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Evidence from Older People's Commissioner for Wales – EOP 05



Older People's Commissioner for Wales
Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru

**Response from the Older People's
Commissioner for Wales**

to the

**National Assembly for Wales' Enterprise
and Business Committee Inquiry into
Employment opportunities for older people**

January 2015

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About the Commissioner

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales is an independent voice and champion for older people across Wales, standing up and speaking out on their behalf. She works to ensure that those who are vulnerable and at risk are kept safe and ensures that all older people have a voice that is heard, that they have choice and control, that they don't feel isolated or discriminated against and that they receive the support and services they need. The Commissioner's work is driven by what older people say matters most to them and their voices are at the heart of all that she does. The Commissioner works to make Wales a good place to grow older - not just for some but for everyone.

The Older People's Commissioner:

- Promotes awareness of the rights and interests of older people in Wales.
- Challenges discrimination against older people in Wales.
- Encourages best practice in the treatment of older people in Wales.
- Reviews the law affecting the interests of older people in Wales.

Employment opportunities for older people

1. As the Older People's Commissioner for Wales I welcome the opportunity to respond to the National Assembly for Wales' Enterprise and Business Committee Inquiry into Employment opportunities for older people¹. I have outlined the Committee's terms of reference below.
2. This is a key issue for many older people and addressing employment opportunities for older people is welcomed. The recruitment and retention of older people in the workforce in Wales is a crucial issue that helps individuals, communities and economies. As I have previously said, it is essential that action is taken to address the growing number of older people not in education, employment or training (NEETs) in Wales and reduce the number of older people who are unemployed long-term and struggling to find work. Older people have a wide range of skills and expertise that could be better utilised by employers in Wales, however they must also be able to access opportunities to learn and develop new skills, vital to increase their employment prospects in an increasingly competitive jobs market².

Context

3. There are almost 800,000 people aged 60 and over in Wales, over a quarter of the population, and, in the next twenty years, this is expected to exceed one million people. The fact that Wales is a nation of older people should be seen as something positive.

¹ <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/mgConsultationDisplay.aspx?id=153&RPID=546214&cp=yes>

² <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/prince-wales-charity-calls-end-7210131>

4. Older people make a huge contribution to Wales' communities and economies. Many older people remain economically active past retirement age, participating in full or part-time employment and continuing to pay tax, volunteering and providing invaluable childcare services for friends and family. They have a wealth of knowledge, skills and experience and, provided with adequate services and facilities, they can continue to make a significant contribution to their communities and the wider economy³.

5. After accounting for costs relating to pensions, welfare and health, older people:

- Make a net contribution worth over £1 billion a year to the Welsh economy, almost £3 million a day;
- Their contribution will total almost £27 billion over the next twenty years;
- The value of volunteering by older people in Wales, the 'hidden army', is estimated at £469 million. Around a third of older people in Wales volunteer, and informal volunteering helps alleviate the demand on public services⁴. Together with childcare, the value is around £750 million per year⁵;
- A 2011 study suggests that by 2030, older people will benefit the economy by around £291.1 billion, compared to projected welfare costs of £216.2 billion.

6. Older workers' skillsets and experience is currently underappreciated and undervalued in the workplace. Provided with support and encouragement, flexibility and tailored skills and learning development opportunities, older people can contribute so much more to communities and economies at local and national levels through employment.

- **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**

7. An increasing number of older people need to, or decide to, work for longer. Working beyond retirement age is a choice for some and a necessity for others: the 2011 abolition of the compulsory retirement age at 65 years has been a real positive step for older workers⁶. The introduction of the new State Pension in 2016 may impact on the need for older people to continue in employment, and removing National Insurance contributions and the promotion of flexible working arrangements may incentivise older workers to continue in employment⁷.
8. Working has a range of benefits for the physical and mental wellbeing of older workers. However, older people, and particularly those between 50 and State Pension age, face a number of barriers that prevent them from remaining in, or re-entering, the labour market. Some older workers have health issues, whilst others may need to update their skills to reflect the current work environment. Workers with caring responsibilities need flexible working practices to balance the demands placed on them.
9. With an ageing working population, workforces that span four generations ('4G' workforces) and people working into their seventies or even eighties will become a more common feature across Wales. It is crucial that Wales maximises the potential of the 'Boomerangst' generation⁸. By 2020 a third of the working-age population will be over 50 years old⁹. Despite these changes, the evidence suggests that older people face a number of barriers in remaining in or re-entering the labour market. For example:

⁶ <http://www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/work-and-learning/default-retirement-age/>

⁷ <https://www.gov.uk/new-state-pension/overview>

⁸ <http://www.21stcenturychallenges.org/focus/britains-greying-population/>

⁹ <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2012/apr/15/unemployed-older-workers-struggle-to-find-work>

- Over 1 in 3 people between 50 and State Pension age in Wales are jobless. This amounts to over 214,000 people (an estimated 62,000 younger people are unemployed)¹⁰;
- Older jobseekers are more than twice as likely to still be long term unemployed than younger jobseekers: more than 40% of unemployed men aged over fifty are still jobless after a year compared with 18% of young men. It is suggested that older women are better skilled to 'bounce back' from job losses¹¹¹²;
- There are four times as many NEETs over 50 as there are under 25, and 10 times as many as there are under 19¹³;
- People in their fifties are more than twice as likely to have no qualifications compared with people under 35 years old: 15% of people aged 50 and over in Wales have no formal qualifications¹⁴;
- People made redundant after the age of 50 are more likely to die than find another job¹⁵;
- Research suggests that 60,000 older people could be assisted back to employment given appropriate support¹⁶.

Discrimination

10. A 2014 report found that more people over the age of 50 are involuntarily pushed out of work through a combination of ill health, redundancy and early retirement than any other age group, with potentially disastrous implications for their long-term financial wellbeing. Much of this labour market exit could be prevented through increased support from employers. Once out of work, people over 50 face a real struggle to 'get back in', meaning that

⁹ <http://www.primecymru.co.uk/older-jobseekers-discriminated-against-in-wales/>

¹¹ <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/prince-wales-charity-calls-end-7210131>

¹² http://taen.org.uk/uploads/resources/Impact_of_the_recession_on_older_workers_media_briefing.pdf

¹³ <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/statistics/2013/130724-young-people-not-education-employment-training-year-31-march-2013-en.xls>

¹⁴ Annual Population Survey, accessed via NOMIS

¹⁵ <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/prince-wales-charity-calls-end-7210131>

¹⁶ 'Improving Employment Prospects for the over 50s' (Prime Cymru, Smallwood (2008))

they never return to the workforce and consequently have an adverse impact on their wellbeing¹⁷.

11. Ageism and discrimination remains a key barrier for older workers and older entrepreneurs. Age-old stereotypes involving older workers, such as slower productivity compared with younger workers, resistance to management, and difficulty in adapting to technological change, persist. Research in 2009 suggested that 65% of older people believe age discrimination still exists in the workplace, whilst a survey undertaken by The Age and Employment Network (TAEN) found that 63% of older jobseekers believed that employers see them as 'too old' and only 9% could say they had not experienced age discrimination when seeking employment¹⁸¹⁹.

12. Providing people who are aged 50 and over with the same chances as anyone else to gain employment and retrain is crucial. The Equality Act 2010 and associated Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) should ensure that older workers are not discriminated against on the grounds of age (further information may be found in Appendix A)²⁰. Regrettably, the labour market, employment training and skills programmes and schemes, careers advice and the whole discourse around employment focuses very much on young people at the expense of older workers.

13. Some good practice exists in terms of employers recognising the benefits of an age-diverse workforce. Large retail companies such as B&Q have led the way in terms of employing older workers and consider the needs of an age-diverse workforce²¹. Whilst such schemes and approaches are welcomed it is important to remember that older workers have a wide and diverse range of employment options to them to reflect their needs and skills,

¹⁷ <http://www.prime.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/PRIME-report-the-missing-million.pdf>

¹⁸ <http://www.assembly.wales/Laid%20Documents/CR-LD7800%20-%20Report%20from%20the%20Equality%20of%20Opportunity%20Committee%20on%20Older%20People%20and%20Employment%20Discrimination-25112009-153959/cr-ld7800-e-English.pdf>

¹⁹ http://taen.org.uk/uploads/resources/Impact_of_the_recession_on_older_workers_media_briefing.pdf

²⁰ <http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/documents/EqualityAct/employercode.pdf>

²¹ <http://www.cipd.co.uk/NR/rdonlyres/3648985D-87D5-4BC6-A2D9-DA565F0F4B3E/0/...>

beyond the retail sector and across the public and private sectors. Employers across Wales must consider older workers as valuable assets and recognise their positive attributes, such as a strong work ethic, reliability and loyalty, business experience and specialised skills²².

