



Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru The National Assembly for Wales

Y Pwyllgor Menter a Busnes The Enterprise and Business Committee

**Dydd Iau, 29 Ionawr 2015
Thursday, 29 January 2015**

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Office of the Older People's Commissioner

Canolfan Byd Gwaith
Jobcentre Plus

Cynghrair Henoed Cymru ac Age Cymru
Age Alliance and Age Cymru

Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o'r Cyfarfod
Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from the Meeting

Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynddi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal, cynhwysir trawsgrifiad o'r cyfieithu ar y pryd.

These proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee.
In addition, a transcription of the simultaneous interpretation is included.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Mick Antoniw	Llafur Labour
Rhun ap Iorwerth	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Jeff Cuthbert	Llafur Labour
Keith Davies	Llafur Labour
Suzy Davies	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig (yn dirprwyo ar ran Byron Davies) Welsh Conservatives (substitute for Byron Davies)
William Graham	Ceidwadwyr Cymru (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Welsh Conservatives (Committee Chair)
Eluned Parrott	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
Joyce Watson	Llafur Labour

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

Daisy Cole	Cyfarwyddwr Lles a Grymuso, Swyddfa Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru Director of Wellbeing and Empowerment, Office of the Older People's Commissioner for Wales
Graeme Francis	Pennaeth Polisi a Materion Cyhoeddus, Age Cymru Head of Policy and Public Affairs, Age Cymru
David Pugh	Prif Weithredwr, Cynghrair Henoed Cymru/PRIME Cymru Chief Executive, Age Alliance/PRIME Cymru
Hayley Ridge-Evans	Cyfarwyddwr Gweithrediadau, Cynghrair Henoed Cymru/PRIME Cymru Director of Operations, Age Alliance/PRIME Cymru
Huw Thomas	Uwch Reolwr Partneriaethau Grwp (Cymru), Canolfan Byd Gwaith Senior Group Partnership Manager (Wales), Jobcentre Plus
Iwan Williams	Arweinydd Cymunedau, Llywodraeth Leol a Llesiant, Swyddfa Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru Communities, Local Government and Wellbeing Lead, Office of the Older People's Commissioner for Wales

Swyddogion Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn bresennol
National Assembly for Wales officials in attendance

Rachel Jones	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
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Claire Morris	Clerc
	Clerc
Anne Thomas	Gwasanaeth Ymchwil
	Research Service
Chris Warner	Clerc
	Clerc

*Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:50.
The meeting began at 09:50.*

Cyflwyniadau, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon Introductions, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **William Graham:** Can I welcome Members and witnesses and any members of the public? The meeting today is bilingual, and headphones can be used for simultaneous translation from Welsh to English on channel 1 or for amplification on channel 2. The meeting is being broadcast and a transcript of the proceedings will be published later. I remind Members and witnesses that there is no need to touch the microphones; they should come on automatically. In the event of a fire alarm, I ask people to follow directions from the usher. I have apologies today from Byron Davies, Dafydd Elis-Thomas and Gwenda Thomas. I'm grateful to Suzy Davies for substituting for Byron Davies today. Welcome.

Swyddfa Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru Office of the Older People's Commissioner

[2] **William Graham:** Members will be aware this is our first evidence session in our new inquiry into employment opportunities for people over 50. I'm very grateful to Daisy Cole and Iwan Williams for coming to speak to us today. Could I ask you to give your names and titles for the record?

[3] **Ms Cole:** Daisy Cole, director of wellbeing and empowerment.

[4] **Mr Williams:** Iwan Williams, communities, local government and wellbeing lead.

[5] **William Graham:** Thank you very much. We thank you for your written paper, and I suggest we go straight into questions. The first question is from Mick Antoniw.

[6] **Mick Antoniw:** I was wondering if you could perhaps summarise what the issues are around people over 50 seeking employment and wanting employment, and what the challenges for them are.

[7] **Mr Williams:** Well, the situation is quite alarming, I'd say, in terms of the issues facing those over 50 who want to work. We estimate that we have over 200,000 people between 50 and state pension age in Wales who are out of work, and who want to or need to get back into the workplace. You compare that with younger workers—around 60,000—it just shows the scale of the situation. As I say, it is 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. So, it is a situation that the commissioner is very much aware of and something that we are keen to address as a matter of urgency.

[8] **Mick Antoniw:** We hear a lot about age discrimination. Just as part of your summary, would you say that it is a significant issue in Wales—age discrimination that

impacts on what happens to people in or seeking employment?

[9] **Ms Cole:** Yes, I would say that age discrimination is a significant issue across the UK. It's one of these things that is present everywhere, but particularly in the work environment, and it's something that's internalised as well by older people. Frequently, people will tell the commissioner how they actually felt that they were pushed into leaving their jobs, and research that has been done has shown that only 22% of older people who left their job actually did so willingly; the rest of the percentage actually felt that they were nudged or pushed out.

[10] **Mick Antoniw:** Has the situation been impacted upon or aggravated in any way by changes in pension?

[11] **Mr Williams:** I think, on pension, looking ahead to the changes to the state pension system next year, I think there's a real concern that those who are approaching retirement age will not fully benefit from the changes to the new flat-rate pension. What we suggest in our written evidence is that there are ways to incentivise employers and others to get older workers back into the workplace—removing national insurance contributions, for example. So, there is some concern there about the forthcoming changes to state pension.

[12] **Mick Antoniw:** Is there any evidence though of the impact, because obviously there are a whole host of people now—many millions—who were probably anticipating retiring at a particular age, but now find that they have no option but to work? And, of course, that then impacts on their ability to be able to. So, is there a concern—. Perhaps you could outline what your concerns are, and what evidence there is to back that up.

[13] **Ms Cole:** I think one of the concerns as well is about the employers just not being ready to deal with the impact of ageing. So, for example, there was an all-UK NHS working longer review; because of the shortages in NHS staff, that had to be done. But we're still waiting to see how that is actually rolled out. They've got lots of great ideas in terms of enabling people through occupational therapy, looking at flexible working, but where we are in Wales in individual health boards, I don't think that's anywhere. But people know; people regularly say to the commissioner how they will be working longer. And I think, to be honest, some of the impacts are unknown because 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.

[14] **Mick Antoniw:** Over 50s jobseekers are twice as likely as young jobseekers to be unemployed. What evidence is there to explain why that is?

[15] **Mr Williams:** I think one of our concerns is the lack of evidence. We talk in our written evidence about people not in education, employment or training and the evidence for younger people seems to be there, but we're not capturing those data for older people in the same way. So, we're suggesting here that, for every young person under 25 who is NEET, there are four people over the age of 50. But that is very much data gathered from different sources by some of our colleagues, so we have no clear picture of what it's actually like out there and that is something to address and take forward.

[16] **William Graham:** Jeff is next.

[17] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Thank you. I take on board your last comments about no clear picture. Nevertheless, Daisy, from what you said, it would appear that 78% of older people feel that they were pushed out of the job. Now, is that perception? Is there evidence to back that up? Is there any correlation between whether they were in the public sector or the private sector, because we will be talking to employers of both sorts, and trade unions, to see what evidence there is, if that's true? So, is it a feeling, or are you aware of evidence that could

support that view or not?

[18] **Ms Cole:** That percentage was from a specific piece of research, wasn't it? But I know, coming back to what's happening, some big companies, such as B&Q, and some of the supermarkets, are really starting to get to grips with the benefits of having an older workforce. I think, with the public sector equality duty, people have still got to get to grips actually with the fact that it's not older people, it's age. So, very often, it's unknown how to work with that. I think, in another debate, one of your colleagues spoke about an impact assessment for older people and I do think there is some merit in that because it's not yet understood what people need to do to implement that duty fully. And I think also, in Wales, we don't know what the situation is with the SMEs to be honest; it's quite difficult because, again, those data are not there.

[19] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Okay. I'll come back later on other things.

[20] **William Graham:** Could I come back to the points you've raised about the health service? Do you think that there's any possibility of those data being available at a later date? It always seemed to me amazing, particularly in the health service, where, as you say, there's a shortage of skilled personnel at all levels and, by the time they get into their 60s, they must be excellent at their job, and yet we're suddenly denied that, particularly in diagnosis. Do you think there's any chance of those data being published?

[21] **Ms Cole:** Well, the NHS working group has actually published their review. So, you can see the data across the UK that they've drawn together. I don't know how much of that we would really be able to see that drills down into Wales because it was across.

[22] **William Graham:** But it would give an impression again, wouldn't it, so we can get a copy of that.

[23] **Ms Cole:** Yes, it would give a good picture.

[24] **William Graham:** Thank you for making us aware. Rhun is next.

[25] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Moving on to specific barriers, we've touched on several of these issues already, where perceptions are barriers and where actual problems are barriers. So, you've said that you think discrimination exists absolutely. What then are the areas on which employers will actually say, 'Well, no, there's a good reason why I'm not employing these people'? For example, starting on skills, the belief that just the skills are not there among the over 50s.

10:00

[26] **Ms Cole:** I think that we have a lot of anecdotal evidence, and also from colleagues of mine who've been made redundant who've spoken to me about the real, just, depression that comes on from putting in your fiftieth, sixtieth, hundredth application and not even getting an interview, even though your experience is way and above—of people going to job agencies and being told, 'Oh you look quite healthy, actually; we can put you forward'. I think those sorts of things are really totally inappropriate, but, again, it's hard to have an evidence picture of it, because it's something where people will walk away and think, 'Well, that has happened to me; it can't be—. With all my experience, I've never had a problem getting a job and suddenly I'm not getting an interview.' But, again, I don't know if there's any specific research that actually pulls that out.

[27] **Mr Williams:** Again, it comes back to that point that we have a dearth of evidence and research, you know, in terms of older workers in Wales, but specific to Wales. I mean, we

refer to, you know, some evidence in here, but that's on a UK level. But, in terms of skills, maybe it's a point of sort of reversing the situation, looking at it from a different point, in that small and medium-sized enterprises and other employers can't afford not to employ people over the age of 50. We need to tap into this largely untapped pool of resources, skills, wealth and experience.

[28] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** So, we've talked about perception of skills; where are the skills gaps, then, because there are bound to be real barriers for people? For example, IT is one where we think there may be some issues that need addressing. Where are the skills gaps for over 50s in particular?

[29] **Ms Cole:** IT is definitely one, and we said about digital inclusion in our evidence. I think there's also a big issue around people's confidence to keep going back and actually there needs to be support out there to help people get over this inherent, insidious element of ageism that actually de-skills people. So I think there's something about giving people that support and also, I think, about the basic skills strategies that need to be in place, because, if you've been doing manual work, it may no longer be practical for you to work those lengths of hours and that length of time and you may need upskilling in some of those basic skills areas.

[30] **Mr Williams:** Sure, sure.

[31] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** How prevalent are health problems, then? Obviously—. I don't know, if you have a table of the barriers, where would health problems and the inability of people to work because of health sit in that compared with, say, the skills problems?

[32] **Ms Cole:** I don't know whether it's just health per se, or whether there's other issues that come in as well, such as caring. So, it may not necessarily be the health of the individual, but very often, with older workers, they may have a parent now who is living with dementia. So, it's about flexible working around all of those kinds of things. I don't think I could sit here and come out with a percentage around health issues. I think that one of the very worrying things for us is the impact on people's health and wellbeing if they don't work. And I would say, actually, there is much more of an increase there. I think there was something in the evidence about someone over 50 being more likely to die than actually get back into employment and I think that's the evidence that I find particularly damning.

[33] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** You mentioned that, actually, in your written evidence to us. What is the evidence of that? Is that just an anecdote or is it backed by evidence?

[34] **Mr Williams:** It brings it, you know, very much to the forefront, doesn't it? But, I mean, you know, again, it comes back to this need for further evidence, research and data around the situation facing older workers in Wales. Whether the reference we have there is outdated now or whether it's from a few years back—possibly, but, you know, it strengthens that point, doesn't it, that, if you are unemployed after 12 months it is very difficult for you to get back into that working arena.

[35] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** I'm sorry to be going backwards and forwards between perceptions and realities, but, on health and perceptions, is the perception that somebody over 50 is bound to have health problems one of the main barriers as well?

[36] **Ms Cole:** I think 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 actual consciousness towards detail, the reliability.

We don't have that balance in society; what we have is a society that is very much focused on the young, but I don't want this to be about an 'us and them' thing.

[37] When you think in terms of how the Government is supporting young people and even things like NVQs—to come back to your earlier question about training—NVQs for people over 25, the funding for that has disappeared. Yet, if we look at a sector like the health and social care sector—older women, that's a much more popular area for them to work. Maybe they don't want to do such a demanding job, and it's very difficult, because we're not skilling people up. The funding isn't there for independent providers to get their staff trained, which, again, is another issue for Wales as a whole, because it has a knock-on impact, and I think there's a big knock-on impact about this issue not being grasped as a programme for government issue, which it really needs to be, because there are so many impacts on the individual, on the economy and on the wider social wellbeing of society that we really need to look at with this.

[38] **William Graham:** Suzy.

[39] **Suzy Davies:** Yes, thank you. I just want to take you back to the comment you made about when somebody sees somebody's age on a CV, because I thought the way we dealt with that these days was not to put an age on a CV, but, of course, if you fill your CV up with all the experience that you've had, people can usually have an educated guess, can't they? Have you had any evidence that people actually over-detail their CVs when they're in this particular position and they're being constantly told, 'You're over-qualified for this job, that's why we don't want to interview you'? I'm not suggesting people amend their CVs, but—

[40] **Mr Williams:** Yes, absolutely. We're not aware, you know, of research in that field, but, just anecdotally, there was an interesting example of, I think, a gentleman in England, who prepared two CVs in his name and prepared one from the perspective of a younger person and one his actual age, over 50, and he was interviewed as that younger person and not as his actual age. That's just an example there that age is a barrier.

[41] **Suzy Davies:** Thank you. That's helpful.

[42] **William Graham:** Keith.

[43] **Keith Davies:** Fe wnaif ofyn yn Gymraeg. Mae gan Lywodraeth Cymru strategaeth ar gyfer pobl hŷn—strategaeth 10 mlynedd. A yw'n cynnwys digon o dargedau, cyn belled ag y mae cyflogaeth a swyddi yn y cwestiwn?

Keith Davies: I will ask my question in Welsh. The Welsh Government has a strategy for older people—a 10-year strategy. Does it include enough targets, insofar as employment and jobs are in the question?

[44] **Mr Williams:** Rwy'n meddwl bod y strategaeth yn cyfeirio at bwysigrwydd cyflogaeth ar gyfer pobl hŷn. Os wnewch chi edrych, o ran y rhan ar adnoddau ariannol, mae yna ran fanna sy'n cydnabod pwysigrwydd hyn. Ond, y peth yr ydym ni'n pryderu amdano yw ble rydym wedi mynd ers cyhoeddiad y strategaeth. Mae'n cyfeirio at nifer o raglenni i fynd i'r afael â hyn, ond, fel rydym wedi dweud yn ein tystiolaeth ysgrifenedig, mae sawl un o'r rhaglenni hyn wedi dod i ben, neu nid ydym yn siŵr beth yw'r cam nesaf. Mae yna gyfeiriad at

Mr Williams: Well, I think that the strategy does refer to the importance of employment for older people. If you look at the section on financial resources, for example, there is a specific section there acknowledging the importance of this. But, our concern is where we have actually moved to since the publication of that strategy. It refers to a number of programmes to tackle this issue, but, as we have said in our written evidence, many of those programmes are coming to a close, or we're unsure as to the next steps in terms of those programmes. There is a

strategaeth sgiliau penodol ar gyfer pobl hŷn—nid ydym yn siŵr eto pryd y mae honno'n mynd i gael ei chyhoeddi. Felly dyna'n pryder ni. Er yr ydym, wrth gwrs, yn croesawu cydnabyddiaeth cyflogaeth yn y strategaeth a'r angen yna i gael pobl hŷn yn ôl i mewn i'r byd gwaith, ble'r ydym, ar hyn o bryd, yn 2015 yn awr?

