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[Y Pwyllgor Menter a Busnes](#)

[The Enterprise and Business Committee](#)

7/10/2015

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

The 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
Mohammad Asghar	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Jeff Cuthbert	Llafur Labour
Keith Davies	Llafur Labour
Yr Arglwydd/Lord Elis-Thomas	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
William Graham	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig (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

Iestyn Davies	ColegauCymru CollegesWales
Dr Rachel Garside-Jones	Pennaeth Ymgysylltu Polisi Sgiliau, Llywodraeth Cymru Head of Skills Policy Engagement, Welsh Government
Julie James	Aelod Cynulliad, Llafur, (y Dirprwy Weinidog Sgiliau a Thechnoleg Assembly Member, Labour, (The Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology)
Victoria Lloyd	Cyfarwyddwr Dylanwadu, Age Cymru Director of Influencing, Age Cymru
Terry Mills	Cadeirydd, Grŵp Cynghori Arbenigol Cyfleoedd Dysgu a Chyflogaeth, Heneiddio'n Dda yng Nghymru, Swyddfa Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru

Huw Morris	Opportunities for Learning and Employment Expert Advisory Group, Ageing Well in Wales, Office of the Older People's Commissioner for Wales Cyfarwyddwr Sgiliau, Addysg Uwch a Dysgu Gydol Oes, Llywodraeth Cymru Director, Skills, Higher Education and Lifelong Learning, Welsh Government
Jeff Protheroe	Rheolwr Gweithrediadau, Ffederasiwn Hyfforddiant Cenedlaethol Cymru Operations Manager, National Training Federation Wales
Sarah Rochira	Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru Commissioner for Older People for Wales
Dr Greg Walker	ColegauCymru CollegesWales

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

Rachel Jones	Dirprwy Clerc Deputy Clerk
Gareth Price	Clerc Clerk
Anne Thomas	Uwch-Ymchwilydd Senior Researcher

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 09:20.
The meeting began at 09:20.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introductions, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **William Graham:** Good morning, and welcome to this session of the Enterprise and Business Committee. I have an apology from Gwenda Thomas. The meeting is bilingual and headphones can be used for simultaneous translation from Welsh to English on channel 1, or for sound amplification on channel 2. The meeting is being broadcast, and a transcript of the proceedings will be published later. May I remind Members and witnesses that there is no need to touch the microphones, they should come on automatically when you speak? In the event of a fire alarm, would people please follow directions from the ushers?

**Cyfleoedd Cyflogaeth i Bobl dros 50 Oed—Ystyriaeth o Ymateb
Llywodraeth Cymru i Adroddiad y Pwyllgor
Employment Opportunities for People Over 50—Consideration of
Welsh Government Response**

[2] **William Graham:** Our first session this morning is on employment opportunities for people over 50, a scrutiny of the Welsh Government response. We're grateful that Victoria Lloyd is with us this morning. Could I ask you to give your name and title for the record please?

[3] **Ms Lloyd:** My name is Victoria Lloyd. I'm director of influencing at Age Cymru.

[4] **William Graham:** Thank you very much. Our first question comes from Rhun.

<p>[5] Rhun ap Iorwerth: Diolch yn fawr iawn a bore da i chi. A gaf i ddiolch yn gyntaf i chi am baratoi'r papur mewn ymateb ysgrifenedig i sylwadau ac ymateb y Llywodraeth i'r adroddiad? Mae'n amlwg o'r hyn rŷch chi wedi ei gyflwyno i ni eich bod chi'n siomedig efo ymateb y Llywodraeth. A allwch chi ddweud rhywfaint yn rhagor wrthym ni am natur y siom yna a'r hyn, o bosibl, y byddech chi wedi gobeithio a disgwyl ei glywed gan y Llywodraeth?</p>	<p>Rhun ap Iorwerth: Thank you very much and good morning to you. May I thank you, first of all, for preparing the paper as a written response to the Government's comments and response to the report? It's clear from what you've presented to us that you are disappointed with the Government's response. Could you tell us a little bit more about the nature of that disappointment and what you would have hoped to hear from the Government?</p>
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[6] **Ms Lloyd:** I think we've got a couple of issues with the original response, but, I have to say that I was more encouraged by the subsequent submission from the Deputy Minister. I think around the research we were disappointed. We know that there is a dearth of evidence around the issues for older people in terms of the experiences and the figures. Actually, there's a lot of UK data, but it's difficult to take what's specific to Wales out of that. So, we think that's an important thing to be done. And, while the response from the Government said that they would consider undertaking that research, we felt it stopped short of an actual commitment to do so and we

were concerned that, in considering it, it might not go further. While we understand that the research isn't action in itself, we do think that's important in terms of evidence-based policy making and making sure that the interventions are right for older people because there is an issue.

[7] There are issues of age discrimination and whether they're perceived or actual in the minds of older people and employers, there's something to be overcome there. So, actually getting underneath that, understanding what it looks like and what it does mean, we think, is something that is really important. Understanding what the data are telling us—because we understand that older people, if they're made redundant, take a lot longer than other age groups to get back into the workplace. That has real implications for people's wellbeing and for their pension arrangements in later life. So, there are all sorts of implications of not understanding and not making the right interventions. So, we were concerned on that level.

[8] We were concerned around the lack of a specific skills plan for over-50s. It was one of the things that we really welcomed in the third phase of the strategy for older people and we thought that was a really important thing to do. We're concerned that that strategy for older people now is actually on a back burner. The Welsh Government were originally ahead of the curve in terms of looking at the challenges of the ageing population. We're concerned that now it's taking a back seat, if you like, and, obviously, we think there are still things to be done. There are still levels of poverty among older people. As I say, with the age discrimination there is still a job to do, and all of this has implications for wellbeing, for health and social care services. So, it's interrelated with a lot of other policy issues. So, we think it is really important.

