

National Assembly for Wales
Enterprise and Business Committee

Employment Opportunities for People Over 50

July 2015

Cynulliad
Cenedlaethol
Cymru

National
Assembly for
Wales



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Enterprise and Business Committee

The Committee was established on 22 June 2011 with a remit to examine legislation and hold the Welsh Government to account by scrutinising its expenditure, administration and policy, encompassing economic development; transport and infrastructure; employment; higher education and skills; and research and development, including technology and science.

Current Committee membership:



William Graham (Chair)
Welsh Conservatives
South Wales East



Mick Antoniw
Welsh Labour
Pontypridd



Jeff Cuthbert
Welsh Labour
Caerphilly



Mohammad Asghar
Welsh Conservatives
South Wales East



Keith Davies
Welsh Labour
Llanelli



Dafydd Elis-Thomas
Plaid Cymru
Dwyfor Meirionnydd



Rhun ap Iorwerth
Plaid Cymru
Ynys Môn



Eluned Parrott
Welsh Liberal Democrats
South Wales Central



Gwenda Thomas
Welsh Labour
Neath



Joyce Watson
Welsh Labour
Mid and West Wales

The following Member was also a member of the Committee during this inquiry:



Byron Davies
Welsh Conservatives
South Wales West

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Chair's Foreword

There is an urgent need to address the challenges faced by jobseekers over 50 in Wales. People are living longer and will have to retire later meaning work is now a necessity not a choice for the majority of this age group.

We are calling for more research into the barriers to employment for those over 50. For such a crucial policy area the lack of information is not acceptable, we cannot continue to rely on anecdotal evidence to plan the approach to tackling this issue.

The focus on reducing youth unemployment has meant that training and apprenticeship opportunities have been prioritised for those under 24. The Committee agree that while this focus is needed and relevant, the needs of older jobseekers should be identified in order to be better addressed.

We are calling on the Welsh Government and the Older People's Commissioner to raise the profile of this issue by investing in a campaign to increase the number of work placements and training opportunities for jobseekers over 50.

The sooner we address the difficulties faced by those over 50 in securing steady employment the better prepared we will be for the demographic changes ahead.



William Graham
Chair

Recommendations

Recommendation 1. The Welsh Government should take the lead, and work with the Older People's Commissioner for Wales and other key stakeholders to commission research in respect of people aged 50 and over for each of the following:

- Employment opportunities;
- Tackling long-term unemployment;
- Self-employment; and
- Levels of older-age poverty.

The work should be an urgent and high priority and there should be a much more accurate assessment of the economic issues and position of people over 50. (Page 12)

Recommendation 2. The different barriers faced by men and women and their different experiences of the workplace should be considered in the development of any support to help people over 50 into employment; and the Welsh Government should complete separate impact assessments for men and women aged 50 and over for all their skills and training programmes. (Page 14)

Recommendation 3. The Welsh Government should commission research to identify the extent of perceived or actual age discrimination in skills, training and employment matters. (Page 16)

Recommendation 4. The Welsh Government should work with the Older People's Commissioner, the Department for Work and Pensions, major Welsh employers, employer-representative bodies and trade unions to do more to try to challenge age discrimination. (Page 16)

Recommendation 5. The Welsh Government should consider designing a scheme similar to Jobs Growth Wales for those over 50 seeking to re-enter the labour market. (Page 19)

Recommendation 6. Either on their own, or with the Department for Work and Pensions, the Welsh Government should run an Age Positive campaign which is well publicised to every employer in Wales to promote the benefits of employing and retaining workers aged 50 and over. (Page 24)

Recommendation 7. The Welsh Government, in conjunction with the office of the Older People’s Commissioner for Wales, should:

- commission research into “self-employment and people over 50” to provide a robust platform for evidence-based policy making; and
- assess whether there is reasonable financial support for people over 50 who want to start their own business and update either this Committee, or its successor, on their findings. (Page 26)

Recommendation 8. The Welsh Government should publish a skills strategy specifically for people over 50. This should complement the Welsh Government’s all-age skills strategies. It should have some very clear and specific outcomes and set out the ways that these outcomes will be monitored. (Page 30)

Recommendation 9. The Welsh Government should produce specific outcomes promoting the economic activity of people over 50 (in addition to the skills strategy) as part of their Strategy for Older People in Wales 2013-23 and set out what resources they are allocating to ensure that these outcomes are achieved. (Page 31)

Recommendation 10. The Welsh Government should:

- call for the continued devolution of the DWP skills programmes to Wales;
- continue to work closely with the DWP to minimise duplication between Welsh and UK funded skills and employability programmes. (Page 36)

Recommendation 11. The Committee understands their reasons for prioritising funding for apprenticeships (level 3 and below) for 16-24 year olds. However the Welsh Government should actively monitor the impact of this on the training opportunities, skills and qualifications of employees aged over 25, and specifically employees aged over 50. (Page 36)

1. Introduction

1. Between November 2014 and February 2015, the Enterprise and Business Committee of the National Assembly for Wales carried out an inquiry into the employment opportunities for people over 50.
2. Having looked at the barriers to employment for 16-24 year olds as part of their [inquiry into Assisting Young People into Work](#) in the autumn term 2014, the Committee decided to look into the issues affecting employment for those over 50. Members felt that, although the rate of unemployment for young people was important for ensuring the next generation were not locked out of the job market, there were equally important barriers to employment for older jobseekers which deserved further investigation.
3. There are just under 1.2 million people aged 50 and over in Wales. Statistics show that Welsh people in this age group are less likely to be in work than in most other parts of the UK. Nearly 36% of people aged 50 – 64 years were not in work in the year ending September 2014. This is the second highest rate in the UK nations behind Northern Ireland. The unemployment rate for those over 50, that is the percentage of those in the economically active population who are not in work, is the highest of all the UK nations.
4. Long term unemployment is a real concern in this age group. 37% of those claiming Jobseeker's Allowance have been doing so for more than 12 months, a greater percentage than any other age group in Wales. The office of the Older People's Commissioner described the situation for people over 50 looking for work as "quite alarming".

"It's a group that is at the moment undervalued, underappreciated and very much an afterthought when it comes to schemes and initiatives that target people getting back into the workplace."¹
5. The nature of employment for those aged 50 and over shows that over a third work in public administration, health and education. Just under a third of those in employment aged 50 or over are working part time and more than twice as many women as men were working part time. The office of the Older People's Commissioner told us that many employers are not ready to deal with the fact that many of their employees will work for longer.

¹ National Assembly for Wales, Enterprise and Business Committee, RoP [para7] 29 January 2015

“There’s a lot of confusion still about what the pension changes mean. I don’t think it’s actually hit either people or employers yet.”²

6. The numbers of people 50 and over who are self-employed has increased by more than 20% over the past five years. There are more than twice as many self-employed men than women in this age group. In terms of accessing the job market, 16% of the referrals from Wales to the UK Government’s Work Programme were for those aged 50 years old and over but only 9% achieved a successful outcome.