[45] **Keith Davies:** Rydych chi hefyd yn sôn am—ac rydym wedi'i glywed sawl gwaith yn y Cynulliad—ba mor dda mae Twf Swyddi Cymru wedi bod cyn belled ag y mae pobl ifanc yn y cwestiwn, ac wedi cael swyddi parhaol wedyn. Rydych chi'n sôn efallai y dylem gael rhywbeth tebyg ar gyfer pobl hŷn ac rydych chi'n credu y byddai'n llwyddiannus.

[46] **Mr Williams:** Yn hollol. Rydym wedi awgrymu yn y fan hyn y dylem, efallai, edrych ar raglen debyg er mwyn targedu anghenion arbennig pobl dros 50 sydd angen gweithio ac sydd eisiau gweithio, neu, hyd yn oed, agor lan y rhaglen Twf Swyddi Cymru i bobl o bob oedran. Pam lai? Pam na allwn ni wneud hyn? Rydym yn gweld bod yr holl bwyslais ar bobl ifanc o ran cyflogaeth, ac rydym ni eisiau cydraddoldeb a bod yr un cyfleoedd ar gyfer y rheini sydd dros 50.

[47] **Keith Davies:** Wrth gwrs, rydym yn cael cwynion hefyd bod system o brentisiaethau gyda ni, ond maen nhw'n gorffen, rwy'n credu, yn 25 oed. Os ydych dros 25, nid oes ffordd ichi gael cefnogaeth i wneud prentisiaeth. Mewn ffordd—a roeddem yn sôn am sgiliau yn gynharach—efallai y dylem sôn am bobl dros 50 yn cael rhyw gynllun sy'n debyg i brentisiaeth er mwyn iddynt wella'u sgiliau.

[48] **Mr Williams:** Yn hollol, yn hollol. Fel y bu i Daisy gyfeirio ato, wrth i chi fynd yn hŷn, efallai nad yw swyddi sy'n fwy corfforol yn berthnasol bellach. Felly, mae angen sgiliau gwahanol arnoch, a ffyrdd arall i gyfrannu at y gweithle. Yn hollol.

[49] **Keith Davies:** Y peth olaf rwyf eisiau gofyn yw: roedd un o'r bobl y gwnaethom weld fideo amdany'n nhw yn gynharach yn sôn am swyddi sy'n dod o

reference to a specific skills strategy for older people—we're not quite sure when that is to be published. So, that's our concern. Although, of course, we welcome the fact that employment is identified and recognised in the strategy and that need to get older people back into the workforce, where are we at present in 2015?

Keith Davies: You also mention—and we've heard this many a time in the Assembly—how good Jobs Growth Wales has been, particularly where young people are in the question and have gone on to get permanent jobs. You're talking about having something similar for older people here and you believe that it would be successful.

Mr Williams: Certainly. We've suggested here that we should, perhaps, look at a similar programme to target the specific needs of those people over 50 who need to work and want to work, or even, to open up the Jobs Growth Wales programme to people of all ages. Why not? Why couldn't we do that? We see there is all of this emphasis on young people in terms of employment, and what we want is equality and for the same opportunities to be available for those who are over 50.

Keith Davies: Of course, we also receive complaints that we have a system of apprenticeships, but they come to an end at the age of 25, I think. If you're over 25, there's no way for you to receive support to carry out an apprenticeship. So, in a way—and you were talking about skills earlier—perhaps we should talk about people over 50 having some kind of scheme similar to an apprenticeship so that they can improve their skills.

Mr Williams: Yes, exactly. As Daisy mentioned, as you get older, perhaps physically demanding employment is no longer appropriate. So, you need those different skills; you need a different way to contribute in the workplace.

Keith Davies: The final thing I want to ask is: one of the people we saw a video about earlier was talking about jobs that arise from European funding. But what she told us was

ganlyniad i arian Ewropeaidd. Ond y peth ddywedodd hi oedd ei bod hi wedi newid swydd tair gwaith, rwy'n credu, oherwydd y ffaith bod yr arian yn dod am brosiectau tymor byr. Wedyn, os ydym yn edrych am fwy o gyllid o Ewrop, a ddylen ni fod yn meddwl am swyddi mwy parhaol, ac wedyn ni fyddai hi yn y sefyllfa y mae hi wedi bod ynddi? Beth ddywedodd hi oedd ei bod wedi colli swydd yn 49, roedd yn 69 nawr, ond, yn yr 20 mlynedd hynny, roedd wedi cael nifer o swyddi ac wedi eu colli nhw, nid oherwydd pa mor dda oedd hi, neu broblemau gyda hi, ond oherwydd y cyllid. Os ydym yn sôn am fwy o gyllid o Ewrop, beth ddylem fod yn anelu ato er mwyn inni allu edrych ar ôl pobl hŷn?

[50] **Mr Williams:** Wel, rydym newydd lansio rhaglen newydd, Heneiddio'n Dda yng Nghymru, sy'n cael ei gadeirio gan y comisiynydd. Hwn yw'r rhaglen bartneriaeth cenedlaethol i wella lles pobl dros 50. Wrth gwrs, mae cyfleoedd ar gyfer cyflogaeth a dysgu yn un o'n blaenoriaethau ni. Felly, mae amseru'r ymchwiliad hyn yn plethu gyda hynny. Ond rydym cyfeirio yn y fan hyn at y pwysigrwydd o ganfod arian Ewropeaidd, yn enwedig drwy'r gronfa gymdeithasol Ewropeaidd, sydd yn mynd i flaenoriaethu taclo tlodi trwy gyflogaeth. Yn hollol, rydym eisiau gweld bod y cyllid yna yn cyrraedd pobl dros 50, a bod gennym raglenni cyflogaeth sy'n gwneud y mwyaf o'r cyfleoedd o arian Ewropeaidd. Mae'n dod yn ôl i'r newid agwedd hyn—roeddech yn sôn fanna am lawer o swyddi yn ystod cyfnod gweithio hwyrach person—a'n bod yn ystyried agwedd fwy cynaliadwy, a'n bod yn gweld swyddi sy'n gallu addasu at anghenion pobl yn yr hirdymor.

that she had changed jobs three times, I believe, because of the fact that the funding comes for short-term projects. So, if we're looking for more funding to come from Europe, should we be thinking about more permanent jobs, so that she wouldn't be in that situation? What she said was that she had lost her job at 49, she was now 69, but, during that 20-year period, she'd had many jobs and had lost them, not because of how good she was, or problems with her, but because of funding. So, if we're talking about more funding from Europe, what should we be aiming for so that we can look after older people?

Mr Williams: Well, we have just launched a new programme, Ageing Well in Wales, which is chaired by the commissioner. This is a national partnership programme to improve the wellbeing of people over 50 years of age. Of course, employment and learning opportunities are one of our priorities. So, the timing of this inquiry dovetails very well with that. But we mention here the importance of identifying European funding, particularly through the European social fund, which will prioritise tackling poverty through employment. We certainly do want to see that funding reaching people over 50, and that we have employment programmes that make the most of that European funding. It comes back to this change in mindset—you mentioned lots of jobs during a person's later working life—and that we consider a more sustainable aspect, and see jobs that can adapt to the needs of people in the longer term.

[51] **Keith Davies:** Diolch. Thank you, Chair.

[52] **William Graham:** Jeff.

[53] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Yes, thank you. Naturally, European funding and Welsh Government programmes like Steps to Employment and ReAct can help; they can't solve the big problem. Clearly, employers have a crucial role to play here in terms of retaining staff and employing new staff. So, what more do you think the Welsh Government can do to encourage employers to consider the benefits of retaining or employing older workers? It could be experiences, how settled they are, various things like this. Indeed, with yourselves, is there work under way to actually improve attitudes?

[54] **Ms Cole:** Yes, there's recently been launched by the Department for Work and

Pensions an age discrimination campaign to actually look at this issue. It would be really good if Welsh Government could get more involved with that.

[55] **Mr Williams:** Yes, absolutely. You know, I think it comes back to this issue of discrimination and whether the Welsh Government could consider a targeted scheme in this area, because what Daisy mentioned there, that age-positive campaign, is absolutely very important, but it will target the larger employers, and of course what we have in Wales is most people employed by small and medium-sized enterprises. So, it's, you know, a targeted initiative that targets SMEs and encourages them to think in other ways and introduce this element of flexibility that we need in terms of working patterns, introduce things like a careers review, improve occupational health safety practices, and things like that that can just help older people to remain in the workforce.

10:15

[56] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Linked to that, I mean, clearly Welsh Government resources are limited; we don't want them to spend money merely duplicating what the DWP are doing, but that doesn't mean to say that there can't be additional projects.

[57] **Keith Davies:** Or better.

[58] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Or better, indeed. But, you know, in terms of the perceptions of the older people who have contacted you who may have lost jobs or fear that they're going to lose jobs, did any of them say to you that they had asked for upskilling, but that it had been declined by the employer? Was that a factor at all?

[59] **Ms Cole:** People have said that they haven't been able to get their skills, how it wasn't even thought about that they would need that training, and they weren't considered for it. Again, that comes back to public sector equality duty. That should be, actually, in the public domain: who is available for what training. That's an area that the Welsh Government could be looking at because the public sector equality duty in Wales is very strong, and it would be really good for the Welsh Government to focus on that.

[60] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Okay. One last very short question. Is there any evidence then, from what you've just said about the public sector duty—the equality duty—that the situation is better for older people in the public sector as opposed to the private sector? It is where we focus our attention.

[61] **Ms Cole:** We don't have that evidence, unfortunately. The evidence that we do have is that the public sector duty, particularly around age, is not working very well in the public sector at the moment. Not working as it should be.

[62] **William Graham:** Joyce.

[63] **Joyce Watson:** Of course, if you're over 50 and you find yourself unemployed, you have a clock that is ticking towards your pension and contributions that you make towards it. Has anybody done any research that you know of that looks at that side of it? Because we're then talking about poverty in your pensionable age, even though it might have moved further down the line, as a consequence of not being able to get back into work from the age, say, of 50 to the age of 67—and it might be 70 very soon—leading to a permanent state of poverty through absolutely no fault of your own.

[64] **Mr Williams:** I'm not aware of specific research in that field, but I'm hoping, through our Ageing Well in Wales programme, that we will have a research element to that programme, and what we'll be doing across the five priority areas, including opportunities for

learning and employment, is to develop those baselines. So, that could be a very effective one just to understand the state of play out there, you know; and in terms of the need to work for longer, as you say, and to support yourself in later life, yes, absolutely, it would be very useful.

[65] **Joyce Watson:** Thank you.

[66] **William Graham:** Mick, on this point?

[67] **Mick Antoniw:** Just a very short point on this. So, in view of the importance of this and the clear statement that this is an area of discrimination and so on, what is the action plan of your office, of the commissioner, in terms of dealing with this? What is the commissioner's role and what, actually, is the commissioner doing on this?

[68] **Ms Cole:** You've hit a very good point there, Mick. It is one of the commissioner's powers, around tackling discrimination and highlighting it. It is an area of work that we will be having an increasing focus on as it comes to her last term of office, but we have had to work quite hard to start to get even the start of an evidence base for people to take it seriously.

[69] **Mick Antoniw:** So, you're still looking at it, but you have no action plan as such?

[70] **Ms Cole:** We're formulating one at the moment, but I don't want to steal the commissioner's thunder, to be honest.

[71] **William Graham:** Eluned.

[72] **Eluned Parrott:** Thank you, Chair. I wanted to ask about, going back to the situation of when someone has lost their job and they're looking to move forward—. The point about making sure that training and an opportunity to change their skills is really well made, I think. I am wondering about ways in which we can remove bias from the recruitment process, because I think that that is important. You mentioned some of the larger organisations that are deliberately going out of their way to work with, or to recruit, older workers. You mentioned B&Q and some of the supermarkets. My first point on that is: is there any evidence that that is a catching trend, if you like? Is there any evidence that other larger organisations are seeing the success of that kind of practice and copying it?

[73] **Mr Williams:** I think there are certain organisations, companies, in the retail sector, for example, that are doing some great work in this area, but, as far as I'm aware, it hasn't led on to the encouragement of this sort of attitudinal change across the board, as it were. But, aptly, this is what we need to do. We need to get to grips with this issue of bias and move away from this myth that's still there that older workers are somehow blocking younger people from getting to the workplace. On the contrary, we find that it's mutually beneficial. It's beneficial for younger workers to work with their older counterparts as mentors and to gain from their skills and experience, and vice versa with things like, you know, technological changes. So, it's absolutely that change in that mindset and attitude that we need to address, yes.

[74] **Eluned Parrott:** I just think it's extraordinary actually that anyone would think that one age group has more of a right to work than another, frankly. But, looking at this issue of bias, clearly, there's conscious bias when, for example, recruitment adverts are seeking a young person or a new graduate or use language of that kind, which is obviously targeting a specific age group. But there's also unconscious bias, which filters into recruitment practices. So, for example, as Suzy was saying, we can take our date of birth off our CVs, but the length of the experience we have, whether we have GCSEs or O-levels—all of those kinds of things—give indicators of what our actual age is. I'm wondering in what ways we can start to

remove those age indicators from the things that we're using to recruit.

[75] **Ms Cole:** What the commissioner is rolling out at the moment is some training about ageism that actually uses exactly the terms that you are using about that unconscious bias, because I don't think people deliberately field these images. It's just that we live in a society that's so youth based that it's not questioned; it's just there internally. So, what the commissioner is doing at the moment is rolling out ageism training that is specifically targeted at the public sector, to actually go and hopefully filter that information out more widely. In terms of future work, what the commissioner will be doing is looking to build on that to actually look at what we've learned from doing it and see how we can make it bigger and better, and to have more of an impact, because we really need to get out there what the messages are about older people—that they're not somebody who's going to sit in the corner and just not really be working. We need to really challenge that on every level. And, of course, people don't just fall into one equality box, and I think that's one of the problems. We are seeing people in such a tiny box, and, actually, there's such a rich diversity of older people. There are so many skills out there that we just really need to start selling to people, 'This is what you're missing'.

[76] **Eluned Parrott:** Should we be monitoring larger organisations, particularly public organisations, for the diversity of the age of their workforce? Because, let's face it, ageism affects young people as much as it affects the over 50s. They have negative stereotypes that they would seek to overcome as well. Is there a broader job of work here in terms of age discrimination, full stop?

[77] **Ms Cole:** Absolutely. I agree with you there. That is very much what the public sector equality duty meant when it actually put in the age within one of the protected characteristics. However, when actually implementing that in practice, there is a real gap and there's a gap in the scrutiny of that as well, and that's the area that the commissioner intends to come in and do some specific work on, just to upskill people in the public sector about, 'Look, this is what's going on—ageism—and this is how you can deal with it'. And it's through actually looking at equality and through actually looking at people having a right to work—I can't remember, but one of the Members said it—and actually they can still develop and participate. We need to move from that position where we are seeing people as their lives come to an end, because that's the declaration for rights that was launched by the Welsh Government to actually say, you know, we want to give older people a right to full involvement, a right to work. So, now we need to look at how we're going to use that. What's the action plan that will come out of that to actualise it?

[78] **Eluned Parrott:** In terms of the private sector, obviously, in Wales, we have a higher than average proportion of smaller companies, and many of those may, of course, have been started by older people who were not able to return to the job market and so decided to use their experience to start their own business. What work has been done with, for example, people like the Federation of Small Businesses to, kind of, identify whether there are issues in terms of recruiting older people in smaller businesses in Wales too?