[9] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** And it's quite striking this sentence:

[10] 'when taken as a whole, this response from the Welsh Government only adds to our perception that the Welsh Government does not consider supporting older workers to be a priority.'

[11] That's why we did this piece of a research as a committee. It's quite an indictment of what you see as the Government's attitude.

[12] **Ms Lloyd:** We understand the issue of making sure that younger people get into the workforce and get the right skills, but, equally, at the other end of the scale we think there's an issue too, and we think that both

groups deserve that attention.

[13] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** And we haven't seen any evidence that the Government is willing to take any significant step forward as a result of this committee, through what you and others told us as a committee, which pointed out the need to speed up.

[14] **Ms Lloyd:** As I said, in the subsequent response that we received, I think, there was the commitment there to do the research, to do the work. We felt that was stronger than, perhaps, the original response that we responded to in our paper.

[15] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Okay, thank you.

[16] **William Graham:** Thank you very much. Keith.

<p>[17] Keith Davies: Gwnaf i ofyn yn Gymraeg hefyd. Bore da i chi. Eich barn chi, rwy'n credu, yw bod yna ddiffyg tystiolaeth bendant am y sefyllfa i bobl dros 50 yng Nghymru, a bod y Gweinidog yn dweud, wel, y gwnaiff hi edrych arno fe, ond dim ond fel rhan o ryw ymchwil neu arian ymchwil sydd ar gael gan y Llywodraeth. Rŷch chi'n dweud taw'r unig dystiolaeth sydd gyda nhw lan hyd nawr yw'r dystiolaeth sy'n dod o Loegr, ac os ydym ni eisiau newid pethau yng Nghymru, dylem ni fod yn cael y dystiolaeth o Gymru.</p>	<p>Keith Davies: I'm going to ask my question in Welsh as well. Good morning to you. Your view, I think, is that there is a lack of definite evidence with regard to people over 50 in Wales, and that the Minister says, well, that she will look at it, but only as part of some research or research funding that's available from the Government. You're saying that the only evidence that they have up until now is the evidence that comes from England, and if we want to change things in Wales, we should be getting the research from Wales.</p>
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[18] **Ms Lloyd:** I think it's not so much that it's from England, but the figures that we have are UK-based figures, without the Welsh figures separated out. In the Minister's response, I think it does suggest that perhaps the data could be re-presented, so that we can actually look at what the Welsh figures are telling us. So, I think that would be helpful of itself. Where there are gaps, then, as I've said, I think we probably do need to look at what the specific barriers are in Wales, because they may be the same barriers that there are in England and other parts of the UK, however, we have got differences in our geography, in our language, and we probably

need to make sure we're taking those into account as well.

[19] **Keith Davies:** Ie, ac mae'n bwysig, hefyd, oherwydd beth sydd yn digwydd yn genedlaethol, bod mwy a mwy o bobl yn byw yn hirach ac yn y blaen, a bod mwy o bobl dros 50 yn edrych am swyddi. Mae'n debyg, fan hyn, nad yw'r ffigurau gyda ni o beth sydd ar gael, beth yw'r problemau ac yn y blaen, ac, wedyn, mae'n bwysig ein bod ni'n gwneud yr ymchwil hyn.

Keith Davies: And, it's also important because of what is happening on a national level, that there are more and more people living longer and so on, and that there are more people over 50 looking for jobs. It appears, here, that we don't have these figures of what's available, what are the problems, and, then, it's important that we undertake this research.

[20] **Ms Lloyd:** I think that's what we're saying, in effect. There is a cultural shift. I think, 20 years ago, people were looking to retire earlier. Now, for many different reasons, people are needing to work longer. Some of that is financial, but some of that is because people recognise the benefits to working longer, in terms of what that does for their wellbeing, their self-esteem, for their day-to-day life. So, there's a whole host of reasons that people will choose to work longer. Finance is a big issue for a lot of people, so I wouldn't want to underplay that in suggesting that there are a range of reasons. So, it is important, and, I think, the shift is taking place in parts, but there is still a lot of underlying myth around the older worker, and those come from a discriminatory basis. There's a whole lump of labour myth that suggests that, if older people stay in work for longer, then younger people can't get onto the workforce, whereas all of the data would tell us that, actually, the more older people that you have in the workforce, actually, the more younger people there are too, because of the implications for GDP around there being more jobs. So, I think that message needs to be got out, but we do need to look at what the implications are in Wales; what the specific barriers might be.

[21] **Keith Davies:** Diolch.

[22] **William Graham:** Oscar.

[23] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you very much, Chair, and good morning, Victoria. Age discrimination in skills, training and employment matters is in our recommendation 3. What are the reasons that Age Cymru is disappointed with the Deputy Minister's response to accept in principle the committee's

recommendation 3 to commission research into the extent of age discrimination in employment and training matters in Wales?

[24] **Ms Lloyd:** I think it's very similar to what I've said. Age discrimination is very much part of this issue that we're looking at. Polling that we've done suggests that there are huge numbers of older people in Wales who experience age discrimination or perceive they experience age discrimination. I think the perception issue is one that we need to get over, because the perception of age discrimination impacts on how people behave, the jobs that they're likely to apply for and those sorts of issues. So, I think, even if it is only a perceived discrimination, we've got to get over that. That's why I think it's important that we do more around raising awareness of the issue and dispelling some of the myths around older workers. I think it's really important to do that, because those communications will impact on employers and potential employees alike, because it's about the messaging, I think. Discrimination is there in people's responses; it's not necessarily overt, basically, because, now, age discrimination in employment and recruitment is illegal, but it would be there underlying the decisions people make. There's evidence to suggest that the beliefs that managers hold will impact on how they make decisions, so, if they've got those ageist underlying assumptions, whether they're doing it consciously or unconsciously, it's still maybe there, which is why the messaging is very important.