14. Tackling discrimination and out-of-date attitudes towards older workers and ensuring that employers across Wales are better prepared to manage an age-diverse workforce is crucial. However, a 2014 report found that only 31% of employers have an HR strategy for managing their ageing workforce despite recognition that the UK's working population is getting older²³. Working cultures need modernising: employers who promote generational diversity and develop a multi-generational workforce are more successful and better able to retain the skills of older workers, whilst also developing the younger workforce²⁴.
15. In order to fully derive the benefits of employing older workers, employees must fully consider the needs of an ageing workforce, including flexible working practices and hours for those with caring responsibilities, targeted learning and skills development opportunities to adapt to technological advances, and ensuring that working environments are adequate and inclusive e.g. health promotion schemes, appropriate light and noise levels through environmental assessments, and ergonomic changes to react to any postural, physical and functional needs.
16. With the public sector workforce in Wales shrinking by 40,000 over the past five years²⁵, employers need to be proactive and urgently consider ways of re-engaging with people aged 50 and over in the labour market. For example, with a third of the NHS workforce over 50 years old, a Working Longer Group has

²² Welsh Government Labour Market Intelligence Project: Opportunities for Learning and Employment amongst people aged 50+ in Wales (November 2014)

²³ <http://www.cipd.co.uk/pm/peoplemanagement/b/weblog/archive/2014/03/24/prepare-for-4g-age-diverse-workforce-now-cipd-urges-employers.aspx>

²⁴ Welsh Government Labour Market Intelligence Project: Opportunities for Learning and Employment amongst people aged 50+ in Wales (November 2014)

²⁵ <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/business/business-news/revealed-wales-shrinking-public-sector-7299498>

been established to address the twin challenges of potential staff shortages and the needs of an ageing population. Some of the Group's recommendations could be taken forward by other employers in Wales, such as advice and support regarding retirement decision making, the importance of appropriate working arrangements, and good practice occupational health, safety and wellbeing²⁶.

17. Far from being a burden on employers, evidence suggests that tapping into the talent pool of older workers is absolutely essential if businesses want to grow and thrive over the coming years rather than stagnate and decline. Older people want to work and contribute: across the UK, it is estimated that 1.2 million people aged over 50 would be willing to work if the right opportunities arose, adding around £50bn to the UK economy²⁷.
18. The Welsh Government could raise awareness amongst businesses and employers across Wales that discrimination on the grounds of age is unacceptable and highlight the benefits of a multi-generational workforce and employing people of all ages. Work remains to build on the recommendations issued in the National Assembly's 2009 report on Older People and Employment Discrimination, specifically the need for the Welsh Government to reduce the barriers to older people working and setting up businesses through the identification of their needs and provision of specifically tailored support, and address the lack of robust monitoring and evaluation of the extent of discrimination against older workers²⁸.
19. Furthermore, a consistent approach is required to measure and report the number of older NEETs in the same way as younger NEETs. Older NEETs are currently facing discrimination and their numbers and circumstances are not being fully captured,

²⁶ <http://www.nhsemployers.org/case-studies-and-resources/2014/07/working-longer-group-presentation-for-employers>

²⁷ <http://www.prime.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/PRIME-report-the-missing-million.pdf>

²⁸ <http://www.assembly.wales/Laid%20Documents/CR-LD7800%20-%20Report%20from%20the%20Equality%20of%20Opportunity%20Committee%20on%20Older%20People%20and%20Employment%20Discrimination-25112009-153959/cr-ld7800-e-English.pdf>

leading to them being at the margins of employers' priorities and employment schemes and remaining as the 'forgotten' workforce²⁹.