[79] **Mr Williams:** I think we see Ageing Well in Wales as the vehicle to engage with the FSB and others in terms of, you know, improving practices in the private sector. I think that's very important, but it's also a case of, across the board, in the public and private sectors, building on what Daisy was mentioning there: strengthening the impact assessments, particularly now with austerity measures. We are seeing more and more companies having to reduce their workforces and, of course, who's at the front of that queue out the exit door? It's usually, older people, you know, older workers. So, it's addressing that and, absolutely, through Ageing Well in Wales, we hope to engage with those in the private sector as well.

[80] **Eluned Parrott:** Are older people who choose the entrepreneurial route to working

getting the support that they need to start their businesses, because, clearly, if you have a specialist skill, it's not necessarily the case that you also have all of the other business skills to support it? Are older people getting the support they need to start their own businesses?

[81] **Mr Williams:** I think more can be done. I think we mentioned here that that entrepreneurial route is an attractive option for older workers: to be your own boss, you know, to, sort of, accommodate the needs within your life around that. So, it is an important issue, and we have a business start-up programme in Wales. I believe that 80% of those who have registered are over 50, but we can certainly do more to flag that up, to promote it as a way of helping older people and getting them to the relevant advice and information services. PRIME Cymru, of course, do a lot as well. So, it's just getting that information, making sure that people are aware of these helpful information services.

[82] **Eluned Parrott:** Just one final question on taking the entrepreneurial route, because it is—. I mean, it can involve a significant financial risk to the individual, but there's also risk around what that means for benefits, and if the business that you choose to start up isn't successful, whether or not you're able then to support yourself through the benefits system. Are the changes that you think might be necessary there to encourage people to choose that route?

[83] **Mr Williams:** I'm not too sure about the details within that, but, absolutely, on that financial risk of starting your own business, I'm aware that there are bursaries and financial support to support younger people, but it's making sure that that similar support structure is there for older workers who are, obviously, in different financial circumstances. But I'm not too sure about the particulars.

[84] **Eluned Parrott:** Okay, thank you.

[85] **William Graham:** Suzy.

[86] **Suzy Davies:** I just want to take you back a little bit. Earlier on, we were talking about Welsh Government policies and strategies, from the point of view of the person looking for work or setting up their own jobs, but I wondered if you thought there might be a, sort of, perverse incentive through the range of different Welsh Government policies that, actually, help employers be ageist. What I mean is this: obviously, Ageing Well in Wales is all about inclusivity and equality, but all the incentives for employers are to take on younger people. So, they may be very open about who they want to take on, but if there's cash in hand or some other sort of incentive that makes it easier to employ someone, with the range of strategies that are available, they are going to go for the younger person, aren't they?

[87] **Ms Cole:** I think we've got the classic problem of older people not being recognised across Government—

[88] **Suzy Davies:** But there are—. What I mean—. Oh yes, well, sorry, I'll take that point.

10:30

[89] **Ms Cole:** You know, the intention is very clearly there. What we'd like to see now is: how is that going to happen? Because it's great to have the strategy for older people, that very clear intention and the declaration and the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill in terms of those high-level outcomes, and nobody would disagree with any of that. Again, it's coming back to how do we actualise it; how can we when, at the moment, as a country, we don't even measure the number of those not in education, employment or training who are over 50? So, I think it's about getting some of these great policy statements to actually have

indicators that we can measure to see the change, and actually have policy drivers behind them that drive them forward, not necessarily just, like, directed—it's just kind of opening it so it's older people and younger people; we're not here—

[90] **Suzy Davies:** Jobs Growth Wales is a perfect example; I think that was raised earlier, wasn't it?

[91] **Keith Davies:** Can I just ask on that? Suzy was asking that question, and it made me think of Communities First, for example. I know that Communities First do a lot with young people, but do Communities First do a lot with older people, because, you know, they could provide training?

[92] **Mr Williams:** Yes. I mean, you know, I'd say the commissioner's visited a number of Communities First schemes across Wales, and they do some good initiative schemes with older people—things like IT lessons, which contributes to, obviously, their overall package of skills and improves their employment prospects as well. But you're right—I think there's an emphasis on young people in Communities First, but it comes back to this issue of just equal opportunities, doesn't it? We want to see that. Jobs Growth Wales is a prime example of that.

[93] **Suzy Davies:** Okay, thank you.

[94] **William Graham:** So, just to ask you your opinion, is there sufficient evidence—you suggested for policy change—for a more direct intervention if it would be possible to introduce some form of quota? Do you think there's any evidence for that?

[95] **Ms Cole:** I think the evidence is not there. To be honest, there is evidence—there's a lot of research that clearly shows it—but without looking at NEETs and really having hard evidence that would be acceptable to the Office for National Statistics and other such like people, we haven't got that at the moment. But what we have got from colleagues who are working across Wales is actually evidence that's been pulled together from a number of sources, like DWP and others, that clearly shows that there's a very real problem. Whether that would be sufficient to make an academic case for change is arguable, but I think the argument is quite clear that there needs to be an equality of opportunity here, and we cannot live in an unequal Wales where the level of demographic change is happening so quickly, where the pressure on our health and social care is happening so quickly, and we are not looking at one of the prime ways to keep people active and keep them well. It's a whole agenda—it's making sure that we join it all up and we don't compartmentalise and think, 'Oh, older people—health and social care'. Well, actually, older people can be a driving force that can be used in our economy. So, I think it's one of those issues where I would say, 'Yes, we need more evidence'—I'm sure policymakers would say 'We need more evidence'—but I actually think the case is made.

[96] **William Graham:** Okay. And who would you suggest would draw that evidence together? Would it be your office?

[97] **Ms Cole:** I think Ageing Well in Wales is a good programme to draw that together. We are working with the Older People and Ageing Research & Development Network to look at it. But I think, at a national level, when you're looking at things like the indicators behind the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Bill, that is all future generations. So, we have to make sure that the indicators collected on things like financial and being involved in the community actually include older people, and that we don't miss them just by accident. Because I think a lot of this is accidental; the intent is there.

[98] **William Graham:** Thank you very much. Eluned, you had a point on that?

[99] **Eluned Parrott:** Yes, thank you. Just in terms of the data, clearly, as I say, we have data—I think it was PRIME Cymru who put forward the case—that you’re more likely to die within a year than get a new job within a year if you become unemployed after 50. What data are missing? I mean, if we were to be making recommendations about what needs to be done, I mean, clearly, finding the information to identify things if there are gaps is important. So, what specific things do you think that we should be measuring that we are not currently measuring?

[100] **Mr Williams:** I think, you know, the two main ones that stand out for me anyway are the issue of NEETs—we need to capture, you know, the older NEETs; we’re not doing that in the same way as younger NEETs—and secondly, discrimination. You know, what is the current picture out there in Wales in terms of discrimination, how many have experienced discrimination, and—. Yeah, I think those are the two that we should prioritise.

[101] **Eluned Parrott:** And how would you quantify discrimination? I mean, that’s something that, you know, unfortunately, is very, very difficult to pin down. We can do attitudinal work with over 50s and say to them, ‘Do you believe that you have experience?’ but that is not evidential in itself; it’s experiential. So, the question is in terms of hard evidence that demonstrates, or proxy evidence that demonstrates, that there is, you know, a significant issue. For example, could we work with trade unions to see, you know, what the size of their caseload is for people fighting age discrimination cases? Could we be looking for other kinds of data and evidence that are proving that, because as I say, it’s a really, really difficult thing to pin down?

[102] **Ms Cole:** I think that’s where, coming back to the public sector equality duty, there is evidence that should already be collected as part of that. So, I think we should be looking at that first to actually see, ‘Well, where are we?’ and then, absolutely, the trade unions. But there’s also a number of older people’s forums that work through the strategy for older people that would be more than happy to work and help you get the evidence needed for this.

[103] **Eluned Parrott:** Okay; thank you.

[104] **William Graham:** Jeff.

[105] **Jeff Cuthbert:** There are a number of ideas coming up here. On the issue of Jobs Growth Wales, and I read what PRIME Cymru had said, I would be very interested to hear the ideas as to how a Jobs Growth Wales, or an equivalent, for those aged over 50 could be structured and funded. I think that the current scheme is rightly aimed at young people, because we don’t want young people being unemployed and maybe going through the whole of their working life; that’s what that’s trying to avoid. So, I don’t want to hear now—unless you do know—about how it might structured, but if that could be sent in, that would be useful for us to look at. You mentioned adult learning in your submission, and clearly, adult learning and skills training go hand in hand with more attractive to employers. I’m aware, of course, of reductions in funding; that’s unfortunately the case for many areas of public spending now. But have you discussed, for example, with the further education sector, through ColegauCymru, or even indeed individual colleges, how they address the issues of adult learning, and indeed, in the same way, work-based learning providers? Are they aware? I’m sure they are, but what are they doing about it, either with you or independently? Do you have evidence on that?

[106] **Mr Williams:** Not specific evidence, but what I would say is, through Ageing Well in Wales, we’re working with the National Institute of Continuing Adult Education Dysgu Cymru, one of our key partners, on that. We are concerned, obviously, about the funding reductions for adult learning, but you’re right that it’s absolutely an incredibly important issue to help individuals improve their employment prospects. Not only adult education in the

community, but also working with higher education institutions—I think we mentioned that. Of all enrolments for courses in 2012-13, I think less than 2% were over 60. That is another area that we can look at. But, certainly, through ‘Ageing Well in Wales’, that is an issue that we want to address, yes.

[107] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Okay.

[108] **Ms Cole:** I think, looking at the evidence that came through the care home review, we were told a lot by providers about how the disappearance of funding for NVQs for people over 25 was having a big impact on their ability to maintain a trained workforce, which I think must be a concern to us all.

[109] **William Graham:** Jeff, have you finished with skills and training?

[110] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Yes.

[111] **William Graham:** Thank you very much. Eluned.

[112] **Eluned Parrott:** No; I think all of my points have been covered, Chair.

[113] **William Graham:** Okay; thank you very much. Are there any other questions from Members?

[114] **Joyce Watson:** Only one.

[115] **William Graham:** Yes, please, Joyce.

[116] **Joyce Watson:** If we’re looking at collecting meaningful data, do you think it might be worthwhile asking people for a profile on the people they recruit? I know that they can’t insist that people—and neither should they—put their age on an application, or on a CV, but once they’ve recruited, wherever that recruitment takes place, they then will know the age of the people they’ve recruited. Is it possible, do you think, to ask local authorities or public sector employers and maybe some people—we hear that B&Q is being cited all the time as a model of best practice, but is it in reality? Would that not give us an evidential base on which to work with factual data to say who has actually achieved work rather than the perception, whichever way that perception might lie?

[117] **Ms Cole:** I think that would be a really good dataset to have a look at. I mean, from some of the research that we looked at when we put this together, what we found was that a lot of HR policies, according to research, are just not there in terms of where they should be and what they are giving to older workers, which makes you suspect that they don’t really have older workers, because otherwise they would have the policies.

[118] **Joyce Watson:** But they will know who they’ve employed and they will know once they’re in the door what age they are.

[119] **Ms Cole:** Yes.

[120] **William Graham:** Thank you very much. Thank you for the way you’ve stimulated our questions this morning. I’m most grateful for your attendance; thank you very much.

[121] **Ms Cole:** Thank you.

[122] **Mr Williams:** Thank you very much.

[123] **William Graham:** Members, we shall break until 11 a.m.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 10:41 a 10:59.
The meeting adjourned between 10:41 and 10:59.*

**Canolfan Byd Gwaith
Jobcentre Plus**

[124] **William Graham:** Can I welcome Mr Huw Thomas, the senior group partnership manager, Wales, for Jobcentre Plus? Thank you for your attendance today. We'll go straight into questions and the first question is from Jeff Cuthbert.

[125] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Thank you. A general question about the support, particularly, that the Department for Work and Pensions offers for people aged over 50, who either want to stay in work—it might involve reskilling—or to find new jobs. Can you just give us the overall picture of how the DWP, first of all, tries to address this matter?

[126] **Mr Thomas:** Okay. Mainly, it's through a network of jobcentres. There are 63 jobcentres in Wales. We're organised into three districts, so we have three management teams, if you want, looking in depth at the services provided by jobcentres. We have customer journeys for each customer group, whether it be young people or older people, and they will vary from area to area, depending on the labour market.

11:00

[127] So, there are some kinds of common threads throughout the customer journeys, such as Access to Work clubs, promoting volunteering, reskilling or a review of CVs. A lot of that support is fed from evidence given to us by jobseekers. So, to learn from jobseekers, we do what we call in-site workshops with groups of customers to find out what their barriers or feelings are around finding work. Over the last, say, two to three years, we've done quite a lot with 50-plus customers in some of our sites and we share that across the network then in terms of what customers are telling us about how they feel about looking for work. We base our interventions—. Our kind of support is based on that feedback.

[128] So, typically, older people are telling us that it's a confidence issue. They may have worked for a particular employer for a long period of time, and they haven't looked for work for a long time, so they're unsure, really, as to how to go about doing that. They might not have a CV, or haven't had one for many years, so we help them to get a new CV. Digital is a big issue for many older people. Not everybody, but lots of older people tell us that they don't—. Perhaps they've got a range of IT skills; they might do their banking at home online, but others don't. So, we are trying to tailor our support to the needs of the individuals, really. So, they're the key ones, I think.

[129] I think that there's a perception of older people about employers perhaps discriminating against them in terms of not taking them on because of their age. An interesting one that we had recently, over the last year or so, was the jobcentre environment. Actually, older people found it quite intimidating. So, we've tried to take that information from people in our respective offices or districts and build customer journeys, as we call them, for that customer group. However, within that it is about personalised support for the individual as well. We do group sessions, which are quite interesting. The feedback from older people was that they didn't want to do group sessions with young people. In fact, it was kind of uncomfortable, so we've put in place group sessions for older people specifically; so, they're in a peer group of their own kind of age range. They help and support each other as well as our work coaches helping them. So, there is a range of things.

[130] As I say, we have some key things running through that in terms of promoting work clubs—if you remember the old job club concept, it was that. As I said, volunteering. Excuse me while I put my glasses on. I think, employers' hiring practices as well; so, we help them to kind of think about, from an employer's point of view, what their hiring practices are like. We promote work experience as well, which is where we are trying to link the individual up with a local employer, hopefully in the field that people want to move into, to kind of break down some of those barriers.

[131] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Okay. Can I come in on just a couple of points? It has been said to us, on the issue of volunteering—and I accept that volunteering is good, not only to help the community, but it helps to teach generic skills, which employers could be looking for—but it's been said to us by others that some people are told that they're doing too much volunteering and that it affects their availability for work, formally, and could then impact on benefits. Is that an accurate statement? How do you, in the DWP, handle issues like that? How do you balance between doing useful work, even if it's on a voluntary basis, and then qualifying, or to be regarded as available for paid employment? How do you balance that out?

[132] Then, on the issue of the perception—and I will just call it 'perception' for now—of age discrimination, what is the actual evidence that comes back to you from employers and key partners like further education, work-based learning providers, and indeed the Welsh Government, about whether it is the issue of age or the issue of skills? Particularly, you highlighted IT skills, but is it really an issue of not having the right level of skills, which, of course, involves interventions from others?

[133] **Mr Thomas:** Okay. On the volunteering question that you asked me, there is a perception across all age groups that, across jobcentres, there are varying levels of the kind of information about the benefits of volunteering. So, we've done a lot of work over the last year or so with the Welsh Council for Voluntary Action, the youth organisation now called GwirVol. GwirVol are doing a lot of work for us, helping us with young people in some of our offices. They're operating some youth panels for us across some of our offices, and, in turn, they're informing us about what it's like to be going into a jobcentre—again, how they feel about coming into jobcentres—and we're changing some of the ways we do things based on that feedback. There is a myth around this 16-hour rule that you can't volunteer for more than 16 hours. We've absolutely tried to eliminate that myth from within our workforce—

[134] **Jeff Cuthbert:** How have you tried to eliminate that?