7. The number of people accessing training is decreasing generally. But only 17% of all learners in further education, work-based learning or community learning were aged 50 or over in 2013/14 compared to almost 25% in 2003/04. In the past year only 7% of those on a work-based learning programme were aged 50 or over according to the National Training Federation for Wales (NTfW).

² National Assembly for Wales, Enterprise and Business Committee, RoP [para13], 29 January 2015

2. Approach to the inquiry

8. The Committee aimed to look at the barriers that older people face when trying to re-enter the labour market, whether or not there is age-discrimination in the recruitment of older people and whether there are any disadvantages to older people seeking to re-enter the labour market.

9. The Committee also aimed to scrutinise the effectiveness of the support for older people in the job market. This included the Welsh Government's [Strategy for Older People in Wales 2013-23](#).

10. We began by issuing a call for evidence in November 2014. The terms of reference for the inquiry are attached at Annex A. We received 15 written submissions, which are listed at Annex B. In total we spoke to 23 organisations.

11. We held two oral evidence sessions with a range of witnesses, including training providers, employers and the Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology. A full list of witnesses is attached at Annex C.

12. We also held five rapporteur visits to speak to employers, training providers and third sector organisations about the challenges in this area. The topics discussed are listed at Annex D.

13. The Members of the Committee would like to thank all those who contributed to this inquiry. We hope that their views have been accurately represented and that they feel the report and recommendations reflect the evidence received.

3. Major changes affecting the over 50s

14. Major changes are affecting employment for the over 50s age group in particular. The abolition of the default retirement age in 2011 meant that employees can no longer be forced to retire because they turn 65. Secondly, the raising of the State Pension Age means that continuing to work is a financial imperative for increasingly large numbers of people.

15. The office of the Older People's Commissioner described the issues faced by people over 50 looking for work as "quite alarming" and is concerned that long-term unemployment in particular has a significant impact on health and well-being.

16. Prime Cymru said there needs to be a "step change" in the way that people over 50 in Wales are supported. Age Cymru agreed, saying "we need to change our attitude as a country."

17. Witnesses told us of the invaluable contribution, including the wealth of talent and experience that people over 50 have, and said this should be contributing to the Welsh economy. Prime Cymru quoted the CBI's economic forecasts which predict that more workers will be needed in future and that there will not be enough young people to fill these new jobs.³

³ National Assembly for Wales, Enterprise and Business Committee, ROP [para 422] Mr Pugh: "And when we're looking over the next 10 years that, according to the CBI, there should be 13.5 million new jobs created in the UK, where only 7 million younger people will be entering that workforce."

4. Lack of detailed research

18. Following the evidence, in particular from the office of the Older People's Commissioner, we are very concerned that there is not enough research into the issues facing people over 50. There needs to be a more accurate and up-to-date analysis of the current issues facing the over 50s, which will provide a robust basis for evidence-based policy decisions.

Recommendation: The Welsh Government should take the lead, and work with the Older People's Commissioner for Wales and other key stakeholders to commission research in respect of people aged 50 and over for each of the following:

- Employment opportunities;
- Tackling long-term unemployment;
- Self-employment; and
- Levels of older-age poverty.

The work should be an urgent and high priority and there should be a much more accurate assessment of the economic issues and position of people over 50.

5. Barriers to employment

19. Some of the barriers older people face when it comes to employment are similar to those from any age group: the lack of public transport in rural areas; the difficulty of making plans around short-term or part time work; access to individually tailored careers advice; and a lack of suitable job opportunities.

20. However, some of the barriers were unique to this age group, they include:

Caring responsibilities

21. Several witnesses raised the issue of balancing caring responsibilities with availability for work. People over 50 often have dual caring roles - for example for elderly parents and for grandchildren. We heard the term “sandwich carers” and also heard what a difference flexible working patterns can make to the employment prospects for people in this position. It can also mean that people over 50 are available for shift-work for example in the evenings and weekends.

Health

22. We heard that ill-health or disability is a major cause of economic inactivity in the 50+ age group, primarily among men and low earners. However this can also become a stereotype that “all people over 50 have more health problems” and we heard evidence that around 60 per cent of older workers remain fit, healthy and keen to work.

23. There was consensus that continuing to work as you get older helps people to stay healthy and that unemployment, particularly long term unemployment, can be detrimental to health. Age Cymru said that there are socio-economic and health inequalities that can result from a later state pension age. They recognise that life expectancy and healthy life expectancy are both on the increase but point out that progress is patchy across the country. The averages overall for the United Kingdom do not necessarily apply to all people and to all places. So, there could be a particular impact in some communities where the number of long-term chronic health conditions, for example, is higher.

Factors affecting women

24. Chwarae Teg said that among all age groups, women are more likely to be in low paid, part time roles that offer little chance of progression. This can result in a much weaker attachment to the labour market and leave older women at a higher risk of dropping out of employment than men.

Recommendation: The different barriers faced by men and women and their different experiences of the workplace should be considered in the development of any support to help people over 50 into employment; and the Welsh Government should complete separate impact assessments for men and women aged 50 and over for all their skills and training programmes.

Discrimination

25. The Equality Act 2010 brought together and extended existing regulations that already gave protection against ageism and other forms of discrimination. Since October 2010 this has been the main law relating to age discrimination, protecting a person against ageism in employment, education and training. Several witnesses including the office of the Older People's Commissioner for Wales told the Committee that age discrimination ("ageism") remains a significant issue across the UK:

"Frequently, people will tell the commissioner how they felt that they were pushed into leaving their jobs, and research that has been done which has shown that only 22% of older people who left their job did so willingly; the rest of the percentage felt that they were nudged or pushed out."⁴

26. Although dealing with smaller numbers of clients, Prime Cymru agreed saying:

"Two-thirds of the people we work with are saying that they're being discriminated against because of age in the workforce. They are the ones that tend to be the first to be made redundant and the last to be re-employed. That's obviously affecting confidence, motivation and their general wellbeing in all."⁵

⁴ National Assembly for Wales, Enterprise and Business Committee, RoP [para 9], 29 January 2015

⁵ National Assembly for Wales, Enterprise and Business Committee, RoP [para 303], 29 January 2015

27. Age Cymru referred to their own research in 2010 when 21% of people between 50 and 64 felt that they had been actively discriminated against on account of their age. Prime Cymru said that *perceived* ageism from employers deters older people from applying for jobs but they also believe strongly that inherent discrimination exists as well.