20. With the focus on flexible working patterns, 'being your own boss', independence and doing something that appeals and matters to individuals, self-employment, business start-ups and encouraging entrepreneurship are important ways in re-engaging older workers in the labour market. Whilst it is encouraging that the number of people working for themselves after 65 has doubled over the past five years³⁰, it is crucial that older workers across Wales are aware of advice and information services such as Prime Cymru³¹ to help them with self-employment options. Mentoring schemes and appropriate quality training products and services can make a real difference in ensuring that older workers can navigate their way towards self-employment and start-ups.
21. Offering those over 50 with career reviews and digital learning, as proposed by the UK Government during a forthcoming trial in April 2015, could help in this regard, and I expect this trial to include an 'older worker champion' for Wales in order to fully address the needs and circumstances of older workers across Wales³².

Dispelling myths: Younger v Older Workers

22. Too often there is a misconception that employing older people means that younger people are missing out on much-needed employment. On the contrary, evidence suggests that employing older people does not mean that younger people are 'crowded out' of the labour market and that there is room in our labour market for a diverse, intergenerational workforce³³.

²⁹ <http://www.primecymru.co.uk/older-jobseekers-discriminated-against-in-wales/>

³⁰ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-29067642>

³¹ <http://www.primecymru.co.uk/self-employment/>

³² <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-30559219>

³³ <http://www.prime.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/PRIME-report-the-missing-million.pdf>

23. Whilst myths remain that older workers are ‘desk-blocking’ younger people, there is much evidence that an age-diverse workforce is mutually beneficial: younger workers benefit from the skills and experience of older colleagues as mentors, whilst older workers can learn much from their younger colleagues in a rapidly-changing, technologically-driven working arena³⁴.
24. Furthermore, the contribution of older people to support younger workers is significant: research suggests that people over 50 supported 5.7 million jobs in the UK economy in 2013 through their expenditure, with some 878,000 full-time jobs for young people boosted by the spending power of those over 50³⁵.

Learning

25. Lifelong learning for older people helps the individual and the State: learning enhances employability and reduces expenditure in unemployment benefits, welfare payments and early retirement pensions. Having accumulated a significant amount of knowledge and expertise, it is also in the interests of employers to retain older people in employment, particularly in sectors such as manufacturing, education and healthcare, which are heavily reliant on older workers³⁶.
26. Whilst learning opportunities for full-time older workers are now more readily supported than in the past, part-time workers and job seekers over 50 are less likely to be engaged in learning. With working practices increasingly dependent on ICT and online services, digital learning is crucial to upskill the estimated 42% of people aged 50 and older in Wales who are digitally excluded³⁷. Learning opportunities that help older workers prepare for retirement or semi-retirement should be more widely available, especially for those whose jobs are physically demanding. These

³⁴ <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/aug/05/case-for-age-diverse-workforce>

³⁵ The Saga Generations: Supporting employment across the UK economy (June 2014)

³⁶ http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/Publications/pub-story/14-02-25/The_Importance_and_Impact_of_Community_Services_within_Wales.aspx

³⁷ Welsh Government Digital Inclusion Delivery Plan 2014

opportunities can lead to further learning and wider economic activity beyond their chosen career path. However, few employers offer such courses, especially for lower paid and less skilled staff.

27. It is good for the individual, the community and the economy for older people to be engaged in some form of employment, education or training. Learning for older people has a range of benefits, such as promoting full economic and societal participation, contributing towards personal wellbeing and fulfilment, and increasing efficiency as workers or volunteers. This complements the Welsh Government's Programme for Government, ensuring that all people have relevant skills for employment³⁸.

28. With the economic downturn affecting the traditional models of retirement, older people must be able to access new learning and employment opportunities to remain in or re-enter the labour market. Older people require access to learning for a number of reasons. For example, with an increasing number of older people unable to afford retirement at State Pension age, the provision of learning and skill development opportunities to improve their employment prospects becomes ever more important.