[135] **Mr Thomas:** We had some staff conferences last year for our office managers, and GwirVol came along and did some sessions for us about the benefits of volunteering, and we got the message out that way. If you look at our advice and guidance on our system, it's very clear that there is no 16-hour rule. This seems to be something that's perpetuated within organisations and by individuals. So, we are very clear that volunteering is a key way of getting back into work—

[136] **Jeff Cuthbert:** So, there is no barrier to people volunteering.

[137] **Mr Thomas:** No. The other dimension to that is that, over the last year, we've introduced something called the claimant commitment. That is a much more in-depth contract, if you want, between us and the claimant on the steps they need to take to get back to work. Instead of us telling people what they need to do, we're working to change our work coaches around, coaching people into thinking about the steps they need to take to get back into work and how much time they need to spend doing that. So, if you're unemployed, what we're telling people is, 'Your working week should be about getting back into work, so let's talk about the steps you need to take'. Some of those steps would be about volunteering, but it

might not be about volunteering forever. So, it's based on the customer, what they want to do, and it's a balance around the reality of the job they want in the labour market that they're willing to travel to. So, it's very much a personalised product, the claimant commitment. It's owned by the customer and by us. Volunteering can be a part of that and we do promote volunteering.

[138] **Jeff Cuthbert:** And I asked you about the issue of skills versus age discrimination—

[139] **Mr Thomas:** Sorry, you did. Yes, from the employers' point of view, we've no evidence base to say that there's age discrimination. Part of—[Inaudible.]—a team of national employer account managers, because they work with some of the bigger companies across the UK to have a DWP kind of deal, if you want, with those employers. And part of that deal is giving some of our less advantaged customers a chance. It might be work experience; it could be a work trial; it could be guaranteed interviews for new store openings, for example, in the retail sector. So, our national account managers will set up those deals for us locally to broker. So, for example, when Sainsbury's opened in Pontypridd, that was part of the whole recruitment process. Because Sainsbury's were really willing to give people a chance, we did a lot of work for them in terms of them using our offices, and we helped them with interviews and to sift applications et cetera, along with other organisations—it wasn't all us. But part of that conversation is, 'Will you guarantee 20 interviews for disadvantaged people?', for example. So, in terms of an evidence base around age discrimination, I can't, hand on heart, say that I can see that. During the research I did for today, there were some articles I read around whether it's about older people blocking young people getting jobs. There doesn't seem to be an evidence base for that anywhere that I can see. I'm no expert, but I mean, from what I read, that was the conclusion that was there.

[140] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Chair, if I may, just a final point—

[141] **William Graham:** Yes, please.

[142] **Jeff Cuthbert:** This is very important for us and for our future work. So, obviously, no employer's going to say, 'I'm discriminating on age', I accept that, but do you feel quite confident that the perception of age discrimination is not necessarily accurate? I mean, we've had anecdotal evidence from people and organisations that would suggest that it is. They acknowledge there isn't a firm evidence base. You feel quite clear that it is not the problem that it's made out to be.

[143] **Mr Thomas:** The feedback from our offices is that older customers have that perception. However, when you work with the customer to freshen up their CV, or to get them a CV if they haven't got one, enhance their digital skills—. We've got teams of local employer account managers, who typically work with smaller organisations in a geographical area, so it's typically your SMEs, which might not have time to put adverts on an IT platform. If you've got a guy with a local garage, you might not even have a computer there. He might have to now for MOTs et cetera, but he probably hasn't got time to put adverts on. So, our employer account managers work with smaller employers and set up kind of work experience opportunities to give people a chance to show what they can do and also for the individual to test out with the employer if that's the job they want. So, we do an awful lot of that in terms of—. You know, we can't change people's perceptions; what we can do is help them have the best possible chance to get into a job through the things I've mentioned, and more and more older people are going into work. We've seen something like a 2,600 reduction in the number of 50 plus on our claimants count over the last two years or so. We think the vast majority of those are going into work, rather than elsewhere.

[144] **William Graham:** Can I just ask you one question, Mr Thomas, on flexibility? You are dealing with people who are volunteers; they very often become, because of their practical

knowledge and experience, key members of a particular team—maybe in an office or a shop with small numbers—and then they are called for interview, and, as you say, they must be available for work. How flexible can you be about that, because you will have the record of how many people don't come to appointments and the remedy you would take?

[145] **Mr Thomas:** I'm sorry. I didn't understand the question. Do you mean how flexible are we in terms of—

[146] **William Graham:** Yes.

[147] **Mr Thomas:** We can be very flexible. If somebody has a reason why they can't come into our office to claim their benefits, we can work with the individual around that. For example, if we've got people on work experience opportunities, we can change the days they come in to sign with us, the times, et cetera, to suit that opportunity. So, yes, we can be very flexible on that.

[148] **William Graham:** I've got various questions—from Joyce, Eluned, then Mick.

[149] **Joyce Watson:** Good morning. I want to take you back to the guaranteed interview and the fact that you said you've got 2,500 people back into work. Do you monitor the outturn figures for that guaranteed interview? You said you were working across a range of people who might be disadvantaged. For older people, do you know how many people, as a consequence of having a guaranteed interview, would then get a job, if they fit in this category?

[150] **Mr Thomas:** No, I haven't got figures to prove that one way or the other. The guaranteed interview is part of a deal we, kind of, discuss with a number of employers and will be for a range of customers. So, it might be older people or people with health problems—and that could be the same individual, if you look at the person. It could be for some younger people. It'll depend on the employer, it'll depend on the number of people they're recruiting. But, for people who perhaps don't go through that interview process or don't get a job as a result of it, what we do is make sure that we put those people back on our caseloads and work with them. The fact they've had some work experience normally helps in terms of that journey back to work.

[151] **Joyce Watson:** I was just trying to get underneath that and see, as this has been identified as an aid back to work, and we're looking at a specific group, whether there was any success that we could measure from that.

[152] **Mr Thomas:** As I said, we don't actually measure by actual exercise that we do with employers. Typically, what would happen with a store opening, or whatever, once we know how many people we get back into work, that would be fed back to the local team, but we don't systematically collect that information.

[153] **Joyce Watson:** Okay.

[154] **Eluned Parrott:** I just want to take you back a moment. You said that you hadn't seen any real evidence of age discrimination. There's a tension, really, between the fact that we're being told that the evidence is weak and yet there's a significant amount of anecdotal evidence, which is repeatedly saying that people believe that they have faced this form of discrimination. So, I'm wondering, in terms of the work that, for example, your account managers do with employers, what monitoring do they do in terms of the age range of people who are being employed? I'm wondering if there's any way of capturing, through your regular monitoring, the success rates of different age groups when it comes to going for employment and, if you're looking at big employers and setting up contracts with them,

whether you are monitoring them to make sure that there is a reasonable spread of age ranges being recruited by them.

11:15

[155] **Mr Thomas:** We don't monitor that, because we work with the employers and, at the end of the day, the employers will recruit who they want to recruit. What we do try to do is give all of our customers equal access to jobs that are available. What I would say, and I haven't got the figures I'm afraid—is that we do monitor on a monthly basis the people flowing onto jobseeker's allowance and the numbers flowing off, and not all the people who flow off go into work. But we do know—I was looking at some figures yesterday—in the last six months, something like 4,500 50-plus customers have gone into work, and we know they've got into work because they've told us. Other people just fail to sign, as we call it, so they don't continue to claim but disappear. Probably a fair proportion of those people go into work as well, but we can't prove that. So, where you've got the claimant count, which is the way we judge how our registers are going, it's quite dynamic on a month by month basis, the numbers of people flowing on and off the benefits system; I'm talking about jobseeker's allowance in the main, but you have the same for income support et cetera. So, that's one way we can kind of look at the success of older people going into work.

[156] There are good news stories and successes that our local offices will keep, because feeding that back into the group sessions we talked about just gives people that kind of belief, really, and evidence that they can get back into work despite their age, because it's happened to other people who they've been in groups with.

[157] So, it's quite a dynamic kind of market, but I can certainly, if you're interested, provide some information and statistics on that following today, if that would be of interest.

[158] **Eluned Parrott:** That would be helpful, thank you.

[159] **William Graham:** Mick.

[160] **Mick Antoniwi:** I just wanted to take you—. You spoke a little bit earlier about the flexibility and the barriers—flexibility of appointments and so on. Do you keep records as to the number of people that are actually sanctioned and how many sanctions are issued?

[161] **Mr Thomas:** Yes, we would have information on that, certainly at a local level.

[162] **Mick Antoniwi:** So, would it be possible then to get, say, for the—. I don't know how it is collated in terms of age group, or whatever, but you'd be able to provide, say, in response to a query on the number of people that are sanctioned for various things, the number, the percentage, the reasons for the sanction? Those sorts of data are available.

[163] **Mr Thomas:** I could look at what we can provide, certainly.

[164] **Mick Antoniwi:** Chair, I think that would be helpful; it would certainly answer part 1 of the areas.

[165] **William Graham:** We accept—[*Inaudible.*]

[166] **Mr Thomas:** Sure. I think it's important, mind. You know, there's a lot of noise in the system, particularly in the press, about sanctions. You know, I'm a member of our senior management team, and our message is absolutely, 'Sanctions are there to be used appropriately'. They're not there to kind of beat people up with; they are there to be used in an appropriate manner. Very often, what we find is sanctions are applied because customers

sometimes are afraid to tell us what's going on, so it's about our relationship with customers that we work at. I can give you some anecdotal evidence again from work we've done in certain parts of Wales with Communities First, for example, where local people tend to trust the Communities First teams and I think they're worried sometimes about talking to us. So, where we've joined up Communities First and Jobcentre Plus locally to share information and support customers, sanction numbers tend to reduce. And we're also seeing on the introduction of universal credit, because of this claimant commitment, that, you know, sanction numbers tend to reduce again. So, I am hopeful and perhaps I would say this, but, you know, we are there to help people to get back into work and minimise the time they spend on benefit. Sanctions are one tool in a toolbox, but they've got to be used appropriately not, clearly, in abundance, which I think some of the press does feed back to us.

[167] **Mick Antoniw:** I mean, that's helpful, because there is a lot of anecdotal, of course—we all have through our constituencies—examples, et cetera. But if you've got the data, those will give us, I suppose, at least some real evidential analysis as to what's happening and its relevance.

[168] **Mr Thomas:** I'll also that, where we get it wrong, we want to put it right quickly as well. So, if we get feedback from Communities First teams, for example, that something looks a bit odd or not quite right, we will look at that very quickly. And if we have made a mistake, we'll sort it out. You know, we're not perfect—I can't pretend we are—but we do try and sort things out as quickly as we can.

[169] **Mick Antoniw:** All right; thank you.

[170] **William Graham:** Moving on; Suzy.

[171] **Suzy Davies:** Yes, I'd like to ask you some questions about the UK and Welsh Government back to work programmes. Can you just explain the relationship between jobcentres and the Work Programme, as that actually does cover the over 50s? How do you work together?

[172] **Mr Thomas:** Okay. The Work Programme was introduced in 2011, so in Wales we've got two contractors—Working Links and Rehab Jobfit. Our role, as Jobcentre Plus, is to refer people at the appropriate point in their customer journey, typically through length of unemployment, into the Work Programme. I think it's fair to say that, when the Work Programme first came in, that kind of transfer across was seen as ending Jobcentre Plus's activity, perhaps, with the customer, because they're on the Work Programme.

[173] I think, over the last three years, we've learnt an awful lot about how we work together better, locally. Relationships generally, at a local level, are really good, with both contractors. I have regular meetings with the senior managers of both contractors and our relations are really good, and we do try, wherever we can, to work together to overcome barriers. However, at the end of the day, they are commercial organisations. They do have a contract to deliver. So, the relationship is that Jobcentre Plus is like a referral point into the Work Programme. However, saying that, relationships have developed over the last couple of years so that we do some joint work together. For example, we might run joint job fairs or pool resources for a broader customer group. But it's DWP, as a separate part of the organisation, that actually monitors and manages the contract—Jobcentre Plus managers don't. I think that's, again, not a confusion, but a misunderstanding, really. However, if we see things going wrong, and we are getting feedback, we do feed that into the contract management teams to make sure that they're aware of anything that's happening locally.

[174] **Suzy Davies:** But you confirm that, effectively, by the time somebody reaches the Work Programme—we do all know this, but it's useful for the record—they've already been

out of work for some time and have sort of entered the category of ‘furthest from the job market’, if you like?

[175] **Mr Thomas:** Yes.

[176] **Suzy Davies:** You say that you’ve got a good working relationship with both contractors. How well do you think they do in helping people over 50 either back into work or onto a different path, perhaps, like self-employment?

[177] **Mr Thomas:** I can’t specifically say for over 50s; I haven’t seen that information. But, certainly, the performance of Work Programme contractors has improved, certainly over recent months, and certainly over the last 18 to 24 months, I’d say. Again, I can provide that information if you want. It’s in the public domain; it’s on gov.uk, in terms of the performance.

[178] **Suzy Davies:** Well, perhaps I can assist you with that one, because we’ve got the data already, which suggest that Work Programme is struggling most with the older people who are on the programme, compared, say, to younger people on the programme. I just wanted to test something—really, I need to ask the Work Programme people as well, but you deal directly with employers as well, as do they—but why do you think there’s a difficulty persuading employers to take on older people?

[179] **Mr Thomas:** Personally, I—

[180] **Suzy Davies:** The reason I ask this is because we’ve got a lot of small and medium-sized enterprises in Wales; it’s not all the Sainsbury’s of this world.

[181] **Mr Thomas:** Absolutely.

[182] **Suzy Davies:** Is there, in the small and medium-sized enterprise population, a lack of understanding about the requirements of Ageing Well in Wales and other programmes, for example, and the expectations on them as opposed to the potential employee?

[183] **Mr Thomas:** There could be, in terms of the big programmes and the large kind of reports that are out there. I think I mentioned earlier that we’ve got employer account managers, who work with a range of small enterprises and they try to get to the right person for that employer. Very often, small employers are telling us that they’re not interested in the CV; they’re not interested in lots of qualifications; they want the right person who’s going to turn up, turn up for work regularly as part of the team or whatever and contribute to the business, which is quite interesting when you look at some of the larger kind of beliefs, I guess, that we have around that. So, the local employer engagement adviser will work with the employer to find out what they’re looking for, come back to the office and see who’s on our caseloads, match those people to those jobs and give the employer a choice of people to talk to—or set up work experience, sorry.

[184] **Suzy Davies:** And does that intermediary sometimes have to challenge the perceptions of the employer, who may be looking for a 24-year-old mechanic? Do they turn around and say ‘Well, do you know, have you thought of somebody who might be 55?’

[185] **Mr Thomas:** Yeah, absolutely.

[186] **Suzy Davies:** They do that; okay.

[187] **Mr Thomas:** Yeah, and one of the things that I know is planned for us from April is an older people’s champion across each of the jobcentre groups in the UK. That hasn’t been

formally singed off and the job description isn't there, but essentially, I understand that to be promoting older people to employer groups. And certainly, our national teams do that through the companies they work with, and our local teams do that as well.

[188] **Suzy Davies:** That's helpful, because I was going to ask you what is the sort of knowledge bank within the jobcentre of, not just the Government programmes—both Welsh and UK Government programmes—but of the very local programmes to assist people to get back to work?

[189] **Mr Thomas:** There's a huge range. Some of the things that I printed off are some resources we've got for our work coaches. This was a piece of work on 50-plus that was done last year and there's a range of things in there about top tips and about working with older people, for example. All of our districts will have 50-plus action plans; they might have task and finish groups within offices, sharing good practice and what works well with those customer groups. Yes, we've got things like the Work Programme and work clubs et cetera, but, also, if we see a gap in the market, district managers have what's called a 'flexible support fund', which they can use to target specific support for any customer group—it doesn't have to be 50-plus; it could be the 18-24 age group. So, we do a lot of that: working with organisations such as Prime-Cymru, local authorities and Communities First clusters, putting on digital upskilling workshops et cetera and CVs. Very often, a lot of that is done in our offices. So, there's a range of support available.