Recruitment processes

28. We heard about potential discrimination in recruitment processes:

- Although job applicants no longer need to put their age on an application form, there are still many indicators of a person's age for example a long work history; or the types of qualifications e.g. O' levels or GCSEs;
- The wording and design of a job advert can deter older people for example "dynamic" and "energetic";
- Prime Cymru said that advertising jobs only on the internet discriminates against people who cannot use computers, or who do not have access to one. Many people aged over 50 are confident online but many are not. Employers should consider whether the job itself requires IT skills.

29. The office of the Older People's Commissioner for Wales told us:

"that's one of the fundamental barriers: that people's perception is that, once you're over 50, you've got your age on your CV, you're not going to get through the door, because the perception is that you won't be as fit, as healthy, as other counterparts and that you won't be as cognitively swift. And it's not counterbalancing that with actually the wealth of experience, the precision, the consciousness towards detail, the reliability." ⁶

30. Age Cymru argued that skills training and qualifications are the most effective way of counteracting discrimination in recruitment processes.

Stereotypes

31. There are other stereotypes which can act as barriers to employment for the over 50s. Although frequently quoted, there seems to be little evidence that older workers are blocking younger people from accessing the workplace. The office of the Older People's Commissioner argues the

⁶ National Assembly for Wales, Enterprise and Business Committee, RoP [para 36], 29 January 2015

contrary, that it is mutually beneficial: “beneficial for younger workers to work with their older counterparts as mentors and to gain from their skills and experience, and vice versa”.⁷

32. Another myth is that older workers are less productive. We were told that a number of research studies on the productivity of workers show that workers are more productive the older they are, with very few that suggest the opposite.

33. Another misconception is that it is more cost-effective to train and upskill younger workers. Labour market intelligence shows that 25 year olds are more likely to change employers as they look to progress up the career ladder, whereas older workers are more likely to stay much longer with the same employer.

Actual or perceived discrimination?

34. The Committee Members asked witnesses about the extent to which discrimination was real or perceived. However it became clear that there is an absence of reliable evidence about employment related age discrimination. Witnesses were only able to refer to anecdotal information.

Recommendation: The Welsh Government should commission research to identify the extent of perceived or actual age discrimination in skills, training and employment matters.

Recommendation: The Welsh Government should work with the Older People’s Commissioner, the Department for Work and Pensions, major Welsh employers, employer-representative bodies and trade unions to do more to try to challenge age discrimination.

⁷ National Assembly for Wales, Enterprise and Business Committee, RoP [para 73], 29 January 2015

6. Individual stories and circumstances

35. In response to a radio “phone-in” and letters to local newspapers, several people shared their views with the Committee based on their personal circumstances:

“Howard (from Wrexham) I lost my job in January 2014 and have been trying to get back into the workplace ever since, having worked in sales and development in the plastic packaging industry for most of my career. I am nearly 63 and in good health, I also want and need to continue working, as the next few months will see my financial situation become increasingly more difficult. Despite feeling alone in all of this I remain positive, as I am confident in my abilities.”

“Eirian finished work as a science teacher two years ago, when she was in her mid-50s. There was too much paperwork in the job, and the workload was huge. She wanted a better work-life balance. People offered her jobs because they knew about her experience as well as her skills: bilingualism was important – not only speaking, but also the ability to write in both languages. IT skills too, and people skills. She has not seen any prejudice against older people in the workplace.”

“Alan (from Caernarfon) retired from the fire service at the age of 52, after 30 years in the job. He felt too young to finish work. Based on his specialist knowledge in fire safety, he set up a business that has proved to be successful. He had no prior experience of running a business, and simply advertised for customers.”

“Heather (from Pembrokeshire) graduated with a degree in History at the age of 52 and had hoped to find a job where her degree would be relevant. She has tried for job after job with no success and has now lost confidence. “The experience was heart-breaking. It makes people feel worthless. Employers don’t even answer applications sometimes.” Heather felt that the over 50s don’t get fair play. “They have much to offer and it is going to waste.”

7. Work trials or placements

36. Huw Thomas, Department for Work and Pensions, emphasised how effective Jobcentre Plus staff find work trials, short work experience placements, and guaranteed interviews. He said these counteracted both real and perceived age discrimination to give people a chance to show what they can do and also for the individual to test out with the employer if that is the job they want.

Jobs Growth Wales for people over 50?

37. Although supportive of the Jobs Growth Wales programme for young people, several of the witnesses were also very keen to have a similar programme for older people or an *all-age* Jobs Growth Wales type scheme.

38. The office of the Older People’s Commissioner for Wales sent an outline proposal for a new Jobs Growth Wales type programme to us, saying: “what we want is equality and for the same opportunities to be available for those who are over 50”.

39. Prime Cymru would also very much like to see an all-age Jobs Growth Wales programme. They stated:

“We feel that having a one-age Jobs Growth Wales programme automatically discriminates against older people. If an employer is going to get support to take on a member of staff for six months, and you have two people who may have equal skills—an older person and a younger person—they’re automatically going to go for the younger person where they’re getting support with the salaries and wages. If we had an all-age Jobs Growth Wales programme, or one specifically for the 50-plus linked to the 16 to 24 programme, we feel that that would be much more just for our client group and bring a huge range of skills back into the workforce from those who have been isolated and marginalised because of age.”⁸

40. The argument was made that the policy logic behind Jobs Growth Wales is that young people do not have work experience to put on their CV and that this is a barrier to them finding employment whereas older people usually do have work experience. In response to this Prime Cymru said:

⁸ National Assembly for Wales, Enterprise and Business Committee, RoP [para 301], 29 January 2015

“There are a huge number of older people as well who, as you suggest, are changing careers and need experience to go on in that, so that’s an ideal opportunity for them. If you look at the sort of jobs that are on the Jobs Growth Wales programme at the moment, there are hundreds if not thousands of jobs there that require people who have skills, which aren’t being filled by 16 to 24-year-olds. The jobs level isn’t always at a level that’s suitable for someone who is 16 to 24, and those jobs could easily be filled by people over the age of 50.”⁹

Recommendation: The Welsh Government should consider designing a scheme similar to Jobs Growth Wales for those over 50 seeking to re-enter the labour market.

⁹ National Assembly for Wales, Enterprise and Business Committee, RoP [para 348], 29 January 2015

8. Is a lack of skills a barrier for people over 50?

41. The evidence indicates that some people over 50 lack the skills needed to find new employment successfully.

IT and digital skills

42. There was mixed evidence on this. Some witnesses agreed, for example the office of the Older People's Commissioner for Wales said that IT is a definite skills gap for many over 50s. The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) said the picture was more mixed: that IT skills and confidence varied, for example, people over 50 may use a computer at home but lack IT experience in the workplace. The DWP added that other people aged over 50, particularly in some types of employment, are likely to have as good a level of IT skills as younger people.

“Softer skills” and confidence building

43. There was agreement that many jobseekers over 50 lack the softer employability skills and need support with confidence building. Older people frequently tell Jobcentre Plus staff that they have confidence issues. They may have worked for a particular employer for a long period of time, and they have not looked for work for a long time, so they are unsure as to how to go about doing that. Age Cymru agreed strongly that confidence building is essential for many, especially in interviews and application processes. Many of the softer employability skills are the same as those needed by younger jobseekers.