29. I am however very concerned about the future of adult learning in Wales: reducing the budget for post-16 education by £29m in 2015-16 will mean fewer lifelong learning opportunities for older people, which will have an adverse impact on their employment prospects³⁹. Whilst more than 90,000 people over fifty enrolled on part-time courses in Wales in 2003, this figure dropped to fewer than 48,000 by 2013⁴⁰. Furthermore, with students over 60 years old representing only 1.8% of all enrolments in 2012/13⁴¹, every effort must also be made to increase the numbers of older

³⁸ <http://cynnalcyrmru.com/sites/default/files/Programme%20for%20Government.pdf>

³⁹ <http://www.niacecymru.org.uk/news/draft-budget-sends-mixed-messages-adult-learning>

⁴⁰ <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/prince-wales-charity-calls-end-7210131>

⁴¹ <https://statswales.wales.gov.uk/Catalogue/Education-and-Skills/Post-16-Education-and-Training/Higher-Education/Students/Enrolments-at-Welsh-HEIs/HEEnrolmentsAtWelshHEIs-by-Gender-Age-Level-Mode>

students attending Welsh Higher Education Institutions as a route to gain relevant qualifications and learning for employment.

- **The effectiveness of the Welsh Government's Strategy for Older People 2013-23 in assisting older people into work**
- **The support that is most effective for older people trying to re-enter the labour market**

30. I welcome the references in the Strategy to the barriers that older workers face, and the importance of retaining older workers for economic prosperity in Wales. For Wales to remain competitive, it is indeed crucial to provide people who are 50 years and older with the same chances as anyone else to gain employment and retrain. I also welcome the reference that older people want more opportunities and support to find new employment. The Strategy states the harsh reality that faces older workers: older people who are unemployed are more likely to be long-term unemployed; around 45% of unemployed people aged 50-64 have been unemployed for a year or more compared to 30% of 18-24 year olds and 38% for 25-49 year olds⁴².

31. A key outcome in the Strategy is that by 2023 older people who want to work are able to do so and can access help with reskilling and retraining. Given the current situation and the numerous barriers that older workers continue to face, much more needs to be done if the Welsh Government is to achieve this employment outcome. Through a joined-up, integrated approach across Government, the Strategy must be complemented and supported by a range of schemes and Programmes that recognises the immense benefits of recruiting and retaining older workers.

⁴² <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dhss/publications/130521olderpeoplestrategyen.pdf>

32. The Strategy mentions the key policies and strategies to achieve this employment outcome, including the Wales Economic Growth Fund, Skills Growth Wales, Workforce Development Programme, Carers Strategy⁴³, and Health Work and Wellbeing Action Plan for Wales 2011-15⁴⁴. Although the Carers Strategy does recognise the value and contribution of older carers, I express concern regarding the relevancy of some of the other Programmes:

- Applications for the Wales Economic Growth Fund closed in 2013, whilst new applications for Skills Growth Wales and the Workforce Development Programme are currently closed or on hold;
- The Health, Work and Well-being Action Plan for Wales 2011-15 makes no reference to the specific challenges and circumstances of older workers;
- In addition, the Older People's Skills Strategy, a much-needed document to address the importance of skills in ensuring that older people remain in or re-enter work, has yet to be published.

33. Furthermore, whilst the Welsh Government's 2014 Policy Statement on Skills⁴⁵ and Skills Implementation Plan⁴⁶ may apply to people of all ages, it makes no reference to the specific skillsets that older workers need to remain in or return to the workforce e.g. renewed qualifications, IT skills. A targeted programme for older workers, similar to the success in addressing youth employment via Jobs Growth Wales, is needed to utilise the largely untapped resource of unemployed people aged between 50 and the State Pension age. Alternatively, and as suggested by Prime Cymru, the Welsh Government could open up Jobs Growth Wales to people of all ages, ensuring equal treatment and access to employment opportunities.

⁴³ <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dhss/publications/130613strategyen.pdf>

⁴⁴ <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/phhs/publications/110517actionplanency.pdf>

⁴⁵ <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dcells/publications/140129-policy-statement-on-skills-en.pdf>

⁴⁶ <http://wales.gov.uk/docs/dcells/publications/140714-skills-implementation-plan-en.pdf>

34. Helping older people to return to work is a key issue. The longer a person aged 50 and over remains unemployed, the more likely it is that he/she will never return to the labour market. Numerous rejections and unsuccessful applications and a labour market that is geared towards young people can have a devastating impact on an older person's mental health, leading to a loss of confidence, stress, a feeling of uselessness and depression⁴⁷. In order to re-engage the 'forgotten' workforce, persistent long-term unemployment among people aged 50-64 is an issue that employers urgently need to address⁴⁸.
35. It is crucial that the Welsh Government and employers in Wales learn from good practice in other regions and countries where the value of older workers and the need to prevent involuntary exits from the labour market is recognised e.g. BMW in Bavaria where working environments have been adapted to accommodate older workers, meaning relatively little investment for considerable return in productivity and economic output⁴⁹, and the development of comprehensive programmes, targeted skills and training and a commitment to flexibility in working practices to achieve longer working lives in Finland⁵⁰.