[190] **Suzy Davies:** And it'll vary a little bit across the country. I appreciate that maybe your remit doesn't cover the whole of Wales.

[191] **Mr Thomas:** My remit does cover the whole of Wales.

[192] **Suzy Davies:** Okay. Are there any geographical gaps then for this wider support for—

[193] **Mr Thomas:** Yes, I think that's why I mentioned earlier that each of our districts covers a territory—a geographical patch. Typically, in the more rural areas, there are fewer organisations that support customers, so we can do more there with voluntary organisations, using our premises as centres for work. Another thing we've done over the last year is we've installed a lot more IT kit into our jobcentres for customers to use. So, if you walk into a jobcentre now, you'll see a bank of computers. Our staff or our partner staff are helping people to get online, get an e-mail account, understand digital job search, get on to Universal Jobmatch et cetera.

[194] **Suzy Davies:** Which are facilities available for all age groups as well.

[195] **Mr Thomas:** Absolutely, yes.

[196] **Suzy Davies:** I just want to finish with a final question, and you may feel that you're not able to answer this, but Age Cymru has said that, until recently, older unemployed people have not been seen as a priority group for support by governments. Is that a state of affairs that you recognise?

[197] **Mr Thomas:** I think that if you look at our focus over the last two or three years, we've had a youth contract and we're pushing the youth agenda, but, I think, to be fair to my colleagues in jobcentres, they've recognised that, by dealing with older people, there's a gap in the market there in the way we deal with older people. That's why we've done so much work around understanding how they feel about looking for work and coming to a jobcentre: what their perceptions are; what their actual barriers are. That's why we come up with 50-plus customer journeys across our sites. Some of the work that Llantrisant jobcentre did last year

has been shared nationally across the UK. It did an awful lot of work around best practice for 50-plus. Each office is developing or has developed their own 50-plus support.

[198] **Suzy Davies:** Okay, thank you very much.

[199] **William Graham:** We'll move on, then. Mick.

[200] **Mick Antoniwi:** You've answered some of the questions I wanted to raise. I particularly wanted to ask a little bit about the sort of support that's available to people going back to work, particularly when they've been out of work for a period of time. How do you specifically focus on that aspect?

[201] **Mr Thomas:** I'm probably repeating myself now, but each office has got a customer journey. What that means—sorry, that is probably a bit of internal language for Jobcentre Plus—is that it kind of defines each step of the customer's period of unemployment. They are types of things that typically we want to do with the customer. So, at the first interview, it might be very much around going through some questionnaires with customers about how they feel about their ability to look for work and their digital capability. So, it does build a personalised picture for that individual. That's where we've had a lot of the feedback about some customers feeling uncomfortable coming into jobcentres. We've listened to that in terms of how we've changed what we do.

[202] The claimant commitment is key in terms of recording the steps that the individual has agreed to take with us and the work we can do, promoting work experience and generally building that person's capability to get back into work. So, there's a range of things, and it's not a standard process; it's very much tailored around the individual.

11:30

[203] **Mick Antoniwi:** Can you tell me a little bit about your database and the information that's available and the data statistics you could actually provide us with on that? How sophisticated is it?

[204] **Mr Thomas:** What I've just described is very much personal, so the claimant commitment is personal and we wouldn't share that with anybody else apart from the customer. The steps we record, really, is this on-flow and off-flow onto the benefits system. Also, the numbers we know are going back into work. Again, all of that information is in the public domain, but I will pull some of that forward for you.

[205] **Mick Antoniwi:** But, basically, you're saying it's probably not very accurate in giving us a very accurate picture as to what's really going on there.

[206] **Mr Thomas:** We could probably tell you what we do with 50-plus customers on a regular basis. It'll generally be what I've described to you in terms of the types of support that are effective.

[207] **Mick Antoniwi:** And will you do it in the form of, sort of, monthly, quarterly reports, annual reports? How do you—?

[208] **Mr Thomas:** We don't systematically do that in terms of a report, but if you were interested in—

[209] **Mick Antoniwi:** You could access all that data for us.

[210] **Mr Thomas:** We could give that to you, yes, but it would be an ad hoc request, rather

than something systematic that we will do all the time. Because of the IT system, it just wouldn't get down to that level of detail.

[211] **Mick Antoniwi:** Okay. Chair, that answers all the points I wanted to raise.

[212] **Eluned Parrott:** I wanted to talk about the way in which the benefits system works itself and how that can sometimes have unintended consequences for people. You've talked a little bit about the fact that the idea that there's some form of cap on volunteering is a myth. Are there ways in which the benefits system works that you think are restrictive in terms of what kinds of training people can access?

[213] **Mr Thomas:** I think the main issue we have is around this 16-hour rule in terms of benefits and training. What we work with the Welsh Government on, for example, is the kind of skills training, in putting packages of support together for employers, for example, who might be interested in—and we've done this recently with a number of employers—a training programme like a pre-employment routeway into that particular sector or that employer. So, we work with the employer and Welsh Government to make sure that the face-to-face training element is not more than 16 hours a week. So, the customers can go through the programme but have their benefits protected as well. Okay—sorry, is that where you—

[214] **Eluned Parrott:** Yes, that's the issue I want to dig into, because, clearly, there is an impact there if people want to change their skills. Often, if someone's been out of work for a period of time, they feel the need to look at their skills and to be proactive in building a portfolio of skills that's going to enable them to get a job at the kind of level that they, perhaps, had previously been working at, rather than a very much more entry-level kind of job in the future. Do you think that maybe we need to change our approach to the way we look at training? If there is no cap on volunteering, why is there a cap on training?

[215] **Mr Thomas:** Yes. I think if the 16-hour rule could be looked at—. I'm not sure, under universal credit, whether the 16-hour rule kind of maintains in terms of training; I'd have to check on that. The one issue, actually, we've been discussing this week, which is quite topical for us, is that we've had meetings with a number of employers and different sectors who've got jobs, but the training to get those jobs typically costs £3,500. So, who's going to fund that? You know, there are no, kind of, big pots of money around these days, are there? So, what we were thinking of is researching whether the student loan-type facility could be applied. You know, if I want to get a skill and it costs me £3,500 and I haven't got that money, could I loan it and pay it back over a short period of time, particularly if I'm going into a well-paid job—£28,000 to £35,000 a year, potentially. So, I think that's—and this is a personal view from a conversation we've had this week—something we could look at. So, you're not talking about thousands of pounds-worth of debt; you're talking about a fairly small amount of money—£3,500 is what we were talking about this week—that could give people entry into a job on a salary of £34,000. So, is there a capacity for us to do that? Who does that fall to? Is it the UK Government, Welsh Government? Is there any desire to do it?

[216] **Eluned Parrott:** Or, potentially, a partnership of those things, because, obviously, even on a good salary like that, you're still talking of an investment of 10% of the first year's income, and, for an individual then, they have to weigh up what the longevity of that employment is likely to be.

[217] **Mr Thomas:** The example that we were talking about was a three-month training programme to get this particular type of job. You wouldn't have to pay it all back in the first year, would you? You could pay it back over five years, I suppose. I don't know what the market bearing would be on that. The interest and all those types of things would have to be looked at, but we just thought, 'Well, is that something worth looking at in terms of a deal

between employers, the Government and the individual?', where we know there are definite jobs. So, it is not some kind of promise of a job; there are actual jobs available.

[218] **Eluned Parrott:** Yeah.

[219] **Keith Davies:** My question follows Eluned's on the 16 hours. I'm led to believe that colleges would prefer students to be there for more than 16 hours because they are then full-time students rather than part-time, and their funding is related to the number of full-time students they've got. So, that does seriously affect then what a youngster wants to do.

[220] **Mr Thomas:** Yes, but if they're in full-time education, they're not eligible to claim benefits.

[221] **Keith Davies:** Yes, but that's why the colleges are pushing them to go on to courses that are more than 16 hours.

[222] **William Graham:** Right. Rhun. Sorry, Eluned.

[223] **Eluned Parrott:** Could I continue, Chair, unless—

[224] **William Graham:** Yes, please go on.

[225] **Eluned Parrott:** Was it on this point?

[226] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** It's related, but carry on. I can come in.

[227] **Eluned Parrott:** I wanted to go into a related but not identical point. A lot of people who are over 50 choose entrepreneurship as a route to employment for themselves. Now, clearly, there is an element of risk for that individual in terms of an investment that they may wish to make, but there's also a risk in terms of benefits that they're able to claim because, obviously, once somebody has launched a business, they're no longer available to work. They are running a business, potentially, with no income for a period of time. But also, at the other end, if that business does not succeed, if it does not fly, how do people get back into being able to be supported by benefits if they've been proactive in this way? Are there unintended consequences to the way in which the benefit system works for those individuals that makes it more risky, even, than it might otherwise be?

[228] **Mr Thomas:** You are right; we have seen a rise in the number of self-employed people over recent months and recent years, particularly in older—. That might be a lifestyle choice or something that people feel more comfortable or confident in doing; I don't know. There is a support package for people who want to go into self-employment, called the new-enterprise allowance, which you're probably aware of.

[229] **Eluned Parrott:** Yes.

[230] **Mr Thomas:** That does give support and financial support for the first 26 weeks, or once people are trading. I think that, for the first 13 weeks, it is £65 a week that is paid and then that drops to £33 in the final 13 weeks. So, there is some help and support. Before the trading period, there is a mentoring and business planning support available as well. That's a DWP scheme. I know that the Welsh Government have other schemes as well. On the question that you ask about, if the business doesn't succeed, when people come back to claim benefits then, it will depend on their contribution rates, and it's quite complex in terms of the different types of contributions they've paid. So, they might still be eligible for jobseekers allowance based on previous contributions paid as an employed person, depending on when and how you work those things out. Otherwise it is income based.

[231] **Eluned Parrott:** But, if an individual makes a decision to end a business, if it hasn't gone bankrupt but they've decided that this is not a viable business, that they were making a loss personally on it, or that they were not able to support themselves with the business that they've started—if a person makes a decision to end a business, how are they treated by the benefit system when they come back?

[232] **Mr Thomas:** The honest answer is that I don't know in terms of how the process works for those particular customer groups. Again, I could find out. From memory, it would be around them providing evidence to us that the business was failing in terms of income for our decision makers to have a look at that in terms of claiming benefits. I understand that that is a fairly kind of generic answer to a very specific question. So, I would have to take that away, I'm afraid.

[233] **Eluned Parrott:** If you could, that would be really helpful, because what I'm trying to understand is, in terms of—. I mean, if people are being proactive about trying to create employment for themselves and, potentially, others, but that risk doesn't pay off, is there an unintended consequence in the benefit system that, having ended that business, they're treated as if they're intentionally unemployed, essentially.

[234] **Mr Thomas:** I understand the point you're making, but I don't really know the answer.

[235] **Eluned Parrott:** It would be really helpful if you could come back with some of that. Thank you.

[236] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Very much related to that, I had an example in my constituency of a young person—[*Inaudible.*—]—down funding to set up his own business because he was on the Work Programme, and wasn't allowed to leave the Work Programme until he had completed it. I guess there could be similar scenarios for older people, too, in not being able to escape from the Work Programme in order to pursue an entrepreneurial agenda.

[237] **Mr Thomas:** My understanding there is that the Work Programme would support that individual moving into self-employment. They do support people moving into self-employment, so I'm quite kind of confused, really, about that level of feedback. It is part of what they do and some of the success stories the Work Programme have kind of talked to us about—from time to time they give us the magazine with success stories—are self-employment.

[238] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Do you use any sort of mentoring programmes to encourage older people to look at particular options, and it could be going down an entrepreneurial path or other work opportunities?

[239] **Mr Thomas:** I think I mentioned earlier the work we've done with PRIME Cymru. They're very good at this type of work with older people. PRIME Cymru have done a lot of work for us. Lots of our offices offer support and advice, particularly around self-employment, and part of that is mentoring, as I understand it, in terms of what we offer. I think they've had quite a bit of success with that.

[240] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Do you see that developing at all? You know, you say you work with PRIME Cymru on that. Is that something that you, yourselves, want to push?

[241] **Mr Thomas:** I think it's about working with partners who've got that expertise.

[242] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** But is it up to them to come to you and offer their product?

[243] **Mr Thomas:** No, no. I know our districts regularly meet with David and the team in terms of what they can do for us. Some of that is funded through our flexible support fund, so we provide the funding and PRIME Cymru provide the skills and support. It's not a kind of standard offer. It is targeted at certain areas.

[244] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Thank you.

[245] **Eluned Parrott:** Sorry, Chair, if I may, I'll return to that just briefly.

[246] **William Graham:** Okay. Very briefly.

[247] **Eluned Parrott:** In terms of the support that's available, there are lots of pots of funding available to people who want to start their own business. How able are your front-line staff in terms of signposting people to things that are more appropriate for them, if what you have to offer, perhaps, doesn't fit the bill?

[248] **Mr Thomas:** Do you mean in terms of self-employment only, or—?

[249] **Eluned Parrott:** Particularly in terms of self-employment, but perhaps in terms of other support services and advice services.

[250] **Mr Thomas:** We work with a range of partners. Typically, they could be our Communities First colleagues around Wales, and other third sector organisations, looking for people who have got special kinds of markets that they deal in, like PRIME, in terms of their support. So, it is very much about the partnership working we do locally with a range of organisations for all of our customer groups, really. As I said, some of that has come into our offices, working in partnership with us there, offering skills training, digital training, et cetera. So, I don't think there's one answer to your question. It depends on what the labour market's like and what our case loads are like in terms of people and what they need and want. So, it's a mixed toolkit, I think, in terms of what we do.

[251] **Eluned Parrott:** Okay. Thank you, Chair.

[252] **William Graham:** I've got a couple of questions. Jeff's been waiting patiently.

[253] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I have, but I was just wondering whether Mick's was relevant to this.

[254] **William Graham:** Fair enough. Mick?

[255] **Mick Antoniwi:** What specifically do you have by way of data in terms of people with disabilities, that is, the monitoring, evaluation and, again, the success rates of it? What I'm concerned with are data rather than the anecdotal evidence that we seem to get a lot of in this area.

[256] **Mr Thomas:** We record whether a person has a disability on our system, if they tell us as part of our diagnostic interviews. Depending on the kind of range of that health problem, again, we might do distinctive types of support for people, or work with particular organisations, or refer people on to our Work Choice provision, which is specifically around helping people with health problems to get back into work.

11:45

[257] **Mick Antoniwi:** So, we can ask specifically for that, and you should be able to give us a fair amount of data.

[258] **Mr Thomas:** Yes, I would say.

[259] **William Graham:** Thank you. Jeff.

[260] **Jeff Cuthbert:** If I may, earlier, after a question from Eluned, you talked about the costs of retraining. Now, the Welsh Government's ReAct programme is a means of funding, for some people, the costs of training. What is the relationship like between your staff and staff at the Welsh Government in that regard, the co-operation that I trust exists there, to make sure the right people are referred to ReAct and they get the support that they need, and then the outcomes of it? And then, secondly and finally, when advising older, 50-plus people wishing to return to the labour market, to what extent do you utilise labour market intelligence to direct them to where the jobs are likely to be, as opposed to what they may want to do? I mean, we certainly have to do that in terms of our investment with younger people, so that limited public funds are directed to the best effect. Do you do something similar?

[261] **Mr Thomas:** Yes. The ReAct question, we've got extremely good relations with the ReAct team, and, in fact, we're involved with the ReAct evaluations that are currently under way, working with the officials in Welsh Government. So, we've got really good relations there. We are part of the rapid response service that is mobilised if an employer goes bankrupt—sorry, if a firm goes bankrupt or is laying off people. So, that is a partnership with Trades Union Congress, Careers Wales, Jobcentre Plus and the ReAct team to mobilise information for affected employees in terms of the level of support that's available, and also reminding people that they can qualify for ReAct up to six months after they've lost their jobs. So, from my personal knowledge, we are really well linked in to the ReAct system.