09:30

[25] **William Graham:** Thank you. Mick.

[26] **Mick Antoniw:** With regard to recommendation 4, which is about the Welsh Government working with other bodies, including trade unions and employers, to work against age discrimination, you warmly welcome that. In fact, you regard that as a key recommendation. The Commissioner for Older People in Wales welcomes the Government's acceptance in principle. What is in the acceptance in principle that you're not happy with?

[27] **Ms Lloyd:** I think, in the submission around this area—and we welcome the acceptance in principle, but there are a couple of key points that the Deputy Minister makes with regard to what's happening. One is the work of the older people's commissioner, and obviously we value that hugely. We think that the older people's commissioner has done a fantastic job in this area, and we welcome and support her in doing that. The other is

the work of the national partnership forum. But, both of those are not Government themselves. We think that the acceptance and statement by Government that age discrimination is an issue, leading an agenda that works with employers, with the trade unions and with the other bodies mentioned, would actually send out a very strong message to people. It would help set an agenda and facilitate a stream of work, rather than it being done at arm's length. So, we think that there's huge traction in the Government playing a leading role in that.

[28] **Mick Antoniw:** So, you think it's predominantly a matter of, actually, focus and presentation of commitment rather than things that may actually be happening. Just coming to the practical, what would you actually want the Welsh Government, specifically and practically, to do further than what it's doing at the moment?

[29] **Ms Lloyd:** I think they could actually do some of the facilitation around bringing the employers and the trade unions together, and helping to set and promote that agenda. Being in the room and being seen to lead the agenda, I think, is the thing that would help.

[30] **Mick Antoniw:** So, it's not so much a specific criticism of the acceptance in principle, but basically just saying, 'You need to actually go a step further than you've gone'.

[31] **Ms Lloyd:** Yes, very much.

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

[33] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Yes. Thank you. On this point, the basis of the Deputy Minister's response is that she feels that, through the various partnership working and existing arrangements, which I know are there, there's not much more, in practical terms, that could be done in terms of working with these other departments, particularly the Department for Work and Pensions, which I know is very difficult. What more, particularly in terms of that sort of partnership approach, do you think could be done?

[34] **Ms Lloyd:** As I say, I think it is about setting the direction and a proper leading from the front, as a Government, rather than the older people's commissioner perhaps leading, or the NPF. Because the NPF is mentioned. The NPF gives advice to Ministers rather than as an agent of action and change, as I understand. So, it's working with them, I guess, to become that

agent of change. I think it's perhaps not so much the DWP aspect, but the work with the employers and the trade unions, to make sure that this is pushed up the agenda.

[35] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Okay. If I may, one of the crucial areas, of course, is employers because, you know, you can't create jobs without the employers agreeing to that, clearly, whether that's public or private sector. Specifically, what sort of work are you doing, which would be of interest to us, of course, in terms of altering the attitudes of employers?

[36] **Ms Lloyd:** We've done a couple of things. Several years ago we produced a programme called Growing Older in Wales, which was not specifically for employers but working with organisations to explain growing older, what ageing meant, and how you might deal with the ageing population. That deals with employment in terms of trying to dispel some of the myths I talked about earlier, trying to overcome some of the ageism. So, we've been doing that. We're also, at the moment, working on developing an age-friendly charter. So, we've been doing a lot of engagement with the public, looking at the things that they think need to be overcome. Our next stage of work in our business plan is actually to do some of that work with employers and to work with some of the employers' organisations, hopefully, to see how partnership working with them can actually help us to cascade that information down to individual employers.

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

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

[39] **Joyce Watson:** On the same theme—good morning, Victoria—I was just wondering whether you've done any cross-referencing about those things that are and specific to, maybe, women. I'm talking about caring roles, because everybody knows that people are living longer, but, consequently, their children, who are in work and who are over 50 are very often the carers. So, I was just wondering whether you've done any work, or considered doing any work, with other groups, maybe like Chwarae Teg, that would've looked at women looking after their children, but the two issues are the same: they're barriers to work.

[40] **Ms Lloyd:** We haven't done any specific work to date on the potential barriers for women, but I know there was a piece of UK-wide work done by Ros Altmann that had specific recommendations around the issues that

women experience, both on particular health issues—things like the menopause—that will play into getting back into the workplace, potentially, but also the caring roles that tend to fall more heavily on a woman than on their male counterparts. So, there is work around that has looked at those issues, but we haven't done anything specifically and we haven't done anything specifically in Wales.

[41] **William Graham:** We'll go to Eluned.

[42] **Eluned Parrott:** Thank you. As you'll be aware, the Welsh Government declined the specific recommendations around creating some form of skills or training or job creation scheme for older people, and I'm wondering why you believe that this would be an appropriate route to take. The Minister, clearly, in her response to us, has talked about Jobs Growth Wales as being something to set people on the start to their career, so what would the rationale be around something for older people, as far as you're concerned? And what do you think the priority should be for such a scheme, if it were to be created?