44. One suggestion was the development of an “employability skills” qualification so that older jobseekers can demonstrate to an employer that “I’m work-ready again”.

Basic literacy and numeracy

45. We heard evidence that some jobseekers over 50 need either basic or refresher literacy and numeracy training but also that some jobseekers over 50 are reluctant to go back into a formal classroom setting for long courses.

Essential Skills in the Workplace (ESiW)

46. The Welsh Government funds essential skills training for people in employment. ESiW is designed to address the high proportion of adults in Wales without the necessary literacy, numeracy and ICT skills to function

effectively in the workplace. Between 1 January 2013 and 30 November 2014, ESiW supported 152 older participants.

The types of work and the skill levels of new employment

47. We were interested in the skills levels of the new jobs. Once again there was no research to show whether people over 50:

- Found new employment in the same occupation and sector with the same level of responsibility as their previous employment, or
- Had to take a lower skilled job, with less responsibility because this was the only work available to them, or
- Decided to take employment in a different sector with lower skills and responsibility levels, through personal choice.

The availability of jobs; temporary work and zero-hour contracts

48. Of particular concern to us was whether people over 50 accept temporary work or zero hour contracts because they are not offered permanent, full time work. However there was not enough robust evidence to enable us to reach an informed view. Evidence-based research is clearly needed on this important issue.

9. Other barriers

49. Members noted that a trend for having children much later in life can impact particularly on women's availability for work even into their 50s. Having children later can also have a long term impact on the family's financial resources. Also, it can be harder for people over 50 to move to other geographical areas in search of work, for example, not being able to get a mortgage to move house because mortgages are time-limited.

Should employers be doing more?

50. Huw Thomas, DWP, and others told us that more could be done to promote older workers with employers. Graeme Francis, Age Cymru, told us:

"I think this is where there probably is a role for trade unions, for the CBI, and for the FSB and others, to really, I suppose, help to sell the benefits to an employer of why you would work flexibly and why you would try to keep your employees engaged for longer."¹⁰

51. He went on to say that there are examples of good practice that get reported regularly in the press. For example there are large retailers and big employers in Wales – including Marks & Spencer, John Lewis, B&Q, Centrica and BT. Some of their good practices include the greater than average number of those over 50 they employ, the ability to work flexibly; and in the case of Centrica, giving matched time off for caring responsibilities.

52. Another example of good practice is the all-UK NHS Working Longer Review. However, the office of the Older People's Commissioner is concerned that these examples of good practice have not led to widespread attitudinal change. Committee Members went out in rapporteur groups to visit several employers:

- Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) is one of the largest employers in North Wales. In partnership with an external recruitment company, the health board endeavours to develop age-friendly initiatives to encourage new applicants over 50;
- Pembrokeshire County Council endorsed the Dublin Declaration in 2013. The Dublin Declaration takes forward the World Health Organisation's recommendation of creating Age Friendly Communities as well as the Welsh Government's Ageing Well in Wales programme.

¹⁰ National Assembly for Wales, Enterprise and Business Committee, RoP [para 418], 29 January 2015

The aim is to improve the wellbeing of those aged 50 plus. One of the Age Friendly Community project objectives is to ensure well-being through encouraging lifelong learning activities;

- The John Lewis Partnership is a co-owned business. Every new recruit to John Lewis becomes a partner in the business, with a say in the running of the business and a share of the profits. John Lewis opened their Cardiff store in September 2009. Some of the areas discussed with John Lewis included: John Lewis' partners who are aged over 50; the recruitment of people over 50; and barriers to employment for people over 50.

10. Exemplar employers and disseminating good practice

53. In her oral evidence, Julie James, Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology said the Welsh Government does use exemplar employers to promote good practice and to encourage the 40 per cent of employers who currently do not fund training to invest in upskilling their employees (all ages). They also work with some anchor companies who use their supply chains to promote good skills and training practices.

54. The Deputy Minister also said that some small and micro companies do not have the capacity to provide training for their staff, so the Welsh Government is looking at the possibility of pools of employers who can share training resources.

An Age Positive campaign

55. The Department for Work and Pensions has recently launched an age positive discrimination campaign. The office of the Older People's Commissioner said that it would be really good if Welsh Government could get more involved with that.

56. The Age Positive campaign will target large, small and medium-sized enterprises. However it particularly targets SMEs and encourages them to think in other ways for example - by introducing an element of flexibility in terms of working patterns, initiatives like a careers review, improving occupational health safety practices, all help older people to remain in the workforce.

57. The office of the Older People's Commissioner said they are currently formulating an employment action plan to promote similar issues.

Recommendation: Either on their own, or with the Department for Work and Pensions, the Welsh Government should run an Age Positive campaign which is well publicised to every employer in Wales to promote the benefits of employing and retaining workers aged 50 and over.

The Public Sector Equality Duty

58. The *Equality Act 2010* and associated Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) should ensure that older public sector workers are not discriminated against on the grounds of age.

59. The [Equality Act 2010 \(Statutory Duties\) \(Wales\) Regulations 2011](#) and in particular, Regulation 3, places a duty on public authorities to publish objectives that are designed to enable it to better perform the general duty under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. Employment information must be collected and published by public bodies as part of these requirements.

60. The Older People's Commissioner for Wales is not convinced that the public sector in Wales is complying with the statutory commitments to guard against age discriminatory practices.

61. Prime Cymru told us that there is research under way at the moment looking at the recruitment policies in respect of age of every local authority, health board and other public sector organisations in Wales for example the Welsh Government.

11. Self-employment

62. We heard evidence that the entrepreneurial route can be an attractive option for older workers and that many organisations including Prime Cymru, Age Cymru, Rotary groups and the Department for Work and Pensions provide support to people over 50 considering self-employment. As well as financial support while starting up a new business, the UK New Enterprise Allowance and Welsh business start-up schemes can provide business planning support. However setting up your own business can potentially involve a significant financial risk and possibly impact on receipt of benefits. We heard evidence that some older people may be reluctant to take on these financial risks.

63. Prime Cymru has an effective volunteer mentoring scheme in Wales which tends to focus on older people who want to set up small businesses. The majority of people that Prime Cymru work with will have successful small businesses that will only employ 1.5 staff in five years' time.

64. Once again there was an obvious lack of robust research. We want to see more information about the types of businesses that are set up by people over 50: whether new businesses are in the industrial sectors that the person worked in before; how long the new businesses exist for; and how many people they employ. Although some very good work is being done, witnesses agreed that more support needs to be funded, focusing on pre-start-up support and small business support.