Ageing Well in Wales

36. I am proud to chair Ageing Well in Wales, the five year national partnership programme launched in October 2014 to improve the wellbeing of people aged 50+ in Wales⁵¹. Opportunities for Learning and Employment is one of the Programme's five priority networks, and key partners, including the Welsh Government, the National Partnership Forum, Wales Council for Voluntary Action, Prime Cymru and Niace Dysgu

⁴⁷ <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2012/apr/15/unemployed-older-workers-struggle-to-find-work>

⁴⁸ <http://www.saga.co.uk/money/news/2014/january/employment-boost-for-the-over-50s-but-it-is-still-hard-for-older-people-to-find-a-job.aspx>

⁴⁹ Welsh Government Labour Market Intelligence Project: Opportunities for Learning and Employment amongst people aged 50+ in Wales (November 2014)

⁵⁰ <http://eurofound.europa.eu/observatories/eurwork/comparative-information/national-contributions/finland/finland-the-role-of-government-and-social-partners-in-keeping-older-workers-in-the-labour-market>

⁵¹ <http://www.ageingwellinwales.com/Libraries/Documents/AWFinalEnglish.pdf>

Cymru, will be working together over the next five years to achieve the network's overarching aim: to ensure the experience of older people in Wales is optimised through continued learning and employment.

37. Tackling age discrimination and recognising the value and worth of older people in Wales will be a key feature in the work of this network. The network will aim to increase the recognised value of older people through further learning, employment and volunteering opportunities. By achieving its aims and outcomes, the network will also address another of the Programme's networks, Loneliness and Isolation.
38. The network can also help develop any pilots or programmes in Wales that helps in re-engaging older people with the labour market. With very few economically inactive people over 50 claiming Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) (it is estimated that 1.5% of people aged 50-64, fewer than 9000 people, claim JSA in Wales⁵²), the network can support new approaches to helping older people back into work, focusing on key barriers such as health issues and caring responsibilities, and encouraging the take-up of part-time work and mentoring roles better suited to the circumstances of older workers⁵³.
39. I am keen to ensure that Ageing Well in Wales maximises funding opportunities from domestic and European funding streams across the five priority networks. The Programme, through its links with the European Innovation Partnership for Active and Healthy Ageing, will look to access funding from the EU Structural and Investment Funds, particularly the emphasis on tackling poverty through sustainable employment and skills for growth in the European Social Fund (ESF) for Wales' regions in the 2014-2020 programming period⁵⁴. This emphasis must improve employment opportunities for people of all ages across Wales.

⁵² <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/gor/2013265930/report.aspx>

⁵³ <http://www.ftadviser.com/2014/12/29/regulation/eu-legislation/governments-must-rethink-retirement-altmann-iliuDD5ROjXESHGxN39iAJ/article.html>

⁵⁴ <http://wefo.wales.gov.uk/programmes/?lang=en>

Conclusion

40. The case for recruiting and retaining older people in the workforce is compelling, and the case for working longer has never been stronger. As the evidence suggests, employment opportunities for older people benefits the individual, the community and economies at local and national levels. With an ageing population and increased longevity, more and more older people across Wales will need to work for longer to make ends meet. Engaging with older workers and ensuring they have the right skills, qualifications and experience to remain in or re-enter the workforce is no longer a choice but a necessity: UK employers are expected to need to fill around 13.5 million vacancies in the next ten years but only 7 million young people will leave education over that period⁵⁵. Furthermore, evidence suggests that reinforcing the workforce with older workers could boost economic output by up to 5.6% of GDP (an additional £88.4bn in 2014)⁵⁶.
41. I look forward to working with the Welsh Government and other key partners to ensure that the employment prospects for older people are improved, and that the advantages of an age-diverse workforce are recognised, benefiting the wellbeing of the individual and improving Wales' economic performance and workforce in the process.