[43] **Ms Lloyd:** If I talk about the priorities first, the priorities for us would be addressing the specific barriers that older people experience in trying to get back into the workplace if they're out of the workplace, and those might be different for different groups of people. We understand it's a very diverse and complex picture, because there will be issues of older people who have been very engaged in the workplace and perhaps working at senior levels; their perception might be that they can't get back into a role that's on a similar level to the one that they've previously left. But there may be issues around them having been in the workplace for a long time, but not then being experienced in application and interview processes—those sorts of things. The very fact of being out of the workplace may have impacted on their self-esteem. So, there are all sorts of issues for people who have been well engaged in work over a long period, potentially. And then, at the other end of the spectrum, you might have people who've had several different jobs; there may be clusters of issues around low skills. I know IT comes up an awful lot, but it's not always IT; it can very well be literacy and numeracy, depending on what sort of roles a person's been experienced in.

[44] So, there are different things, and what we think is important is proper diagnosis on an individual level of what the issues are and then individually planned responses to that. So, I think it's important that it addresses particularly the issues around older people in terms of—. We looked at some

work that's been done on the Work Programme by our colleagues at Age UK; they've done an assessment of outcomes around the Work Programme, and they found that there were particular issues for older people just in terms of some of the approaches—so, the length of time spent with people and experience and expectations around people. So, there are a lot of individualised aspects to this that would need to come across, and some of it is not the specific actions that are taken but, sometimes, the way they're taken, because the way that they're taken, perhaps for somebody in their late 50s, might be very different for that 18 to 24-year-old, so it's making sure that things are tailored according to need.

[45] **Eluned Parrott:** When it comes to training and so on, clearly, there's been—you comment upon it in your response—a withdrawal of funding for some apprenticeships for the over-24s, and you fear that there's a disincentive, then, for employers to take older people on. Are there apprenticeships that a lot of older people would take, or is it, do you think, just more indicative of an attitude that training isn't open to and isn't available to older people?

[46] **Ms Lloyd:** I think the apprenticeship will be right for some people, because, if it's somebody at the age of 50, then, potentially, they've got almost 20 years more work—

[47] **Eluned Parrott:** Exactly.

[48] **Ms Lloyd:** —you know, even up to the state retirement age. So, that's a long, significant period of work that they've got ahead of them. So, it is going to be right for some people, and it's not going to be right for others. I think the particular issue we have with the apprenticeships—the level 3 qualification—is the interaction with health and social care. We spend a lot of time at Age Cymru talking about the importance of good-quality social care, and the issue was raised with us, not in terms of an employment issue specifically, but around making sure that care staff get appropriate qualifications. It was raised with us on the grounds that, for a particular employer, they weren't able to get the funding for people coming in over the age of 24 for those social care qualifications. So, it's the broader implications that we need to be looking at in this context as well.

[49] **Eluned Parrott:** It's something that was raised with this committee that, perhaps particularly, women re-entering the workplace after childcare or other caring responsibilities had found that they weren't then able to

access training for social care roles and that that particular sector had been very badly hit by the changes in funding. But can I ask—? I mean, the Deputy Minister has said to us on a number of occasions that all of the training and skills-based opportunities are available to everyone, apart from a very few that are targeted at young people. Do you think that that is an accurate reflection of the number of available places on a training scheme, as opposed to, necessarily, the number of schemes? Do you believe that older people are being told about the opportunities that are available to them appropriately?

[50] **Ms Lloyd:** The issue of being told is interesting. I guess it's the access-to-information issue, so it's whether they're being told, whether they're finding out and whether more needs to be done to raise awareness of what is there. I think I'd go back to my previous answer that the approach with older people in terms of how those things are actually addressed and the way that it's done is probably as impactful as the fact that it is done—so, making sure that it is the right approach for the person on the specific occasion.

[51] **Eluned Parrott:** So, for example, the Careers Wales website being the main portal where careers advice is given—it's a website and social media, and you feel that that might cut out some of the older people.

[52] **Ms Lloyd:** Potentially. It is about how people go about job-seeking, because, if somebody hasn't done it for 30 years, then the whole approach is going to be very different. So, it's about making sure that they've got the right skills and the right information to be able to do that. Careers Wales, for a lot of people, will be the careers advice that you had when you were at school, rather than something you'd go to, necessarily, as somebody in your 50s. So, it's making sure that people are aware of that and know the right routes.

[53] **Eluned Parrott:** Thank you.

[54] **William Graham:** Jeff. Question 6.

[55] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Yes, question 6. Can you explain a little bit further why you're, to quote, 'extremely concerned'—which, to me, is quite a serious statement—by the Welsh Government response to recommendations 8 and 9 for a skills strategy and economic activity outcomes specifically for people over the age of 50? Now, both those were declined. You know, what is it that

makes you extremely concerned about that matter?

[56] **Ms Lloyd:** I think—it was two things, really. I think it was in the existing skills strategy, which we understand is all-age—but there is no reference to older people in there. So, the specific barriers for older people and any specific issues are not recognised. So, I think that was the first issue, and the second was the one that I've probably already touched on in terms of the strategy for older people. We thought that that skills strategy, as part of the overall strategy for older people, was, you know, a really tangible part of what the Welsh Government were doing for older people, and we are concerned, as I said, about that overall message. We're starting to feel that it's not such an issue any more—that, perhaps, the work is done—whereas, as I've already said, we feel there's still a lot to do in terms of age discrimination particularly, but also some of the other challenges of ageing.

9:45

[57] **Jeff Cuthbert:** In terms, if I may, of focusing on the skills strategy bit of it, I know that there are practical difficulties. It's a little bit more straightforward with younger people who are seeking to enter the jobs market for the first time, but the experiences of someone aged 50-plus, taken as a cohort, could be vast, with very different aspirations, very different experiences, existing skill bases, and some with very limited skills, even such as functional literacy and numeracy, which we know to be a huge problem. What, if anything, do you think there should be a focus on by the Government? I mean, rather than trying to embrace the whole lot, are there key aspects that you think they'd be best spending their resources on?