Recommendation: The Welsh Government, in conjunction with the office of the Older People's Commissioner for Wales, should:

- **commission research into "self-employment and people over 50" to provide a robust platform for evidence-based policy making; and**
- **assess whether there is reasonable financial support for people over 50 who want to start their own business and update either this Committee, or its successor, on their findings.**

12. Support available to people age over 50

65. During the Inquiry, we spoke to several organisations who provide a range of support to people over 50 including: the office of the Older People's Commissioner and several charities including Prime Cymru who provide in-depth advice, mentoring and information on volunteering etc.

66. Huw Thomas, DWP, described the assistance for older workers provided by the 63 Jobcentre Plus offices including the Work Programme, Access to Work clubs, promoting volunteering, reskilling or a review of CVs. Jobcentre Plus offices set up group sessions for older people specifically. The older jobseekers help and support each other as well as the DWP's work coaches.

67. We had heard some criticism that older jobseekers had not been a priority for the DWP for a number of years. Huw Thomas said that now all of the Jobcentre Plus districts have 50-plus action plans and older people's work coaches; they might also have task and finish groups within offices, sharing good practice and what works well with those customer groups. The DWP also provides public access to computers and IT facilities within the jobcentres for jobseekers to use.

Working Links

68. Working Links is one of two contractors who deliver the UK Work Programme in Wales. They work closely with DWP and Jobcentre Plus staff. Since 2000, they have helped 30,000 people in Wales into employment. The Committee Chair visited Working Links as part of our Inquiry to see the work that they are doing to help jobseekers over 50 return to employment.

Long-term unemployment

69. Older jobseekers are more than twice as likely to be long-term unemployed as younger job seekers. When asked about this type of support, the Deputy Minister said people over 50 who are long-term unemployed often find themselves in the UK Work Programme. Welsh Government officials have been working closely with UK civil servants to minimise any duplication gaps between Welsh support programmes and UK programmes. The Deputy Minister said that this has been difficult, especially when both types of programmes have European funding, but some progress has been made recently.

Volunteering

70. Witnesses told us of the very important role that volunteering can have in helping people over 50 back into work. Prime Cymru run volunteering programmes which are effective in helping to address confidence and motivation barriers and skill-building. As well as encouraging their clients to consider voluntary work, Prime Cymru themselves rely heavily on volunteers as part of their mentoring programme:

“For us, it’s been a huge benefit for our clients to volunteer to gain skills for themselves, not just volunteering in a sort of altruistic, giving-back-to-community way, but to gain skills for themselves as well”.¹¹

71. The DWP took the opportunity to debunk a widely held myth that jobseekers cannot volunteer for over 16 hours a week without affecting their benefits. Volunteering is often encouraged as part of the DWP’s “claimant commitment” contract with jobseekers. The Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) estimates that 34 per cent of over 55s have done unpaid work in the last 12 months.

¹¹ National Assembly for Wales, Enterprise and Business Committee, RoP [para 410], 29 January 2015

13. Government strategies

72. Age Cymru has said that, until recently, older unemployed people have not been seen as a priority group for support by governments. The Department for Work and Pensions said that there had been a gap in the market in the way that older people are dealt with.

The Department for Work and Pensions' strategies

73. In June 2014, the DWP published a strategy document: [Fuller Working Lives – A Framework for Action](#), which sets out the benefits to individuals, businesses and the economy as a whole of people aged over 50 staying in work. The Strategy sets out a number of new actions. Including the appointment of a Business Champion for Older Workers; an older workers' champion scheme⁴; and a mid-life career review which aims to prevent early labour market fall out and planning for retirement.

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales Strategy

74. The [Ageing Well in Wales](#) programme was launched in October 2014¹² as a five-year partnership between national and local government and major public and third sector organisations in Wales and is designed to contribute to and complement the Welsh Government's strategy. The programme's overall aim is stated as "to ensure that within Wales there is an improvement in the wellbeing of people aged 50+". The programme has five areas of focus for its thematic networks, one of which is *Opportunities for Learning and Employment*.

Welsh Government's Strategy for Older People in Wales 2013-23

75. The Welsh Government's 10 year strategy: [Strategy for Older People in Wales, Living Longer, Ageing Well](#) (phase 3) states that by 2023 the Welsh Government aims to ensure that "older people who want to work are able to do so and can access help with re-skilling and retraining". A Strategy Delivery Plan was issued by the Government in 2014.¹³

76. However, several witnesses are concerned about a lack of progress since the Strategy was launched in 2013. The Older People's Commissioner for Wales has said that much more needs to be done to achieve the key outcome of providing re-training for all those who need it.

¹² Ageing Well in Wales, [Ageing well in Wales launches at the Senedd](#), October 22, 2014

¹³ Welsh Government, [Strategy delivery plan](#), 2014

77. Although Graeme Francis, Age Cymru, was involved in advising the Welsh Government on the strategy, he finds it frustrating that the strategy does not hold any resources of its own and relies on other Welsh Government departments to pick up much of the actions arising from it. He has also been frustrated that very little has been published in terms of an update since the launch.

“The strategy document itself pledged a delivery plan to be produced, which was much delayed, and, when it was produced late last year, to my mind, included very little additional detail that the original strategy didn’t have. So, it’s not clear how Welsh Government is working towards some of the outcomes that the strategy set for itself. . . And I think we also haven’t seen any kind of update monitoring on the employment parts of that strategy so far.”¹⁴

78. Prime Cymru agreed saying: “there’s been very little since. It would be a prudent time to do something else”.¹⁵

Welsh Government’s skills strategies

79. The Strategy for Older People refers to the development of an **Older People’s Skills Strategy**,¹⁶ which, as several witnesses have pointed out, has not been published to date. The Welsh Government has published a number of *all-age* skills policy documents including:

- the [Policy Statement on Skills, the new 10 year skills plan, in January 2014](#);
- the [Skills Implementation Plan](#) in July 2014;
- the new [Skills Performance Measures](#) in September 2014; and
- the [Framework for co-investment in skills](#) in November 2014.

Recommendation: The Welsh Government should publish a skills strategy specifically for people over 50. This should complement the Welsh Government’s all-age skills strategies. It should have some very clear and specific outcomes and set out the ways that these outcomes will be monitored.

¹⁴ National Assembly for Wales, Enterprise and Business Committee, RoP [para 399], 29 January 2015

¹⁵ National Assembly for Wales, Enterprise and Business Committee, RoP [para 400], 29 January 2015

¹⁶ Welsh Government, [Strategy for older people in Wales, living longer, ageing well](#), 2013, p20

Recommendation: The Welsh Government should produce specific outcomes promoting the economic activity of people over 50 (in addition to the skills strategy) as part of their Strategy for Older People in Wales 2013-23 and set out what resources they are allocating to ensure that these outcomes are achieved.

