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I-Work Document 3 – 1

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NDA Network: Terms of Operation

Aims of this Memo

This Agreement is designed to set out the ground rules of our Network.

We have been funded under the New Dynamics of Ageing programme to submit a Collaborative Research Proposal in October 2007. We have ambitions for a long-term, mutually-beneficial collaboration for the next five years and more. The aim of this Memo is to establish a number of operating principles which will:

1. establish the basis of our working relationships with each other
2. generate a spirit of collaboration and co-operation
3. provide a supportive framework to encourage us to be creative and innovative

For our Network to be successful, we need to bridge our disciplinary boundaries, share our ideas and form linkages between ourselves and other partners. We must also recognise that competition for research funding under the NDA programme (and under other competition-based funding programmes) is intense. The NDA programme has funded a 'rival' preparatory network which has a near-identical brief to our own.

Our Network needs a set of operating principles which manages, simultaneously, to foster a spirit of open collaboration and to protect the intellectual property of our members. We will succeed in our bid if:

- 1. We can demonstrate that our approach to our collaborative research on inclusive workplaces is coherent, integrated and multi-disciplinary.**
- 2. Our group of academics, practitioners, industry partners and end users has a shared set of achievable objectives.**
- 3. We contribute to policy formation by producing findings, evidence, tools, proto-types, devices, models, projections, processes or resources which improve the quality of (longer) working lives**
- 4. We are ambitious, innovative and ground-breaking in the way we apply our methods and approaches to issues of workplace design for an ageing society.**
- 5. Our network establishes links with researchers in the EU, North America and other countries in order to apply and/or adapt new methods (processes, tools etc) in the UK.**
- 6. We engage in an on-going dialogue with Professor Alan Walker, the programme director, and act on (although not necessarily accept) his recommendations.**
- 7. We submit a better bid than our competition, in terms of value for money and quality.**

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These measures involve us crossing departmental, institutional and disciplinary boundaries. We must find a way to tap into the expertise and track records of our Network members, whilst achieving Item 7: beating the competition. We will need to collaborate openly with one another whilst respecting the confidentiality of our working papers and the intellectual property generated by our discussions and workshops.

Our communication with the NDA programme director

The terms of our NDA grant include a clause on the role and influence of the programme director:

Where advised to consider additional or alternative expertise it must be demonstrated that the preparatory network team has considered and acted upon this advice.

Liaison should take place with the NDA Director, Professor Alan Walker, throughout the period of the award. This must not be limited to the submission of written reports, nor to the final months of the award.

It would be wise for our network to have a single line of contact to the NDA office. This paper proposes that Professor Robert Lindley, University of Warwick, performs this role.

Our steering committee

Our Network will grow during the course of the next year, as we develop our work packages, industry partnerships and user engagement. Our ultimate success, however, will be judged on the quality of our collaborative research proposal. Our Network will have a Steering Committee, chaired by Robert Lindley, at the Warwick Institute for Employment Research, with a remit to:

- Act in the best interests of the Network as a whole
- Set the strategic direction of the Network
- Be the final arbiter of the work packages which form the final NDA research proposal

Conflicts of interest

There may be occasions when a Network partner is facing a potential or actual conflict of interest. For instance, membership of our NDA Network may involve a conflict with other roles or responsibilities outside of the Network. This must be raised with the Principle Investigator (PI), Kerry Platman. Where this cannot be resolved, the case will be referred to the Network's Steering Committee.

The Membership of the Network

We will wish to extend the Network and form new alliances. We must balance the need for new members with the best interests of the Network as a whole. We wish to encourage new partners but we must also recognise that our resources are slender.

The process for new members is this:

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1. A potential new member should have a 'proposer' and a 'seconder' from the Core Network membership.
2. Their name should be circulated for approval in advance of being invited to join. Any one member has the power of veto, so long as their objection is justified in writing.
3. Appeals will be heard by the Steering Committee.

Communication

The Network will rely on a secure, web-based document storage system, based at the Warwick Institute for Employment Research. This system is designed to store and share documents, images, templates, costings etc.. It will have a small number of public pages, and a password-protected log-in to our confidential pages and documents. Each institution will be issued with its own password. It is essential that access to this secure site is limited to the core members of the Network. Passwords are strictly limited to the named parties in the Network.

Confidentiality & Intellectual Property

We will use the utmost discretion and care when disclosing information about our activities, processes and plans. We will need to balance a spirit of openness between ourselves, and with potential collaborators, with the leakage of creative ideas. The latter could undermine our competitive edge and compromise the trust we have generated within our Network. It will also undermine the intellectual property we have built up over the years. By intellectual property, we mean know-how, market opportunities, business affairs, plans or intentions, operations and processes, copyrights, design rights, trade secrets and product information.

All working documents generated by the Network are confidential. They may be shared with close colleagues in each member organisation where this is essential for the progress and satisfactory conclusion of our work. However, certain key documents may be unusually sensitive and these documents will be subject to a document control process where each copy is separately identified and distributed to agreed, named people only.

Our meetings

Any member may submit a paper to our meetings at any time. But for efficiency's sake, electronic copies must be distributed two business days in advance. Where this is not possible, sufficient paper copies should be brought to the meeting for distribution to participants.

Co-operation in the NDA bid

Under the terms of our contract, we must submit an application to the call for Collaborative Research Projects in October 2007. This is a highly complex bid. Each work package leader will need to submit to the PI details of their work package, costings, literature reviews, c.v.s etc in a timely manner. We need to respect agreed deadlines.

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Future issues

We will need to draw up a more detailed agreement between our partners once funding is secured. This collaborative agreement will be a more legalistic document covering issues of authorship and intellectual property.