[58] **Ms Lloyd:** Before getting into spending the resources, I guess an acknowledgement of the issue in the strategy would be the starting point, and then, probably on the basis of the research that we've been discussing earlier, it's looking at where the biggest issue is. Is it the functional numeracy and literacy, and then playing into those IT skills that come up so often? Or is it at the opposite end of the spectrum that you've described—the people who have those vast experiences? Now, I think the research would actually allow us to, I guess, assess which is the priority area, where the biggest problem is, and, when we dissect the figures specifically for Wales, what that long-term unemployment looks like. Is it at one end or the other? Then, I guess it would be addressing the biggest issue.

[59] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Okay. And finally, if I may, on this, have you done any

work yourselves with employers, either through the Confederation of British Industry or the Federation of Small Businesses, if not individual employers, to help identify what they think the skills shortages are?

[60] **Ms Lloyd:** We haven't, but, as I mentioned earlier, we're just embarking on some of the work around looking at an age-friendly charter, and employment is very much part of that.

[61] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Thank you.

[62] **William Graham:** I don't mean to lead you, but you will know that our recommendation 7 was very strongly that the Welsh Government should commission research. I assume that you would strongly endorse that.

[63] **Ms Lloyd:** Yes, and, as I said, we would endorse the recommendation for research, but equally we would say that research is just research. We then want to be seeing action following from that.

[64] **William Graham:** Excellent. Rhun.

[65] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** On the timescale, in relation to the communication plan, you raise an eyebrow about the fact that it's only highlighting communication work due in 2015-16, and you doubt really if anything can be done in that kind of timescale.

[66] **Ms Lloyd:** We understand that, potentially, the Government committing to something while it's still the Government is a sensible thing to do, but, actually, if you're looking for cultural change—and, in terms of challenging age discrimination, that's what you're looking to do—then, yes, it's a longer term piece of work.

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

[68] **Keith Davies:** You've been very critical of the policy statement on skills and the supporting skills implementation plan. That doesn't refer to older people at all.

[69] **Ms Lloyd:** It doesn't, and that's why I was saying that even an acknowledgment of the specific issues—. There is a range of issues, they are complex, and they will need different interventions, but actually acknowledging that fact, I think, is something that we'd welcome.

[70] **William Graham:** Thank you very much for your attendance today. We've finished a little bit before time, but then you were very good to answer questions by yourself without a companion. Thank you very much. The committee will break now until 10.10 a.m., when our next witnesses will arrive.

*Gohiriwyd y cyfarfod rhwng 09:48 a 10:09.
The meeting adjourned between 09:48 and 10:09.*

**Cyfleoedd Cyflogaeth i Bobl dros 50 Oed—Ystyriaeth o Ymateb
Llywodraeth Cymru i Adroddiad y Pwyllgor
Employment Opportunities for People Over 50—Consideration of
Welsh Government Response**

[71] **William Graham:** Welcome back. I welcome Jeff Protheroe, Iestyn Davies and Greg Walker to our meeting. Thank for your attendance. I think there are Members who need to make declarations.

[72] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Yes, I need to declare, Chair, that I'm a member of the board of the National Training Federation for Wales.

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

[74] **Eluned Parrott:** Chair, I would like to declare that my husband provides services for further education institutions as a member of staff for a higher education institution.

[75] **William Graham:** Thank you very much. Dafydd.

[76] **Yr Arglwydd Elis-Thomas: Lord Elis-Thomas:** I'm honorary Rwy'n llywydd anrhydeddus Grŵp president of Grŵp Llandrillo Menai. Llandrillo Menai.

[77] **William Graham:** Thank you very much. I'd like to invite questions now, if I may, and our first question is from Joyce Watson,

[78] **Joyce Watson:** Good morning, both. I'd like to ask you, because neither of you submitted a paper, what your overall views on the Welsh Government's response are.

[79] **Mr Davies:** Thank you, Joyce, and Chair. It's an interesting one, coming to this quite fresh, if you like, to be able to look at things in the round and try to consider not only the response the Welsh Government is making to the challenges faced by those who are over 50, but more widely in this agenda to establish and to secure on a sustainable basis a genuine commitment to lifelong learning. So, I think this is part of a wider response and an aspiration that we would all share. However, it's clear—again, you haven't got to be in the post very long to be able to understand this—that the Welsh Government does face some particular challenges in financing and supporting the range of FE and lifelong learning provision. I think it's very fair to say that, as an organisation, we recognise that and accept that the recommendations—. We accept also in realistic terms when some of the recommendations are not going to be carried through, and would hope that the committee, in the fullness of time, will perhaps reflect on the implications that might have more widely for society and particularly for learners.

[80] **Mr Protheroe:** I think, Joyce, from an NTFW perspective, some of the responses that have been made are understandable. There is a considerable amount of work going on within the skills and training area at the moment, but I guess there is a recognition that maybe the focus on those aged 50 and over is probably not there in the wider sense.

[81] **Joyce Watson:** The Minister did accept seven recommendations in principle, and she did decline four recommendations, which I'm sure you're aware of. Have you got anything further than what you've just said to add in that regard?