Welsh Government employment programmes

80. The Deputy Minister told us that “youth unemployment is the scourge of all Western civilisations” and repeated several times that she “makes no apology whatsoever for concentrating on youth unemployment”. However she also emphasised that most Welsh Government programmes are all-age programmes and are open to everybody: “It’s just for us to make sure that people access them”.¹⁷

81. The Deputy Minister said that increasing employment opportunities for young people and adults remains a key priority for the Welsh Government and that their employability programmes support young people and adults to gain confidence, motivation, improve their skills and gain work experience to enable them to enter sustained employment.

- ‘Work Ready’ is aimed at unemployed adults and will be replaced in August 2015 by a new programme – ‘Skills for Employment Wales’.
- ‘Lift’ is another all-age Welsh Government programme to provide 5,000 training and employment opportunities by the end of 2017 for those people living in households where no-one is in work. The programme focuses on those who have not been in employment or training for over six months.
- ReAct is an all-age programme designed to support people either facing redundancy or who are about to be made redundant. Between 1 January 2013 and 30 November 2014 ReAct supported 1,751 older participants (approximately 37 per cent of all ReAct participants).

82. We asked the Deputy Minister whether she had assessed the effect of prioritising younger people rather than other age groups. She said she had not because the all age programmes are not targeted in that way but later provided a supplementary paper to the Committee that had some impact assessment data for the over 50s.

¹⁷ National Assembly for Wales, Enterprise and Business Committee, RoP [para 221], 25 February 2015

European funding

83. The Deputy Minister told us that they have focused a large share of European funding on supporting individuals to improve their skills and/or helping people into work. 4,800 participants aged 50 and over started the skills programmes from 1 January 2013 to 30 November 2014, just over 24% of all participants. These programmes are provided by the Welsh Government using European Social Funds.

84. At the time of our Inquiry, the Welsh Government were in the process of applying for ESF funding for the 2014-20 round. The Deputy Minister emphasised the three key priorities for European funding continue to be: tackling poverty through sustainable employment; skills for growth and youth unemployment and attainment. An older jobseeker told us about the short-term nature of the jobs that arise from European funding. The jobseeker had changed jobs three times as a result of working on short-term projects. However this did not appear to be a problem for her.

Navigating the programmes

85. The Deputy Minister agreed with us that understanding and navigating your way around all the different Welsh Government and UK Government European funded programmes is very difficult. Julie James provided a supplementary paper for us seeking to provide clarity, saying:

“I received a paper which listed all the programmes that are currently running under the European Social Fund categories, and the programmes that we’re looking to continue in the next round, and, frankly, it was a whole page of just the titles of the programmes. So, I thought, ‘Well, it’s no wonder that people are struggling to get their heads around some of the ways that these programmes interlink’, and so I hope you’ll find it useful that we’ve set out the programmes and what they’re aimed at in that short paper.”¹⁸

86. The Deputy Minister did however say that the needs-based nature of the programmes means that some complexity is inevitable. She also emphasised that the programmes for those people who are unemployed and trying to access employment and for those people who are in employment who are trying to upskill themselves are very different.

¹⁸ National Assembly for Wales, Enterprise and Business Committee, RoP [para 202], 25 February 2015

87. Some witnesses emphasised how important one-to-one advice from jobcentres and the careers service is in helping jobseekers over 50 to find the most appropriate programmes for them. For example, NTfW told us that they would like to see an increased role for Careers Wales, alongside Jobcentre Plus – through the recently launched Skills Gateway for Adults – in offering information, advice and guidance to this group.

Duplication with DWP

88. The evidence showed that there needs to be greater cohesion between the training programmes provided by the Welsh Government, UK Government and third sector. The opportunities to access training need to ensure progression for the learner not duplication. The training provided is currently assessed in terms of qualifications achieved rather than measuring outcomes, such as the number of people who achieved sustainable employment as a result of their training.

14. Training to improve skills and re-enter the jobs market

89. Prime Cymru estimate that between 60% and 70% of their clients are having to change direction because of the nature of their previous jobs.

“They’re coming out, perhaps, of heavy industry jobs, which just aren’t available. They may have been in the same job for the last 30 to 35 years. They’re not going to be able to go back into a job that they did. We’ll work with them to look at their transferable skills to go into something that’s different, but in having to gain experience in that role as well.”¹⁹

Further education for people aged 50 and over

90. Further Education (FE) providers say that they are the main deliverers in Wales of educational opportunities for people over 50; around 27,000 learners age over 50 are enrolled in FE colleges, most of who study part-time. There is a downwards trend in the number of people of all ages enrolling for further education, work-based learning or community learning. But the Committee were particularly concerned to learn that the number of learners aged 50 and over decreased by 42 per cent from 64,000 in 2006/07 to 37,000 learners over 50 in 2013/14 - almost halving the number of over-50s already engaged in learning.

91. Colleges Wales told us that education investment priorities should include funding for education and skills for adults, including for those over 50. They also told us the continued availability of non-apprenticeship based education and training for this age group is important (as apprenticeship provision is generally full-time). Full-time programmes may not be suitable for people over 50 who may have childcare, elder care responsibilities or disabilities. They are concerned that:

“Without a properly funded infrastructure for adult learning, including in FE, there is a danger that education may become a ‘once-for-all’ opportunity for the young” and also “It would, however, be deeply regrettable if a strategic focus on improving pre-16 education meant

¹⁹ National Assembly for Wales, Enterprise and Business Committee, RoP [para 360], 29 January 2015

a de facto end to the lifelong learning agenda that was such a strong government emphasis not so long ago.”²⁰

92. The Deputy Minister said that the fall in numbers has been very largely in self-funded, part-time courses as well as government funded courses. However she has said on many occasions that the cuts to the work-based learning budgets have been substantial and have been the result of difficult decisions. She also said that the Welsh Government were looking at the feasibility of a modular system where credits could be accumulated over a period of time to help people, particularly in low paid, part-time work, who were struggling to pay training fees.

93. Witnesses suggested a number of reasons for this downwards trend:

- Professional and Career Development Loans are available to pay for tuition fees. However Age Cymru suggested that people over 50 may be “debt averse” and reluctant to take on a loan;
- The DWP rules mean that if someone looking to retrain attends a training course for more than 16 hours a week it affects their eligibility for benefits.

Work-based learning

94. In 2013/14, only 6.7% (4,880) of participants within work-based learning were older workers. This was a slight increase from 6% in 2011/12. Of these learners, 83% undertook an apprenticeship programme.

95. The importance of people over 50 being able to up-skill while in-work was an important theme in the evidence. The NTfW states that as the Welsh Government attempts to focus its limited budget towards young people individuals that fall outside of this priority area will find it increasingly difficult to access funding to develop their skills, especially at levels 2 and 3.

96. In the Skills Implementation Plan Ken Skates, then Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology, said that a new adult employability programme will be established in September 2015 with a focus on essential and employability skills. The Welsh Government has also recently consulted on [Aligning the apprenticeship model to the needs of the Welsh economy](#), January to April 2015.