[262] The second part of your question about labour markets, it's a big part of what we do, but I think lots of organisations use the term 'labour market information' for different purposes. So, if you're using it in schools, it might be what the labour market trends are like in 10 or 15 years' time. Ours is much more reactive and timely, around, 'These are the jobs available now' and the travel-to-work area. So, if we are talking to a customer who wants to do or enter a particular occupation that really is not realistic, given the labour market they're working in, we have a conversation with them to try to change that kind of perception or wish around to a more realistic view of what they want to do. It could be that people will change the length of travel they'll undertake to get work, where the job is available. So, that is how we use labour market information: very much around current vacancies, redundancies, if we know there's inward investment or new store openings. That's how we use labour market information.

[263] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Okay, thank you.

[264] **William Graham:** Joyce.

[265] **Joyce Watson:** I've got some very pointed questions. One, do you have an idea of the optimum time to be successful in gaining re-employment or employment in the first place? The second question is: we've heard a lot of talk about skills deficits; have you got three key areas of skills deficits that definitely get in the way of people getting a job in this age group? And then I've got one other, but I'll let you answer those two.

[266] **Mr Thomas:** Optimum time, our view is to get people back into work as quickly as we can, recognising the longer people are away from the labour market, the harder it is to get those people—

[267] **Joyce Watson:** I know that. I'm asking, with respect—

[268] **Mr Thomas:** No, I can't tell you weeks or months. No, I can't.

[269] **Joyce Watson:** Because there must be a pattern, you know, that these people are successful and how long they've been out of work.

[270] **Mr Thomas:** I think it depends a lot on the background, their previous employment history. They might have been ill for a long time, so they would have a longer pathway back into work. Some people get back into work really quickly, don't they, through friends and relatives other than us particularly? So, it is really difficult to say, 'This is an optimum time', and that's why the Work Programme is there, again, I suppose, with more intensive support for people after a period of time out of work.

[271] **Joyce Watson:** The reason I asked the question is because we are told, time and time again, and it's taken as read, that the longer you're out of work, the harder it will be to find it, and I'm trying to get underneath that. So, if that's the case, then there must be a reverse to that: that the sooner you get back into work, the better your chances, and you're telling me that you don't have those figures, and that's okay.

[272] The skills deficit. Have you identified—. I know it's according to the jobs available in the area, but are you finding a pattern where there are particular or specific skills that employers are looking for, for this age group, that they don't have?

[273] **Mr Thomas:** I think, where people are changing their occupation, it is difficult. One of the key areas where I know we've got jobs that are hard to fill is around the care sector. Again, there are some perceptions about what it's like to work in the care sector. So, what we do in those cases is work with a lot of employers in a particular sector, in a jobs fair, we'd call it—some information, some work experience and coming to see what it's like in that sector to try to get people to think a bit differently around entering that particular sector. On skills deficits generally around older people getting back into work, what they're telling us is that it is around digital and it's also around confidence, and actually going through the process of applying for a job. That's where we try to work intensively with older people earlier on in their claim to identify where the barriers are and put in place strategies to overcome them.

[274] **Joyce Watson:** Okay. I was just asking because we're about trying to put policies into place and some advice, and if we knew that there was a particular skill set we could put that in our report. And the other final question from me is: in terms of targets and getting people back into work, are you restricted in any way, do you feel, by those targets? Are they specifically aimed, say, at young people against, say, the 50-plus age group and do you feel that you're not able to help in that way?

[275] **Mr Thomas:** No, I don't think we've got any targets at all that hinder that.

[276] **Joyce Watson:** Thank you.

[277] **William Graham:** Suzy.

[278] **Suzy Davies:** Joyce mentioned that a lot of this is about informing policy, which is obviously why we're here, but I just want to refer to some written evidence that we had from the older people's commissioner. It was a lengthy submission, but it says,

[279] '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...of older workers'.

[280] Now, you mentioned earlier that you have an older people's champion in your system already—

[281] **Mr Thomas:** No, we will have from April 2015.

[282] **Suzy Davies:** Oh, that's the result of this, is it?

[283] **Mr Thomas:** That was part of the autumn statement announcements, yes.

[284] **Suzy Davies:** And what do you expect them to be able to do in informing at a local level?

[285] **Mr Thomas:** I think it's about maintaining the focus on older people's employment issues, pulling together the best practice that already exists, I think, across lots of our jobcentres, but also the employer agenda—really doing more concentrated work in that area with employers and employer groups to promote older people. So, that's my understanding of what that role will be.

[286] **Suzy Davies:** Would you expect that person to have a sort of regular relationship with the older person's commissioner, so that there's information coming in from the whole body of older people, represented through that champion into workforce planning?

[287] **Mr Thomas:** We already do have a close relationship with the older people's commissioner's team. I have regular meetings with Iwan and some of the team around financial entitlements for older people, and we're doing some work on that. One of my team sits on one of the sub-groups on the Ageing Well in Wales strategy group about learning and employment. So, we are linked in and plugged in to that organisation—

[288] **Suzy Davies:** And it all filters down to the front line—people at your desks in jobcentres.

[289] **Mr Thomas:** Yes, but I mean I do think this extra person coming in, or this extra post, is going to help really focus on that across all of our jobcentres.

[290] **Suzy Davies:** Okay, thank you. Thank you, Chair.

[291] **William Graham:** Jeff, any final questions?

[292] **Jeff Cuthbert:** No.

[293] **William Graham:** That brings us to the end of our questions, unless there's anybody else? No. Thank you very much for the way you've answered our questions, and I hope it will be helpful to you also. We will produce a record in due course for you to check. Thank you very much for your attendance today.

[294] Members, we've had to bring forward our session this afternoon, so we're going to close now until 1.00 p.m. Be back for 1.00 p.m. please.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 11:55 a 12:59.
The meeting adjourned between 11:55 and 12:59.*

Cynghrair Henoed Cymru ac Age Cymru Age Alliance and Age Cymru

[295] **William Graham:** Good afternoon and welcome to our witnesses. As a formality, could I ask them just to give their names and titles for the record, please?

[296] **Mr Francis:** I'm Graeme Francis, the head of policy and public affairs for Age Cymru.

[297] **Ms Ridge-Evans:** Hayley Ridge-Evans, director of operations, PRIME Cymru.

[298] **Mr Pugh:** David Pugh, chief executive of PRIME Cymru.

[299] **William Graham:** Thank you very much. We thank you for your papers. I suggest that we go straight into questions. The first question is from Mick Antoniwi.

[300] **Mick Antoniwi:** Good afternoon. Perhaps just a general, scene-setting question, really, which is what your general view is of what the main challenges are at the moment, and what your main area of focus is with regard to over 50s and employment.

[301] **Mr Pugh:** Obviously, the aim of PRIME Cymru, which is the Prince's Initiative for Mature Enterprise in Wales, is supporting people over the age of 50 who are economically inactive and want to return to work. We have an unenviable task of trying to support over 210,000 people in Wales in that category. We have been relatively successful in that, but we feel that we are sometimes facing a slightly losing battle when a lot of emphasis is put on younger people getting into work and developing a career for themselves. We understand that's hugely important going forward, but we have a huge untapped, experienced workforce that is being, sometimes, detrimentally dealt with by having a programme such as Jobs Growth Wales. We think Jobs Growth Wales is a fantastic opportunity, but what we'd like to see would be an all-age Jobs Growth Wales programme. We have many, many clients who just need a little support to get back into being a full member of the community and contributing to the economy of Wales.

[302] **Mick Antoniwi:** That leads to a sort of suggestion that there is discrimination against people the older they get, particularly past 50, in terms of provision but also in terms of, I suppose, employers and attitudes towards people. We've heard anecdotal evidence on that; are you able to give us any more than your own anecdotal evidence? Do you have any sort of data, research or more specific evidence that might support that view but also how it operates?

[303] **Mr Pugh:** Well, it's very hard for us to give exact numbers, because we're dealing on a one-to-one basis with our clients. Obviously, we're dealing with a very small number. So, to extrapolate from that really wouldn't make a lot of sense. But, from where we're coming from, 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. Obviously, that has an effect, then, on the health economy of Wales. There's a direct correlation between people working and having a healthier lifestyle. So, for us, of our 210,000 potential clients, two-thirds of those, if you extrapolate out from what we're doing, 170,000, say, are feeling discriminated against because of their age.

[304] **Mick Antoniwi:** So, there's a very strong perception. Have the changes to pensions—? People now have to work much longer, until a much later age to take pensions, which has obviously impacted upon the way in which people planned for future work or future

retirement. What impact has that had, or has it?

[305] **Mr Pugh:** That has seen a number of comfortably off economically inactive individuals over 50, especially those who may have retired to Wales as the ideal place to live, now having to find work to supplement reduced annuities. We're seeing that very often coming through to us. Facing older-age poverty in retirement is a huge worry to the clients that we have.

[306] **Mr Francis:** If I could add to that in terms of the state pension age changes, we campaigned specifically around the time that those changes were made to highlight the particular impact on women, whose state pension age was accelerating much quicker than had originally been planned, and managed to get the UK Government to taper some of those differences. But, we're still concerned about the changes to people's plans that they're being given with pretty short notice, in practice. And clearly, we don't think it's in the interests of the country if what you're going to be doing is starting to pay state pension at a later age, but continuing to pay unemployment benefits until people hit that point. And within Wales, we're particularly concerned about the socioeconomic and health inequalities that can come around a later state pension age, because although we know that life expectancy and healthy life expectancy are both on the increase, that's patchy across the country, and the averages overall for the United Kingdom, which the UK Government are using to base their new reforms on, don't necessarily apply to all people and to all places. So, there could be a particular impact in some communities where we know that the number of long-term chronic health conditions, for example, is higher.

[307] **Mick Antoniw:** We do have some evidence that people over 50 have much greater difficulty in getting employment than younger people. They're seeking employment, they're twice as likely to be unemployed as at the other end of the age spectrum. Do you have a view as to why that is? You've touched on things like Jobs Growth Wales, but I wonder if you could expand on the broader factors that play into that.

[308] **Mr Pugh:** There are a number of barriers that often become compounded with age to returning to work. We have clients coming through to us who are sandwich carers, caring for their own children perhaps with a second family, and also looking after parents, and trying to balance the caring responsibilities and income is a huge barrier for them. The perceived, sometimes, ageism from employers really deters, sometimes, older people from applying for jobs.

[309] We feel that through the volunteering programmes that we've run in the past, that really has helped to address the confidence and motivation and skill-building, but there needs to be a step change in what we do in Wales to address those issues. You know, if you look at the number of people on employment support allowance, for up to a year, it's at 11,000 people under the age of 24, but over the age of 50 there's 62,000. And, of course, a number of those are now being moved from the ESA to jobseeker's allowance, so we're going to see more and more people in the older age bracket now needing to find work because the benefit's being reduced.

[310] If you look at over 12 months on an ESA benefit, you're looking at fewer than 6,000 for under-24s, but you're still looking at over 40,000 for over 50s. So, there's a huge amount of people there.

[311] **Mick Antoniw:** If you could just comment then on two aspects. One is, in terms of job schemes and so on, there has been some evidence about the fact that it only applies to one age of the age spectrum. Could you perhaps expand on that as to why you think that is wrong and why it should be extended, just to get your evidence on the record for that? The other thing is, just in terms of employers and say, over 50s, I know a lot of it is based on your

perception and the evidence you have from people coming in to see you. But would you say that, by and large, over 50s are discriminated against in Wales when it comes to employment?

[312] **Mr Pugh:** Regarding the discrimination, I don't think it's overt discrimination, but if we look at the number of people over the age of 50 who are looking for work and who want to apply to, perhaps, a county council for a job or a health authority, they need to apply and complete an application online. Now, we're not saying that everyone over the age of 50 isn't used to the internet and using computers, but there is not an overt discrimination, but there is discrimination against people who can't actually use IT systems. And, often, they're applying for jobs, perhaps in housekeeping or portering, where there will be no need to use IT once they're into a job, but to get to that point they need support to be able to apply. So, there's a discrimination there inherent in that application process, and that's repeated across a number of industries and sectors in Wales. We have seen, where we have supported people to apply on the internet, they've secured jobs, but wouldn't have done that without our support. And we probably see about 35% of our clients coming through that are being stopped from applying because of that.

[313] **Mick Antoniw:** And the Jobs Growth Wales point, and the schemes point, can you just expand that point you made earlier on, in terms of you have a Jobs Growth that applies to a certain age limit? What is your view in terms of those schemes, or the inadequacy, or lack of schemes in terms of the other end of the age spectrum?

[314] **Mr Pugh:** 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.

[315] **Mick Antoniw:** Okay.

[316] **William Graham:** Jeff.

[317] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Thank you. Mick has covered a number of the areas, but I wonder—. I mean, I'm very familiar with the structure of Jobs Growth Wales and why it was set up in the way that it was. I'd be very keen—I'm not expecting you to do it now—for you perhaps to send us ideas that you may have as to how a scheme, either by expanding the current scheme to include all ages, or a new scheme that might be called whatever, but based on Jobs Growth Wales, would work for workers over the age of 50. If you want to send us details of how you think that might be constructed, and crucially, funded, I'd certainly be very pleased to see that.

[318] **Mr Pugh:** We'd be delighted to do that, yes.

[319] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Right, on the issue of age discrimination, we have had a session with the DWP, and I think it's fair to say from that that he challenged the notion of actual age discrimination. Now, we accept that no employer is going to say, 'No, I don't want them because they're too old'. They're not actually going to say that—and he accepts that—but I think he felt that, probably, the reason was more to do with differing skill levels, perhaps inadequate development and training, and maybe those are the sorts of areas that we ought to be considering. We acknowledge that there are other practical issues like caring responsibilities, transport and things like that, but that could apply across the board. So, going

back to the point that Mick made, can we, in terms of directing our report and our resources, confidently say that there is evidence of age discrimination, or ought we be focusing on issues like continuous professional development, whatever occupation it may be, and making sure that people of all ages do have the skills that industry needs, because we are an ageing population and that's something that we have to address?

[320] **Mr Pugh:** I agree that a lot of work needs to be done with employers. We really need to do some work with them to get them to recognise the skills that they'd be losing from their workforces by getting rid of older people from their employ. I think—. Well, there can't be any overt discrimination for age, but I think there's inherent discrimination there. We have seen, from our own practices, even down to the way that an advert for a job is designed, that that can put off older people. So, it's very, very easy to discriminate but not in an overt way. So, I think there is discrimination out there. Some of it is by perceived by older people, but I would say that there is definitely discrimination there.

[321] **Mr Francis:** On that, if I can just say that I listened to some of the evidence that you received this morning, both from the older people's commission and from the DWP, and heard the discussions about this sort of lack of evidence in terms of age discrimination—

[322] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Ah, you were cribbing then. [*Laughter.*]

13:15

[323] **Mr Francis:** Yes, absolutely; it's sensible to. I think there is a real divide between the evidence and the perception. Our own research, which dates back a few years now, and was in the written paper that we put to you, it was in 2010, and we polled people in Wales and 21% of people between 50 and 64 felt that they had been actively discriminated against on account of their age. Now, that doesn't stack up against, if you look at things like the number of age discrimination cases taken to industrial tribunals, for example. But we know that that bar in getting to those tribunals, especially now that the UK Government has made fees payable in order to take cases—so, someone taking a case of age discrimination would have to pay over £1,000 in fees to take that to the tribunal—means that we're never going to see the number of cases that we perhaps would expect to, given the perception.