⁵⁵ <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2012/apr/15/unemployed-older-workers-struggle-to-find-work>

⁵⁶ <http://www.prime.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/PRIME-report-the-missing-million.pdf>

Appendix A: Equality Act, Declaration of Rights for Older People in Wales, UN Principles

Equality Act

Under the Equality Act 2010 (Statutory Duties) (Wales) Regulations 2011⁵⁷ the Specific Duties in Wales set out the steps that listed bodies must take to demonstrate they are paying due regard to the General Duty under the Act.

Employment Information must be collected and published by public bodies as part of these requirements. This information must include:

- people who have applied for jobs with the authority over the last year;
- employees who have applied to change position within the authority, identifying how many were successful in their application and how many were not;
- employees who have applied for training and how many succeeded in their application;
- employees who completed the training;
- employees involved in grievance procedures either as a complainant or as a person against whom a complaint was made;
- employees subject to disciplinary procedures;
- employees who have left an authority's employment.

There would still seem little understanding of the implications of the inclusion of age as a protected characteristic under the law. 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.

⁵⁷ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/wsi/2011/1064/contents/made>

Indeed, there is anecdotal evidence that older workers employment opportunities are being adversely impacted as they are targeted for early retirement by public sector employers as part of austerity measures. The extent to which effective Equality Impact Assessments are conducted to inform these policies and procedures is also questionable.

The Declaration of Rights for Older People in Wales

The Declaration was launched by the Older People's Commissioner for Wales and the then Welsh Government Deputy Minister for Social Services in July 2014⁵⁸. Although it has no statutory basis, the Declaration offers a clear commitment on the part of Welsh Government and another example of the policy divergence in terms of how we treat older people in Wales.

The Declaration includes the following statement:

“I have the right to work, develop, participate and contribute
My life does not come to an end because I have reached a certain age. I have a right to work. I have a right to full involvement in my own community. I have a right to thrive and to continue learning, developing and growing. I have a right to support so I can continue contributing. I have a right to explore new things.”

UN Principles

The United Nations Principles for Older Persons were adopted by the UN General Assembly (Resolution 46/91) on 16 December 1991⁵⁹. Governments were encouraged to incorporate them into their national programmes whenever possible. There are 18 principles, which can be grouped under five themes: independence, participation, care, self-fulfilment and dignity.

The Principles acknowledge:

1. the tremendous diversity in the situations of older persons, not only between countries but within countries and between individuals;
2. that individuals are reaching an advanced age in greater numbers and in better health than ever before;

⁵⁸ <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/health/publications/health/strategies/rights/?lang=en>

⁵⁹ <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/OlderPersons.aspx>

3. that scientific research disproves many stereotypes about inevitable and irreversible decline with age;
4. that in a world characterized by an increasing number and proportion of older persons, opportunities must be provided for willing and capable older persons to participate in and contribute to the ongoing activities of society;
5. that the strain on family life in both developed and developing countries requires support for those providing care to frail older persons.

The Older People's Commissioner for Wales is legally obliged to have regard to these Principles and is pleased to do so. They are Principles which should be considered by all organisations and regarded as a framework for their treatment of older people.

Independence

1. Older persons should have access to adequate food, water, shelter, clothing and health care through the provision of income, family and community support and self-help.
2. **Older persons should have the opportunity to work or to have access to other income-generating opportunities.**
3. **Older persons should be able to participate in determining when and at what pace withdrawal from the labour force takes place.**
4. **Older persons should have access to appropriate educational and training programmes.**
5. Older persons should be able to live in environments that are safe and adaptable to personal preferences and changing capacities.
6. Older persons should be able to reside at home for as long as possible.

Participation

1. **Older persons should remain integrated in society, participate actively in the formulation and implementation of policies that directly affect their well-being and share their knowledge and skills with younger generations.**
2. **Older persons should be able to seek and develop opportunities for service to the community and to serve as volunteers in positions appropriate to their interests and capabilities.**

3. Older persons should be able to form movements or associations of older persons.

Self-Fulfilment

1. **Older persons should be able to pursue opportunities for the full development of their potential.**
2. Older persons should have access to the educational, cultural, spiritual and recreational resources of society.