97. The NTfW says that the key to the continued success of work-based learning in Wales is that programmes are designed and delivered in a

²⁰ Written evidence from Colleges Wales, para 14

complementary way that allows an individual “a ladder of progression” through to, and on from, a “gold standard” Apprenticeship. They believe strongly that having one coherent “skills offer” for an individual would go a long way to assisting people aged 50 and over into work. Along with other witnesses, the NTfW is concerned about duplication between the Welsh Government’s programmes including Work Ready and Apprenticeships, and the range of programmes commissioned and delivered by the DWP.

Recommendation: The Welsh Government should:

- **call for the continued devolution of the DWP skills programmes to Wales;**
- **continue to work closely with the DWP to minimise duplication between Welsh and UK funded skills and employability programmes.**

Apprenticeships

98. In November 2014 the Welsh Government published the Framework for Co-investment in Skills which refocuses apprenticeship provision (level 3) in support of adults aged 25 and under. Support will continue to be available to older workers during the transition phase which will take place up to April 2017. Older workers will also benefit from access to all-age support for Higher Level Apprenticeships (those at Level 4 and above). In Wales, there are 46 Apprenticeship Frameworks available at Level 4 and above, including Accounting, Logistics, Creative Media and Advanced Manufacturing.

99. Witnesses told us that the numbers of those over 50 who took part in apprenticeships were disproportionately smaller than the numbers of those who were looking for work. There is also an imbalance between the genders, with women being twice as likely to be on an apprenticeship of a higher level and most probably in the field of health and social care. Witnesses said that there is a need to rebalance the provision of apprenticeships towards men.

100. Along with many witnesses, we understand the Welsh Government’s prioritisation of support for young people age 16-24 years, but inevitably this has had an adverse impact on the employment and training prospects of people age 50 and over.

Recommendation: The Committee understands their reasons for prioritising funding for apprenticeships (level 3 and below) for 16-24 year olds. However the Welsh Government should actively monitor the

impact of this on the training opportunities, skills and qualifications of employees aged over 25, and specifically employees aged over 50.

NIACE

101. The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) is the national, independent organisation for adult learning in England and Wales. NIACE promotes the interests of all adult learners and potential learners, especially those who have benefited least from education and training. Some Committee Members went on a rapporteur visit to NIACE as part of our Inquiry where they discussed the barriers to training for people over 50.

Union learning

102. The Welsh Government is supporting a range of projects as part of the Wales Union Learning Fund (WULF). Managed by the Wales TUC, for the most part these projects are not restricted by age group and are based upon the demands indicated by specific trade unions. A rapporteur group of Committee Members went to visit the Wales TUC to discuss issues relevant to the Inquiry. The Wales TUC brings together representatives from Public Service employers and trade unions to sit on the Workforce Partnership Council. They have been upskilling their local union representatives to assist people over 50 in accessing the AWALG e-learning platform.

Higher education

103. The total number of enrolments at Welsh HEIs has remained relatively constant between 2006/07 and the latest figures for 2012/13. However there has been a decrease of 7,810 (33%) in the number of enrolments by people aged 40+ (statistics for people age 50 and over are not readily available).

104. There were 5,330 (34%) fewer women aged 40+ enrolled on a higher education course at a Welsh HEI in 2013/14 than in 2006/07. The equivalent figures for men show that 2,480 (29%) fewer men aged 40+ enrolled on a higher education course at a Welsh HEI than in 2006/07.

15. Conclusions

105. Based on all the evidence that we received, we conclude that the Welsh Government and some other key stakeholders are not giving sufficient priority and urgency to the employment, skills and training needs of people aged 50 and over.

106. We welcome the Welsh Government's Strategy for Older People in Wales 2013-23 but are very concerned that not enough progress has been made since the strategy was launched and that the strategy is not supported by dedicated resources.

107. We sincerely hope that the Welsh Government will publish a skills strategy specifically for people over 50 as a matter of urgency and actively monitor outcomes and progress.

108. We understand the Welsh Government's prioritisation of funding for the training and support of 16-24 year olds. Nevertheless we still believe that they have not undertaken a sufficiently robust assessment of the impact of this decision on people over 50.

109. As the Inquiry progressed, it became obvious that there is a real dearth of robust research into the employment, skills and training issues facing people aged over 50. Much of the information is based on anecdotal evidence which is simply not good enough for evidence-based policy making.

110. We warmly commend the employers, public sector organisations and many voluntary and charitable groups who support people over 50 to find training, volunteering opportunities, employment and self-employment. Alongside this, there needs to be a national campaign to promote good practices and to convince others of the cost-effectiveness of employing and training people over 50.

111. As a result of demographic changes, the increase in the State Pension Age, and the abolition of the default retirement age, the number of people over 50 who are either in work or seeking work is increasing.

112. All of which means these issues need to be addressed urgently.

Annexe A - Terms of Reference

The terms of reference for this inquiry were:

- What are the barriers that face older people trying to re-enter the labour market;
- The extent of age-discrimination and its impact on the recruitment of older people;
- Whether there are any disadvantages to older people re-entering the labour market;
- How effective is the Welsh Government's Strategy for Older People in Wales 2013- 23 in assisting older people into work;
- What support (particularly programmes and projects) is most effective for older people trying to re-enter the labour market?

Issues which the Committee considered as part of this inquiry included:

- The availability and suitability of local job opportunities;
- The need for relevant support and skills training;
- Transport difficulties (in rural areas, availability and cost);
- Lack of confidence (for example following redundancy);
- Assisting and supporting people with additional challenges, for example those with a disability;
- Any disadvantages to older people re-entering the labour market, for example potentially adversely affecting the number of jobs and career progression opportunities available to younger workers;
- Assisting those from areas of high unemployment;
- The impact and value-for-money of European funding;
- The role of older people in mentoring younger workers and passing on their skills and knowledge.