[324] The other thing that I would say is that, even despite it being very difficult to measure, the fact that the perception exists amongst older people that they're discriminated against—and I think, particularly, the recruitment process, which we've talked about a bit already, is the area where perhaps the most barriers in this come in—in reality means that they are reinforcing the discrimination themselves. So, I think it is a clear issue and either, if we can't address the training side of things—I will rephrase that: I think we can address the training side of things and I think you, as a committee, might be right to put your focus in that kind of area, around skills and qualifications; we also need to get this culture change to happen to make both employers look more attractive to older people and portray very obviously that they do not discriminate and, hopefully, get older people or older jobseekers to get over some of the barriers that mean that they think that they are discriminated against.

[325] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Okay. So, do you think there is more that the agencies involved, like the DWP and the Welsh Government, can do in a practical way to help bring that change about?

[326] **Mr Francis:** I think there is. I think it's a process and age discrimination in this area has only been illegal since 2011. So, we're still relatively new after that, especially in terms of getting a process of culture change, which I was just talking about, and attitudes that are very pervasive in society around age discrimination in a lot of aspects of life, not just employment. The time we've had since has been quite small to do that, but I think there is a role for the

DWP and for people like Welsh Government and major Welsh employers or employer-representative bodies, like the Confederation of British Industry or the Federation of Small Businesses, to do more to try to challenge some of these attitudes because, certainly, whatever the reality is in terms of age discrimination, the belief that it's pervasive is out there strongly amongst the people we—

[327] **Jeff Cuthbert:** And trade unions.

[328] **Mr Francis:** And I think trade unions could play a role in that, absolutely.

[329] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Okay, thank you.

[330] **William Graham:** On this point, Joyce?

[331] **Joyce Watson:** On this point. We've talked a lot so far about age discrimination, but I'd like to get underneath that as well in terms of gender split within it, because if we're talking about people who've reached 50 or more, they have more or less had a working career, so is there any evidence available that says that these people, who are at this point in their career, are more successful in gaining employment as against other people within the same profession who might not be at that level? And then, of course, that's where we'll get to understand maybe whether there is a gender divide in that.

[332] **Mr Francis:** Can I say something on that? I don't know if there's anything I've seen about particular seniority within careers, and I think I understand the point that you're driving at with that. There are some indications in the figures that I've looked at, in preparing evidence for this committee, that suggest that men maybe have it easier in this age group than women, possibly. Now I have to caveat my response on this because there are obviously historic differences in terms of employment rates between men and women anyway, but from the figures we looked at, the number of people employed over the age of 65 is much higher amongst men as a proportion of the population than it is amongst women—nearly 12% of men aged over 65 are in employment compared to 6.5% of women. And when you look at unemployment rates, and the way that they have dropped over the last year or two, they have dropped less for men over 50 than they have for younger men, but they've basically remained static for women over the age of 50. So, although the overall employment rates have improved in that time, there has been no improvement for women over 50. So, that's the evidence that we have on that. We think that that suggests that there might need to be some work specifically done looking at why older women are finding it harder to get into work or that there are less of them working. But having said that, there are some specific reasons, like the fact that the women state pension age is currently moving up, that may play a role in those statistics as well. So, I think that there's a bit of a caveat around that.

[333] **William Graham:** Eluned.

[334] **Eluned Parrott:** Thank you, Chair. I want to just drill into some of the issues around unconscious bias inherent in the system, which you have already touched on. One of the things that I wanted to come back to you on, Graeme, if I may, was the idea of the data and the evidence that you've looked at. Obviously in terms of discrimination being illegal on the basis of age since 2011, presumably public sector organisations have been required to monitor age as a protected characteristic in their equal opportunities monitoring forms. I'm wondering if there's any data from that period to suggest whether public sector organisations are successful in having a reasonable balance between age profiles in their recruitment.

[335] **Mr Pugh:** That's actually being looked at at this very moment. There's some research being done with every local authority, asking about their recruitment policies and actual recruitment figures. So, that's not going to be out for a little time yet, but that will drill

down to the numbers of older people employed and the male-female split across the board for all local authorities, and health authorities as well.

[336] **Eluned Parrott:** Local authorities and health authorities, but what about other public sector organisations?

[337] **Mr Pugh:** I think that the Welsh Government, as well, is being looked at.

[338] **Eluned Parrott:** Okay. Thank you. When you look at those statistics, is there any way of analysing, or is anyone starting to look at whether or not people returning to the workplace after the age of 50 are going into careers that are of lower skill levels than they had previously held?

[339] **Ms Ridge-Evans:** I think, from our point of view, a number of the clients that we support are quite happy to go to a level that is lower than they've previously been in just because they want to do something, they know that they've got to do something, but they don't want to be the next CEO of a business. They want to get a level that suits them, suits their lifestyle and suits any caring responsibilities that they have as well.

[340] **Eluned Parrott:** So, for what proportion would you say that it's a positive choice that they're making to take a step down in terms of responsibilities?

[341] **Mr Pugh:** I would say over 60%.

[342] **Ms Ridge-Evans:** Yes, it is quite high.

[343] **Eluned Parrott:** Interesting. Thank you. I wanted to have a look at—. One of the things that we've been looking at is recruitment practices in the public and private sectors, and you've touched on this as well. You said, David, that even the design of an advert can put off somebody who is over the age of 50. In what way? Can you explain how the layout of an advertisement could discriminate?

[344] **Mr Pugh:** It's not so much the layout of an advert; it's the words that are used in it. There are certain words that you automatically link with the younger people: things like—oh, gosh—'dynamic'. Sorry; you've put me on the spot here, but things like that that you automatically think of being younger, just like with the Jobs Growth Wales programme. When you put an advert on there, you can't ask for someone with experience. That, on the flip side, for an advert for older people—to encourage older people—needs to be phrased a lot more delicately.

[345] **Eluned Parrott:** Right. So, it's more to do with the language that you use. Clearly, obviously, the channel that is used is also going to be very important. There is a balance, is there not, between cost and traditional means, such as newspaper advertisements and online advertising? Is this a question of changing employers' practices or training people to respond to the way in which the jobs market works in the current time?

[346] **Mr Pugh:** I think that there's a little of both. Generally, I would say that there needs to be some retraining for perhaps older workers to understand the new methodology for applying for jobs. The only issue that we have received through a number of our clients coming through is that they want to learn and they want to re-skill, but they don't want to go into a classroom or actually come to an examined end. They just want to learn the skills to be able to do something, rather than get a qualification to do it.

[347] **Eluned Parrott:** Okay, thank you. I want to return to something you mentioned just now—Jobs Growth Wales and the perception that, obviously, support is targeted at young

people at the start of their careers, but the support is, perhaps, lacking for the over 50s. The policy logic behind Jobs Growth Wales is that an identified barrier for young people is that they didn't have experience to put on their CV. That was a barrier to them getting employment—'I can't get experience and I can't get a job because I haven't got experience, but I can't get the experience because I can't get a job.' That was the policy logic there. Clearly, that policy logic doesn't necessarily hold for someone who is over 50 and has got work experience. What specific barrier are you hoping to overcome here? Is it, perhaps, matching tailored work experience to people changing career direction, or is there, you know, a specific barrier that you're hoping to overcome with some kind of creation scheme?

[348] **Mr Pugh:** Well, it's talking up the opportunities for older people. 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.

[349] **Eluned Parrott:** So, is it a question that, actually, there are jobs on that programme that are inappropriate for the target? In which case, what we need to be looking at is, perhaps, improving the targeting and making things more fit for purpose for the age groups that we're looking to support.

[350] **Mr Pugh:** Yeah, I think so.

[351] **Eluned Parrott:** Certainly in terms of some of the anecdotal evidence, we've talked about skills, we've talked about people wanting to retrain, and we've talked about people, earlier on today as well, re-entering the workplace after, perhaps, taking a break for caring responsibilities for either children or grandchildren, or, indeed, elderly parents. Is there a dearth of—. You know, there is anecdotal evidence that there is a lack of work experience at that kind of level for people retraining, but where would you like to see the focus? Would you like to see the focus on providing opportunities for the training, which is currently missing as well, for things like NVQs, or would you prefer to see things like work experience or job creation? What is the priority as far as you're concerned? What's the biggest barrier here?

[352] **Mr Pugh:** For the majority of clients who we've worked with, it's the job creation and the experience part that's needed. The majority of our clients don't want to go into an in-depth learning process. They don't want to be following NVQs. They want to be able to gain the skills to do a job, but not necessarily be qualified in doing that job.

[353] **Eluned Parrott:** So, the majority of the people whom you are working with are changing direction. They are not—. You know, you've talked about people wanting to take a step back in responsibility, but, actually, completely changing career direction at this point as well, are they?

[354] **Mr Pugh:** Yes, some are.

[355] **Eluned Parrott:** Some. What proportion?

[356] **Mr Pugh:** I would probably say, again, that between 60% and 70% are having to change.

[357] **Eluned Parrott:** Having to or choosing to?

[358] **Mr Pugh:** I would say 'having to'.

[359] **Eluned Parrott:** Why are they having to?

[360] **Mr Pugh:** Because of the nature of their previous jobs, they just aren't there anymore. They need to retrain, re-skill. 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.

[361] **Eluned Parrott:** Thank you very much.

[362] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** I'm just asking you to expand, if you could, and I'll open it out to Graeme as well, perhaps, on the idea of a package of skills that older people need to get back into employment. I'm talking about the soft skills that we discussed a lot, certainly in relation to young people, and in that context it would have been things like, you know, dressing appropriately to go to an interview and turning up on time—things that you would assume, maybe, the over 50s would be comfortable with, but, if you think it would be a good idea to have some sort of way of giving over 50s a package of skills, what kind of elements would you like to see within that package of soft skills?

13:30

[363] **Mr Pugh:** A lot of our clients have come from long-term jobs where they haven't been in the labour market. They're coming out of those jobs and have no idea what they should be doing, how they look for a job, how the market's changed, what employers are looking for now. So, there are a lot of soft skills around that that need to be developed, very much like the younger age group, the 16 to 24-year-olds. So, yes, a package of soft skill development—the confidence, the motivation, the language that's used, even down, again, to timekeeping and the difference and the changes in attitudes of not having set working hours and changing those sorts of parameters that someone has generally worked with need to be done with older people as well.

[364] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** And maybe basic IT skills—not IT skills necessarily to do a job, but basic skills.

[365] **Mr Pugh:** Yes, exactly.

[366] **Mr Francis:** Absolutely, and just to add to that I'd agree that confidence, especially in an interview and an application environment, can be one of the big barriers, but one of the things that's sometimes not talked about very much is basic numeracy and literacy as well. We're harking back, potentially, to a time when education standards weren't as high or people left school at an earlier age, and they've got through the careers that they've done before or the jobs that they've done previously and are now looking at new jobs and careers and can't prove GCSE A to C in maths and English, for example, and maybe they would need some extra confidence and numeracy and literacy skills. Now, that's not the case for all, by any means, but, if we're talking about a package of skills training, then I think there might be an element of that needed for some people as well.

[367] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** I'm sure if you asked some organisations, maybe DWP themselves, maybe they'd say, 'Oh, we already do that. We already pass on this kind of information and tell people what they need to do to get up to speed and how to get into the workplace.' Do you agree that that is being offered in some shape or form now? If not, who should deliver that kind of package and in what form? You know, are we talking about a little soft skills qualification-type thing for people so they can show an employer, 'I'm work-ready

again’?

[368] **Mr Pugh:** That is a potential option, yes, doing something around that, but, again going back to this, our clients tend to say that they don’t want to be following classroom-based learning. We find it very good when we set up a support network for each client, often with other clients in the same boat. People learn skills off each other, and we are there to facilitate learning. I don’t think DWP is the right organisation to be delivering that, and it does need to be specifically tailored to the age group.

[369] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** If I could ask one more, you say that older people say that they don’t really want to go back into a classroom situation. Might there be an argument for saying, ‘Well, actually, you have to go back; it would be best for you if you did actually follow a two-week soft skills course in a classroom-type environment’?

[370] **Mr Pugh:** When I say ‘classroom’, I don’t actually mean two weeks of soft skills. I’m talking about, say, a year of college for two days a week or that sort of thing. That’s not what our clients want to do.

[371] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Okay.

[372] **Mr Francis:** Just to say very briefly on the DWP stuff, I mean, I understand that Jobcentre Plus do, in some cases, offer things like IT, numeracy and literacy skills to their jobseekers, and I know in our evidence we stated that older jobseekers hadn’t been a priority for the DWP for a number of years. We stand by that; we think that’s true, although some of the indications we’ve had more recently are that that might be changing, directly from the UK Government, who have appointed Ros Altmann, for example, as an older workers’ business champion, which I think is the title—

[373] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** It’s a good description even if it’s not the title.

[374] **Mr Francis:** Absolutely. I went and visited the jobcentre in Ebbw Vale shortly before Christmas and had a chat to them. I know that you heard evidence from DWP earlier on that they are setting up 50-plus work champions in each of their offices, and Ebbw Vale had been a pilot site to have one of those. You know, I was quite impressed with the attitude of their advisers and the way that they were now pursuing greater opportunities or greater focus on people who are aged 50 plus. So, I think that might be changing, but I think it is in part a recognition of the fact that their support had been so focused on younger people before. Possibly that’s a step that the Welsh Government will need to take in the future as well.

[375] **William Graham:** Mick.

[376] **Mick Antoniw:** On that point, do you have any familiarity with the Wales Union Learning Fund and the way that operates and whether that, potentially, is a model that could be looked at to provide those—. To some extent, it’s already doing so in work, but of course once someone is out of work—. Have you had any sort of engagement with that at all?

[377] **Mr Francis:** I haven’t, no.

[378] **Mr Pugh:** No.

[379] **Mick Antoniw:** Okay.

[380] **William Graham:** Jeff.

[381] **Jeff Cuthbert:** I accept that people aged over 50 in the workplace are probably

reluctant to go back to what is called the classroom and to take a formal qualification; I accept that. But more and more work-based qualifications are now delivered on a competency basis, as I'm sure you know, including NVQs, and as long as they're focused on the knowledge and practice that they need for the job, I hope there isn't a reluctance in your view that's coming across from older workers to pursue a legitimate course like that. Maybe you could comment on it.

[382] The other issue that I want to mention in terms of adult learning, because you did refer to it, is further education. I know that the budgets are reduced and under pressure—that's a common story, I'm afraid—nevertheless, in your view, are FE colleges offering the right type of support for older people who do want to undertake or learn new skills to help them to get back into work?

[383] **Mr Pugh:** If you take work-based learning, again, it is work-based learning. If someone's in work, they're more likely to want to carry on and do something there, but you have to be in work to do a work-based learning qualification. So, I don't think there's an issue with older people following that once they're in the workplace.

[384] As regards FE, I think there are a number of colleges that are trying their best to facilitate learning for older people. Often, having mixed ages in classes doesn't work, because of the learning speeds. Sometimes it does, but often we've found that it doesn't work. It's very hard for colleges to run specific courses for specific age groups. So, there's a sort of chicken and egg situation there—having the money to do it, or have the need to do it and get the money down.

[385] **Jeff Cuthbert:** And are you making representations to the FE sector on that?

[386] **Mr Pugh:** Yes, we are.

[387] **Mr Francis:** On further education, some funding changes happened with that from the UK Government in terms of advanced adult learning loans that you could access. People in Wales can access those, too. Basically, they ended direct Government subsidy for schemes, but people could take out a loan and repay that afterwards. Our understanding is that the number of older people, or the number of 50-plus people, entering further education has actually fallen since the introduction of those schemes—maybe because of a general aversion to debt and taking out loans like that amongst that age group.

