around re-entering the labour market now compared to 20/30 years ago.

Barriers to do with re-training are often due to a poor self-perception of an individual's ability to learn new skills. 'I'm too old to learn' is a phrase many individuals have been telling themselves, or have heard from others, and are now of the mindset that they are past being able to learn or develop new skills. A key challenge is changing this mindset.

Prior educational and learning experiences are also likely to vary significantly. For many, their last formal educational experience will be secondary school, while for others training and development, or Continuous Professional Development activity, will have played some part in their working careers, although participation may have been imposed/directed by their employer.