Annexe B – List of Written Evidence

The following people and organisations provided written evidence to the Committee. All written evidence can be view in full at:

www.senedd.assembly.wales/mgConsultationDisplay.aspx?ID=153

Organisation

Age Alliance for Wales

Age Cymru

Association of Voluntary Organisations in Wrexham

Chwarae Teg

Diverse Cymru

Flintshire County Council

National Training Federation Wales

Older People’s Commissioner for Wales

Prime Cymru

Remploy

Working Links

Wrexham County Borough Council

Individuals

John (Powys)

Karen (Wrexham)

Howard (Wrexham)

Annexe C – Witnesses

The following witnesses provided oral evidence to the Committee on the dates noted below. Transcripts of all oral evidence sessions can be viewed in full at:

29 January 2015	Organisation
Daisy Cole	Director of Wellbeing and Empowerment, Office of the Older People’s Commissioner for Wales
Iwan Williams	Communities, Local Government and Wellbeing Lead, Office of the Older People’s Commissioner for Wales
Huw Thomas	Senior Group Partnership Manager (Wales), Jobcentre Plus
Kevin Morgan	Group Partnership Manager (Wales), Jobcentre Plus
Graeme Francis	Head of Policy and Public Affairs, Age Cymru
David Pugh	Chief Executive, Age Alliance/Prime Cymru
Hayley Ridge-Evans	Director of Operations, Age Alliance/Prime Cymru

25 February 2015	Organisation
Dr Greg Walker	Chief Executive, CollegesWales
Maggi Dawson MBE	Chief Executive, WEA Cymru
Jeff Protheroe	Operations Manager, National Training Federation Wales
Julie James AM	Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology
Huw Morris	Group Director, SHELL
Nick Lee	Head of Policy & Intelligence

Annexe D – Rapporteur Visits

On 12 February 2015, Members of the Enterprise and Business Committee undertook a number of separate rapporteur visits to hear the views and experiences of stakeholders who work with people over 50 in helping them find employment and also to hear from employers who employ people aged over 50.

Members of the Committee visited the following locations:

- Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board
- Pembrokeshire County Council
- Working Links (Cardiff)
- Wales TUC
- NIACE Cymru
- John Lewis (Cardiff)

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board

Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) is one of the largest employers in North Wales. In partnership with an external recruitment company, the health board endeavours to develop age-friendly initiatives to encourage new applicants over 50. It is the largest health organisation in Wales, providing a full range of primary, community, mental health and acute hospital services for a population of around 676,000 people across the six counties of North Wales (Anglesey, Gwynedd, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham) as well as some parts of mid Wales, Cheshire and Shropshire. They employ around 16,100 staff and have a budget of around £1.2 billion.

They are responsible for the operation of three district general hospitals (Ysbyty Gwynedd in Bangor, Ysbyty Glan Clwyd in Bodelwyddan and Wrexham Maelor Hospital) as well as 18 other acute and community hospitals and a network of over 90 health centres, clinics, community health team bases and mental health units. The Health Board also coordinates the work of 115 GP practices and NHS services provided by North Wales dentists, opticians and pharmacies.

Some of the areas discussed at the meeting included:

- The Health Board as an employer of people aged over 50;
- Recruitment of people over 50;
- Barriers to employment for people over 50;
- Any recommendations for the Welsh Government.

Pembrokeshire County Council

Sarah Rochira, the Older People's Commissioner for Wales presented Pembrokeshire County Council with a certificate in October 2014 to mark the Council's endorsement of the Dublin Declaration 2013. The Dublin Declaration takes forward the World Health Organisation's recommendation of creating Age Friendly Communities as well as the Welsh Government's Ageing Well in Wales programme, which aims to improve the wellbeing of those aged 50 plus.

Age Friendly Communities

Age Friendly Communities (AFC) was an Ireland - Wales INTERREG 4a funded project that is part-funded by the European Regional Development Fund. It brings together the following five partners in Ireland and Wales to develop intergenerational strategies (local and trans-national) and to pilot relevant activities:

- Conway County Borough Council (Wales - Lead Partner)
- Ageing Well Network (Ireland) - a not for profit organisation working with Kildare County Council
- Isle of Anglesey Council (Wales)
- Kilkenny County Council (Ireland)
- Pembrokeshire County Council (Wales).

The project objectives were to:

- Create a vibrant community for all by supporting the development of intergenerational strategies on both cross-border and local levels;
- Create cohesive communities through the implementation of pilot projects targeting the social inclusion of older people within society;
- Capture, protect and preserve cultural heritage by reinforcing the positive image of older people within society;

- Ensure well-being through encouraging lifelong learning activities.

Some of the areas discussed at the meeting included:

- Age Friendly Communities;
- Pembrokeshire County Council as an employer of people aged over 50;
- The Council's recruitment of new employees over 50;
- Barriers to employment for people over 50;
- Any recommendations for the Welsh Government.

Working Links

Working Links is a UK wide public-private-voluntary company with shareholders. They say that since 2000, they have helped 30,000 people in Wales into employment.

Since June 2011, Working Links Wales has been one of the two providers of Work Programme in Wales. They have 15 Working Links offices across Wales as well as 20 partner premises that directly deliver Work Programme on their behalf such as Pembrokeshire College, Newport City Council, Torfaen Training, Remploy and Agoriad Cyf.

Working Links is also responsible for Work Choice (for disabled benefit claimants), Community Work Placements (claimants post Work Programme) and a Flexible Support Fund (FSF) Contract in South East Wales for claimants from the start of their benefit claim and another FSF contract in Swansea in January 2015 focussed on post Work Programme support. In October 2014, Working Links was confirmed as the preferred bidders in Wales to run the Ministry of Justice's Transforming Rehabilitation programme.

Some of the areas discussed at the meeting included:

- Barriers to employment for people over 50;
- Support available to help people over 50 back into employment;
- Recruitment of people over 50;
- Any recommendations for Welsh Government.

Wales TUC Cymru

The Welsh Government provides the Wales TUC with guidance and financial support to help it extend learning opportunities, develop partnerships and maximise the impact of union learning representatives. Unionlearn is the learning and skills organisation of the TUC. It works to assist unions in the delivery of learning opportunities for their members as well as managing the Union Learning Funds (ULFs).

Some of the areas discussed at the meeting included:

- Training for people over 50;
- Barriers to employment for people over 50;
- Recruitment of people over 50;
- Any recommendations for the Welsh Government.

NIACE

The National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE) is the national, independent organisation for adult learning in England and Wales. NIACE promotes the interests of all adult learners and potential learners, especially those who have benefited least from education and training. NIACE seeks to achieve this through:

- Running high profile campaigns such as Adult Learners' Week, Sign Up Season and Taking Control;
- Engaging local and national media;
- Delivering high quality research, development and evaluation work;
- Supplying expert consultancy, advice and support services;
- Engaging policy makers;
- Supporting networking with practitioners, policy-makers and researchers;
- Publishing leading books and journals;
- Disseminating specialist information; and
- Providing flexible and personalised training courses.

Some of the areas discussed at the meeting included:

- Training for people over 50;
- Barriers to training or employment for people over 50;
- Any recommendations for the Welsh Government.

John Lewis

The John Lewis Partnership is a co-owned business. Every new recruit to John Lewis becomes a partner in the business, with a say in the running of the business and a share of the profits. John Lewis opened their Cardiff store in September 2009. At the time of opening, John Lewis, Cardiff employed over 800 people; it was the largest department store in Wales and the largest John Lewis store outside of London.

Some of the areas discussed at the meeting included:

- John Lewis' partners who are aged over 50;
- Recruitment of people over 50;
- Barriers to employment for people over 50;
- Any recommendations for the Welsh Government.