[388] I did want to say something about apprenticeships and the Welsh Government's policy on that, and it seems an opportune time now. We raised in our written evidence a specific concern about the removal of fully funded apprenticeships for people aged 25 and over, and the way that doesn't seem to fit with the ambitions of the strategy for older people, for example, in terms of the reskilling and retraining of people. And I wanted just to relate a specific example of how that's impacting on an employer, which happens to be one of our local Age Cymru partners that delivers social care services and, to do with Care and Social Service Inspectorate Wales requirements, needs 50% of its staff to have a level 2 NVQ qualification. Clearly, being the organisation that we are, it's important to us that we're not discriminating when choosing who to employ, but the fact that the Government funding is no longer available for people aged over 25 will push some employers towards that kind of response, we would have thought. The experience of our local partner is around their having to change the way they advertise for those kinds of posts, to ask for people who already have that qualification, rather than employing people and then helping them to gain it, and they've had to do things like extend probation periods so that they protect their investment if they do fund people to go through apprenticeships. So, it is having a direct impact on an organisation that we know very closely, and we can only assume that it will have that impact, and, potentially, more so, on some other organisations as well. So, we do think that's quite

regrettable. We understand the need to focus funding from Welsh Government, and we don't dispute the fact that there's a need to help younger people into employment, but we don't think that necessarily has to be to the specific disadvantage of other age groups.

[389] **Jeff Cuthbert:** This is a very interesting point, and I'm aware of the former policy of all-age apprenticeships. I also understand why, maybe, there's a need to refocus, but can I ask you—I don't want you to betray any confidences—in terms of the example that you've quoted: was that organisation paying for staff development, in any event, and training, because the counter-argument to what you just said is that it should be the employer that is paying for that upskilling of people, whether it's a formal apprenticeship or not, rather than public money? So, how would you respond to that?

[390] **Mr Francis:** I think I do understand the point you're making, and yes, all of our Age Cymru organisations have specific learning and development budgets for their staff as well. Unfortunately, with this particular service, because it's a local-authority-funded care service, because of the short notice of the change made in terms of the funding of apprenticeships, the cost of that learning is not built into the contract to provide that service. So, the organisation is taking a hit from its own budgets to make sure that it fulfils the CSSIW requirements in terms of staffing. So, I do agree with you: there is a balance within employer responsibility and what could and should be funded from the public sector. Perhaps some of our concern is around the way that decision was taken and the short notice, but, equally, it does have a bearing on this inquiry in the sense of incentivising employers further to take on people under the age of 25, because the funding is available for that.

[391] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Have you made representation to the Welsh Government on that point?

[392] **Mr Francis:** Yes, we have.

[393] **William Graham:** On this point?

[394] **Joyce Watson:** No.

[395] **William Graham:** I'll come back, if I may.

[396] **Keith Davies:** Rwy'n mynd i ofyn yn Gymraeg. Mewn ffordd, rydych chi wedi bod yn beirniadu rhai o strategaethau a pholisïau Llywodraeth Cymru—Twf Swyddi Cymru a'r prentisiaethau nawr. Fe glywsom ni'r bore yma, oddi wrth rywun arall, wrth gwrs, pan ydym ni wedi cael cyllid Ewropeaidd ar gyfer projectau gwahanol, bod y projectau hynny'n creu swyddi rhan amser ac nid llawn amser, ac efallai fod eisiau newid yn y fan honno. Mae strategaeth 10 mlynedd gennym ni ar gyfer pobl hŷn ac efallai nad yw'r strategaeth yn cynnwys digon am swyddi ac yn y blaen. Sut y gallwn ni wella pethau? Beth ŷch chi'n erfyn i'r Llywodraeth ei wneud?

Keith Davies: I'm going to ask questions in Welsh. In a way, you have been criticising some of the strategies and policies of the Welsh Government—Jobs Growth Wales and the apprenticeships now. We heard this morning, from somebody else, of course, that, when we've had European funding for different projects, those projects create part-time jobs and not full-time jobs, and perhaps we need a change there. We have the 10-year strategy for older people, and perhaps the strategy doesn't include enough about jobs and so forth. How can we improve things? What do you expect the Government to do?

[397] **Mr Francis:** I'll say something on the strategy for older people, specifically, to start with, and I have to declare an interest in this, in that I did some work advising the Welsh Government on developing this strategy. So, I should say that at the outset. Employment and

skills have always been an important part of the strategy for older people since 2003, and, in fact, it's one of the driving reasons why 50 is the entry point for the strategy for older people and not an older age. I know that's something that's been quite controversial over the years. The strategy that was published in 2013, as you say, is a 10-year one, and I think it does have the right acknowledgement of employment as an issue for older people. It does hold a reasonably high status within the strategy, and it has specific outcomes set around employment, by 2023, I should say.

[398] However, I think, with that strategy, there's a, sort of, underpinning tension behind a strategy like the strategy for older people, which doesn't hold any resources of its own and relies on other departments to pick up much of the actions that fall out from it. So, there is, sometimes, and I found this when working on this later strategy, a difficulty in terms of trying to build in new policy requirements or new programmes when other departments clearly have their own priorities and already have worked-up budgets in terms of what they are spending their money on.

13:45

[399] However, I have felt frustration with this particular strategy since it was launched, in that very little has been published in terms of an update since—. 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. One of the big things it does pledge to deliver is an older people skills strategy, and I'm in the dark as to where that is in terms of publication. So, perhaps one thing respectfully I could suggest the committee might want to look at with Welsh Government and potentially recommend is to make sure that that skills strategy is published before the end of this Assembly, and that, when it is, it has some very clear and specific outcomes and ways that those will be monitored by Welsh Government.

[400] **Mr Pugh:** I concur entirely with what you said; there's been very little since. It would be a prudent time to do something else.

[401] **Keith Davies:** Un peth arall sydd wedi codi falle yn ystod y dydd yw nad oes llawer yn cael ei wneud falle am hunan-gyflogaeth fel ffordd ymlaen i bobl hŷn. Beth ddylai gael ei wneud man 'ny, te? Achos gyda pobl ifanc, ni wedi bod yn sôn am entrepreneuriaeth a pethau fel yna, ond pobl ifanc eto, fel Twf Swyddi Cymru. Beth ddylen ni wneud? Sut allwn ni gefnogi pobl hŷn?

Keith Davies: One other thing that has arisen perhaps during the day is that not much is being done about self-employment as a way forward for older people. What should be done in that area, then? Because with young people, we've been talking about entrepreneurship and things like that, but young people again, like Jobs Growth Wales. What should we be doing? How can we support older people?

[402] **Mr Pugh:** That's a huge part of what we do at PRIME Cymru: 50% of our clients start their own businesses. We do that through a volunteer mentoring programme, which is quite under-resourced, but does have a good impact. If you look at the mentoring programme that's run through Business Wales, that's very much dedicated to business that have already started and who are likely to be high-growth businesses. The majority of people that we work with will be having businesses that in five years' time will still only employ 1.5 staff. So, they're not seen as going to be a huge impact on the Welsh economy. So, some change needs to be made on focusing on pre-start-up support and small business support.

[403] **Mr Francis:** I defer to David's knowledge in terms of self-employment.

[404] **Keith Davies:** Y pwynt olaf gyda fi—ac rydym wedi clywed sôn amdano fe—yw'r cyllid sy'n dod o Ewrop, a'r ffaith bod y projectau sydd wedi bod lan hyd nawr, wrth gwrs, yn creu swyddi dros dro. Dyna'r enghraifft a gawsom y bore yma. Beth ddylen ni wneud nawr 'te, achos rydym ni'n edrych nawr ar, beth yw e, 2014 i 2020 a chyllid ychwanegol yn dod o Ewrop? Sut allwn ni drial sicrhau bod ni'n cael y swyddi mwy parhaol hynny?

Keith Davies: The last point I had—which has already been mentioned—is the funding that comes from Europe, and that the projects that we've had up until now, of course, have created temporary jobs. That's the example we had this morning. What should we do now then, because we're now looking ahead to, what is it, 2014 to 2020 and additional funding coming from Europe? How can we try to ensure that we have more permanent jobs?

[405] **Mr Pugh:** That's obviously a difficult one; we're all looking for the permanent jobs and the permanent businesses, because, from our own experience, when someone's from an older age group—the 50 plus group—historically, 74% of the businesses that we help to start up are still trading after three years, which is a huge outcome. If you compare that to the younger age group, it's over double the sustainability factor there. And that does come, I think, with age, experience and the experience to realise that things aren't going to be an overnight success, being realistic about what return they're looking for from the businesses, and actually working themselves and not wanting to be a business owner but not working in it. So, it's longevity 50 plus for businesses.

[406] **William Graham:** Rhun.

[407] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** I'm okay on this point now, thank you.

[408] **William Graham:** Thank you. Jeff.

[409] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Following on from that, on volunteering, I know that volunteering for many older people is very popular, as it is for young people, and you can learn some valuable generic skills, which can help you to gain employment. We heard from the DWP that the perception that there's a barrier, in terms of benefits for anything else, or being available for work, if you're volunteering more than 16 hours, is not the case. He assured us that there was a very flexible attitude towards volunteering. What has been your experience of the value of volunteering and, generally, how popular is it with older people over 50?

[410] **Mr Pugh:** 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, and that's where the volunteering has worked for us. And seeing it as a stepping stone to more formal economic activity works very well for our clients. We have the largest volunteer mentoring programme in Wales. We have over 400 people who volunteer for us to support other clients who want to find work or start a business. So, they are volunteer mentors for us. And 90% of those are over the age of 50, both working and not working.

[411] **Mr Francis:** I'd agree with that. As an organisation that relies heavily on volunteers, the vast majority of our volunteers are older people themselves. Although that's not a requirement by any means, I think it reflects that people want to give something back, potentially, and also have more time to put towards volunteering. Our volunteers volunteer for a huge range of reasons, some of which are around rebuilding confidence and developing new skills to look to put to employment elsewhere. Some of our volunteers have no intention, of course, of going back to employment in the future. So, I think volunteering can play a very important role.

[412] I was pleased to hear what the DWP said in terms of that it has no bearing for people who are also looking for work at the same time, or no negative bearing anyway. I hope that's the case, and I think it plays alongside some of the other things we've talked about in terms of caring responsibilities and things, whereby we know that older people, older jobseekers, particularly, value flexible working as a way to continue contributing in their employment. And so that's another thing that we need employers to be conscious of in terms of other people's responsibilities outside of work, whether that's caring responsibilities, whether it's volunteering, or whether it's something else.

[413] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Okay. Thank you.

[414] **William Graham:** Joyce, did you have a question?

[415] **Joyce Watson:** Good practice: I don't know if anyone's asked before I came in on good practice, but, if you've got good examples of it, how do we share them, how do we learn from them, and how do we take those ideas forward? That's the first question. And the other question I'm going to raise is: you talk about older people and their commitments, whether that's caring or whatever, but has anybody looked at the economic aspects of not being able to move when you're over 50? For example, not being able to get a mortgage because it's time-limited. Because you can't get it beyond 65, so if you're 55, you're looking at 10 years. Those sorts of issues are very real if you find yourself out of work and work isn't available locally. Has anybody done any sort of economic impact assessment in that respect of unemployment of older people and the differences that there might be for them and for younger people?

[416] **Mr Pugh:** I have to say that we haven't done any research on the economic impact there, but we often see that that's an area where an individual will start their own business. Because they can't move, they'll be looking at developing a business that enables them to perhaps work part-time in an underpaid job, in a lower paid job, and have a business with it and combining the two. So, that's an important player in starting your own business—being restricted in where you can actually live and travel to.

[417] **Mr Francis:** We know, in terms of people's financial prospects in retirement, that working above the age of 50 can be absolutely crucial in terms of the ultimate pension that you receive, so it is a big concern that there are this number of people who are unemployed after the age of 50 and it will have an impact on people's economic circumstances; they won't be building the pension provision they would do otherwise. We also know that being employed—. Although people regularly tell us that they don't want to go on working any longer, actually the evidence suggests that, if you are able to and you do, it's very good for your health: it's very good for your cognitive health and it's very good for your physical health in terms of retaining an interest. Volunteering can have similar benefits as well. So, there's economic benefits and there's health benefits to the individual from being able to work as an older person and there's clearly benefits to the economy as well to have those people employed and paying taxes rather than being on unemployment benefit.

[418] In terms of good practice examples, which you asked about as well, we're aware that there are about 12 that get regurgitated regularly in the press, and you've heard about some of them this morning. You've heard about supermarkets, Marks & Spencer, John Lewis, B&Q, Centrica and BT—some of which are big employers in Wales. So, we do have some good-practice examples to lean on. They're good-practice examples for different reasons: some of them are around the number of over 50 staff that they have and the ability to work flexibly; some, like Centrica—and this case study featured in an Age UK report on flexible working—give matched time off for caring responsibilities, for example. So, if you take a day's annual leave for caring, they will match that with a day that you can take out of your working hours for care and responsibility as well. So, there are some good examples. 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, for example, and most of the evidence that's around productivity of workers shows that, far from some of the stereotypes, actually, workers are more productive the older they are and there's a number of research studies that point towards that, with very few that suggest the opposite.

[419] Just a final thing to say on good practice, I mentioned Ros Altmann; I've looked at my notes here—she's the old worker business champion, which I think might have been what I said earlier. That's a UK Government post, but the UK Government also plan to appoint some regional business champions around England and I don't know whether the Welsh Government has similar plans to look at something like that, but there might be—in terms of sharing good practice and making sure that this kind of thing is picked up—something for the Welsh Government to look at in terms of a similar role for Wales, potentially, to work with the big employers and the smaller employers that we have here.

[420] **Joyce Watson:** One final question, if I may, looking to the future—I always like to look to the future—in this field, particularly, if we're talking about over 50s being unemployed in the future and if we link it to trends at the moment, the general trend in having children much later in life, so, that is, over the age of 35, means that you have the potential to have considerable numbers unemployed while they're still actually trying to manage their families who haven't left home and will still be in education. So, are you trying to do anything in terms of what we know to be the case now and projecting that into the need that could arise in the very, very near future?

[421] **Mr Francis:** I think that's precisely the reason why this kind of inquiry is so important, because we need to change our attitude as a country. We need to change the culture around employment to mean that people do carry on working for longer and can get new jobs if they are made unemployed over the age of 50. If we don't do that, then we'll be stacking up significant problems for the future, if you look at the increase in state pension age and the issues that you're talking about in terms of people's other financial responsibilities that might carry on later into life. We really need to get to a stage where we are not consigning people to the scrap heap because of their age and that we are valuing everyone in terms of the contribution that they can make to society.

[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. So, what do we do? Do we import people, or do we change people's perceptions of older workers?

14:00

[423] **William Graham:** Eluned, one last question.

[424] **Eluned Parrott:** Yes. Just very briefly, in terms of the people who you work with and the anecdotal evidence that you've brought forward today, what's the age profile of the people who you are working with in terms of, you know, the proportion that are 50-60, 60-67, shall we say, and beyond retirement age?

[425] **Mr Pugh:** Because we do it every three months and it does tend to change a little, it's roughly 45% under 60 and 30% 60-65 that we measure it at, and over 65 is the balance. One of our oldest clients was 81 and we helped him set up a business—a very successful business.

[426] **William Graham:** Very good. Do Members have any more questions? Well, thank you very much for your evidence today. It was very helpful to our inquiry. There will be a record published for you to check in due course. Thank you very much for your attendance

today.

**Cynnig o dan Reol Sefydlog 17.42 i Benderfynu Gwahardd y Cyhoedd o'r
Cyfarfod**

**Motion under Standing Order 17.42 to Resolve to Exclude the Public from the
Meeting**

Cynnig:

Motion:

*bod y pwyllgor yn penderfynu gwahardd y
cyhoedd o weddill y cyfarfod yn unol â Rheol
Sefydlog 17.42(vi).*

*that the committee resolves to exclude the
public from the remainder of the meeting in
accordance with Standing Order 17.42(vi).*

*Cynigiwyd y cynnig.
Motion moved.*

[427] **William Graham:** I move a motion under Standing Order 17.42 to resolve to exclude the public from the remainder of this afternoon's meeting. Thank you very much. This meeting is now closed.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 14:00.
The public part of the meeting ended at 14:00.*