[82] **Dr Walker:** I think, obviously, the recommendations that were declined mainly were those that related to whether there should be a separate over-50s strategy and research, compared to the existing all-age strategy, which has been the way the Government has approached things in the past. To be honest, the ColegauCymru position has been that we would prefer a generic, all-age skills strategy, rather than having a strategy that applied to under-25s, those aged 25 to 50, and those aged 50 and over. We think that it would be better just to have an all-age strategy, rather than to have different slices of policy applying to different sections of the age population. That's not to say that there are not specific issues for older people in their reskilling needs and in their re-engagement needs. There clearly are, and there are obviously issues relating to age discrimination, but I think there's sufficient flexibility within the skills priorities programme and within the equality strand of that to ensure that the specific needs of that age group are catered

for.

[83] **Mr Protheroe:** Actually, I think from an NTFW perspective as well, there is, as we've seen, much focus on the younger person and the 16 to 24-year-old age group. And from the work-based learning sector, predominantly, obviously, the provisions delivered in the workplace, there's a focus and a shift towards that. I think having one specifically for those aged 50 and over would begin to polarise the focus, but also would probably squeeze out that middle ground in terms of those aged 25 to 49. Similar to CollegesWales, an all-age skills strategy, we think, obviously has merit.

[84] **William Graham:** Keith and then Rhun.

[85] **Keith Davies:** Cwestiwn sy'n dilyn o beth roedd Greg yn sôn amdano, oherwydd beth sydd wedi digwydd cyn belled ag y mae'r cyllid i golegau yn y cwestiwn. Wrth gwrs, rydym yn sôn am bobl dros 50 sydd eisiau sgiliau, dywedwch dechnoleg gwybodaeth, er enghraifft. Ai'r sefyllfa nawr yw taw'r cyrsiau sydd wedi cael eu cau gan y colegau yw'r cyrsiau i bobl, efallai, sydd dros 50 sydd eisiau'r sgiliau ychwanegol hyn?

Keith Davies: A question that follows on from what Greg was talking about, because of what's happening with regard to the funding for colleges. Of course, we're talking about people over the age of 50 who want to develop skills, perhaps in terms of IT, for example. Is the current situation that the courses that have been closed by the colleges are those courses, perhaps, for people over 50 years of age who want these additional skills?

[86] **Mr Davies:** Rwy'n siŵr y bydd Greg yn ychwanegu at hyn, ond dyna yw fy nealltwriaeth i, yn gynnar, o'r hyn sydd wedi digwydd. Un goblygiad yn dilyn y penderfyniad i ffocysu yn amlwg ar ddiwallu anghenion y *cohort* o bobl ifanc, y tu fewn i setliad ariannol anodd, yw y bydd yn cael effaith ar garfan arall o ddysgwyr.

Mr Davies: I'm sure that Greg will add to this, but that is my understanding, early on, of what has happened. One of the implications of the decision to focus clearly on meeting the needs of the cohort of young people, within a very difficult financial settlement, is that it will have an effect on another cohort of learners.

10:15

[87] I do think as well that it's important to differentiate between general,

generic skills provision and retraining provision, and also to put those schemes that are targeted at particular work cohorts. So, I think there's a danger that we think of this generically, when we know, in certain industries and certain locations, there have been interventions from Welsh Government outside of the generic provision that go some way to addressing particular needs. But, I think it's inevitable, and Greg, you'd agree, that that's what happened.

[88] **Dr Walker:** And because the majority of people who have benefited from the part-time adult funding that goes to the colleges, which has largely ceased for areas other than essential skills in terms of literacy and numeracy this year, are over 50, as you can probably see from the table that we provided in our initial evidence back in February this year, the disproportionate impact will be on the over-50s. So, it's just worth reflecting on the fact that, over 10 years, the number of part-time adults engaging in learning at colleges has collapsed by 40 per cent, and we would expect that to go down significantly this year as a result of the reductions in adult part-time funding. As Iestyn said, that's against a very difficult fiscal backdrop and some tough decisions have been made. But, I think we've seen other areas of funding and finance for the over-19s that haven't had a reduction in funding—I'm thinking about the cost of full-time higher education in particular—and so it seems a strange set of priorities to continue to channel large sums of money towards full-time higher education through fee support and to quite radically slash back on part-time adult FE support.

[89] **William Graham:** Thank you. Rhun.

[90] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Mi awn i fanylder ynglŷn â sawl elfen o ymateb y Llywodraeth, ond eto, ar y dechrau yn fan hyn, i fod yn glir beth yw'ch safbwynt chi, ai dweud yr ydych chi, fel dau sefydliad mewn ffordd, fod yna gyfaddefiad yn ymateb y Llywodraeth fod yna broblem, ond datganiad nad ydy'r cyllid yno ar hyn o bryd i fynd i'r afael â'r problemau hynny, ac felly mai'r hyn rydym yn ei wynebu, yn sgil ymateb y Llywodraeth, yw sefyllfa lle rydym o bosib yn storio problemau at

Rhun ap Iorwerth: We will go into detail on several elements of the Government's response, but again, as an initial statement, just to be clear what your point of view is, are you saying, as two bodies, in a way, that there is an admission in the Government's response that there is a problem, but also a statement that the funding is not currently there to get to grips with those problems, and therefore what we're facing, in the wake of the Government's response, is a situation where we're storing up

ddyfodol lle bydd yna, o bosib, fwy o adnoddau i fynd i'r afael â nhw?

problems for a future where there will perhaps be more resources available to get to grips with them?

[91] **Mr Davies:** Rwy'n credu bod hynny, i raddau, yn gwestiwn i'r sawl sydd wrth y llyw mewn rhyw chwe mis lawr yr hewl. Mae'r cyllidebau wedi cael eu gosod ar hyn o bryd ac mae'r cynlluniau mewn lle ar gyfer y flwyddyn academaidd sydd newydd ailddechrau. A yw hynny, felly, yn gwestiwn i chi fel aelodau'r pwyllgor yma, ac Aelodau o'r tŷ yma, i ystyried ble ddylai'r cydbwysedd gael ei roi, er mwyn sicrhau ein bod ni'n deall anghenion unigolion, ond hefyd, wrth gwrs, yn ehangach, anghenion economi cynhenid Cymru, wrth iddi fynd trwy amryw o newidiadau yn sgil y ffaith ein bod ni gyd yn byw yn hirach a bod yr economi yn galw am bobl sydd yn mynd i weithio yn hirach, a phethau felly?

Mr Davies: I think that, to an extent, is a question for whoever is at the helm in about six months down the line. The budgets have been set at the moment and the plans are in place for the academic year that's just begun. Is that, therefore, a question for you as members of this committee, and as Members of this place, to consider where that balance should be established, in order to ensure that we understand the needs of individuals, but also, of course, in a wider context, the needs of the indigenous Welsh economy, as it goes through a number of changes as a result of the fact that we are all living longer and that the economy is calling for people who are going to work longer, and so forth?

[92] Felly, delio â'r realiti yw beth rydym ni yn ei wneud ar hyn o bryd fel sectorau—sectorau sy'n gweithio yn aml, fel rydych yn gwybod, ar y cyd. Mae goblygiadau hynny efallai yn gwestiwn i chi fel Aelodau'r Cynulliad ar hyn o bryd, a darpar Aelodau, gobeithio, llawer ohonoch chi, ar gyfer y dyfodol hefyd.

So, dealing with the reality is what we're doing at the moment as sectors—sectors that, as you know, often work together. The implications of that perhaps is a question for you as Assembly Members at the moment, and for many of you, hopefully, in the future as well as prospective Members.

[93] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** And the same question to you, Jeff. Is the Government's response basically just parking this for another day, whilst saying 'Yes, there is a problem, but we can't really deal with it'?

[94] **Mr Protheroe:** I think, certainly, on a very practical level, what we have, particularly within work-based learning, is a set of programmes, some that

are very well established and some that are being developed, which are flexible and responsive and can be delivered to a whole range of age groups. It just so happens that, obviously, the priority at the moment is on the 16 to 24, but that doesn't mean to say that if funding was made available in the future, from whichever source, those programmes couldn't flex to deliver to a whole range of people within age groups. It's recognised within a lot of the evidence that's been provided that people are staying in work for longer and I think, ultimately, if people are in work, and are looking to access training or retraining, then there is the scope through work-based learning, and other forms of education as well, to meet that need.

[95] **William Graham:** Thank you. Dafydd.

[96] **Yr Arglwydd Elis-Thomas:** Diolch yn fawr, Gadeirydd. Rydw i'n derbyn yr atebion a roddwyd i'r cwestiynau blaenorol ynglŷn â'r rheswm dros wrthod strategaeth benodol ar gyfer personau hŷn, ac fel person ychydig bach yn hŷn fy hun rydw i'n derbyn y dadansoddiad yna, ond, fe garwn i ofyn i chi, os ydych chi'n pwysleisio bod angen strategaeth pob oed, onid oes angen sicrhau sefyllfa lle mae yna sylw penodol i sector o'r boblogaeth na ddeliwyd â hi, yn nhermau rhagfarnu, yn y gorffennol?

Lord Elis-Thomas: Thank you very much, Chair. I accept the responses given to the previous questions about the reasons for rejecting a specific strategy for older people, and as a person who is a little bit older myself I accept that position, but, I would like to ask you, if you emphasise that there needs to be an all-age strategy, don't you also need to ensure a situation where there is specific attention given to a sector of the population that has not been dealt with, in terms of discrimination, in the past?

[97] **Mr Davies:** Yn sicr, nid ydw i'n credu bod neb yn amau hynny, ond bod hynny yn digwydd y tu mewn ac o dan adain strategaeth llawer mwy hyblyg. Rwy'n siŵr y byddwch chi i gyd yn cytuno bod unigolion sydd yn troi'n 50 ddim i gyd yr un fath. Mae yna unigolion efo anghenion penodol y tu mewn i'r adran oedran hynny. Mae'n bwysig bod ein strategaeth ni'n delio â'u dyheadau nhw a hefyd eu hanghenion nhw. Hefyd, wrth i chi

Mr Davies: Certainly, I don't think anyone doubts that, but that that happens within and in line with a more flexible strategy. I'm sure you'd agree that individuals who've turned 50 aren't all the same. They have different needs, they have specific needs, within that cohort. It's important that the strategy deals with their aspirations and also their needs. Also, when you look at other projects that have targeted specific

syllu ar brosiectau eraill sydd wedi targedu gweithluoedd pendant, mae'n amlwg os ydych chi'n gadael, er enghraifft, Alwminiwm Môn, fod anghenion gwahanol i chi, o gymharu, efallai, â rhywun sy'n gadael swydd draw yn ardal Porthmadog. Felly, mae hyd yn oed anghenion lleol yn mynd i fod yn wahanol yn dibynnu ar bwy yn union rŷch chi'n trio targedu. Felly, mae'n bwysig bod y strwythur yn ddigon hyblyg i nodi hynny ac yn medru ymateb i hynny. Ond, fel rŷch chi wedi ei ddweud, rydym yn credu bod hynny'n rhywbeth ar gyfer y cam nesaf, ond mae'n bwysig bod y strategaeth yn ddigon hyblyg i weld anghenion pawb.

workforces, it's clear that, for example, if you're leaving Anglesey Aluminium, you'll have different needs compared with, for example, somebody who's leaving a post in the Porthmadog area. So, even local needs are going to be different, depending on who exactly you're trying to target. So, it's important that the structure is flexible enough to identify that and to respond to that. But, as you've said, it's something that we believe is for the next step, but it's important that the strategy is flexible enough to meet the needs of everybody.

[98] **Yr Arglwydd Elis-Thomas:** Pan rŷm ni'n edrych ymlaen at Sgiliau Cyflogaeth Cymru o flwyddyn nesaf ymlaen, Ebrill 2016, a ydych chi o'r farn y bydd y rhaglen cyflogadwyedd newydd i oedolion, a fydd yn cynnwys pwyslais arbennig ar lythrennedd digidol, yn cyrraedd y nod rŷch chi'n ceisio amdano?

Lord Elis-Thomas: When we look forward to Skills for Employment Wales from next year onwards, from April 2016, are you of the opinion that this new employability programme for adults will include an emphasis on digital literacy and will that achieve its aims?

[99] **Mr Protheroe:** If I can take this one—. From an NTFW perspective, it's ultimately our members, which include FE institutions, who are delivering on the current Work Ready programme and are working with Government to develop and deliver the Skills for Employment Wales programme. In very early discussions with Welsh Government, it is quite clear that all essential skills, which includes digital literacy, are part of that offer. And, there is a commitment from Welsh Government to work very closely with the current cohort of providers who are delivering Work Ready to develop a programme that is fit for purpose and will be ready to be delivered from 1 April 2016. Maybe for the benefit of committee members, in very early discussions that I've had, it is very much going to be a programme that has employer

placements or employer engagement at the very heart of it, with a view to getting people who are in an unemployed position into the workplace, working to develop the skills that they need, specific to them being able to move on into sustained employment. So, the early indications that we're getting as a network are very positive, but, just to come back to the question: yes, digital literacy and essential skills will form part of that.

[100] **Yr Arglwydd Elis-Thomas:** Felly y byddwn ni'n holi'r Gweinidog yn nes ymlaen. A fyddech chi, felly, fel tri thyst yma, yn cytuno â phenderfyniad y Gweinidog i wrthod argymhellion 2, 5, 8 a 9—yn arbennig argymhelliad 5, sef yr argymhelliad a wnaed i geisio llunio rhywbeth tebyg i Twf Swyddi Cymru ar gyfer pobl dros 50? A fyddech chi'n cytuno bod hwnnw'n benderfyniad priodol gan y Gweinidog?

Lord Elis-Thomas: We will be questioning the Minister later on. Would you, as three witnesses here before us, agree with the Minister's decision to reject recommendations 2, 5, 8 and 9—especially recommendation 5, which is the recommendation that the Government should consider designing a scheme similar to Jobs Growth Wales for people over 50? Would you agree that that is an appropriate decision by the Minister?

[101] **Mr Davies:** Wrth edrych, rŷm ni'n derbyn y penderfyniad hynny, ar hyn o bryd, y tu mewn i'r setliad ariannol a'r tu mewn i'r cynlluniau sydd wrth drefn.

Mr Davies: We accept that decision at the moment within the financial settlement and within the schemes that are under way.

[102] In the conversations we've had around the ColegauCymru management table in the last three or four days, I think, understanding targeted, specific support, such as Jobs Growth Wales—which was aimed, essentially, at work experience and raising young people's awareness of the reality of work—clearly, that kind of tack shouldn't be needed with a cohort of 50 plus who has experience of work. We are dealing, possibly, with skills deficits, such as IT and other forms of essential skills, and that, of course, then opens up the potential of using other responses, such as blended learning, which might be more appropriate for that cohort than, possibly, for 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20-year-olds, who are, perhaps, less inclined to have self-directed learning as an option to improve their skills. I think the idea of a specific programme is good, but Jobs Growth Wales targets a particular kind of need, and we're dealing with a different need, potentially, here, for this cohort of potential learners.

[103] **Mr Protheroe:** And to echo that as well, Jobs Growth Wales is a programme that is designed for those individuals who are deemed to be work ready but are just lacking work experience. I think that, again, picking up on some of the responses, there's probably a need for the emphasis of a programme that looks to tackle specifically people of 50 and over. But, as Iestyn has said, people would be coming into the programme with a degree of work experience already and, probably, maybe having followed a period of redundancy, looking for the upskilling and confidence building to get back into the world of work. Certainly, in terms of the early discussions I've had around Skills for Employment Wales, there is that element of work placement; there is that element of delivering the programme within the employers. So, I guess it was a bit of a try-before-you-buy type of thing for both parties, really.

[104] **Mr Davies:** I think it's important, Chair, to remember that what's good about Jobs Growth Wales, if you take away the age-specific challenge, is it's a mediated programme with the involvement of the voluntary sector and the private sector; it builds bridges and supports individuals. I think we would all agree that is an approach that could and should be taken, although it's clearly going to be difficult and challenging for the Government to deliver within the current priorities that are set out, within what is always going to be a difficult financial settlement moving forward. So, I think there are two separate questions here: the appropriateness of an approach that's about mediation and support, and the timing of that, realistically, within what remains of this Assembly.

[105] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** Greg gave us an answer a few moments ago that, I'm afraid, prompts me to declare another interest as chair of the university council of Bangor, because you did make the point that has been of great concern to many of us about the reduction in adult part-time further education living alongside massive fee support for HE students. How would you address that?

[106] **Dr Walker:** The big issue, I think, for the older cohort is that there will now be a much smaller number of part-time programmes that they will be able to engage with. A lot of the work-based learning programmes are orientated at people who can devote full time to retraining and reskilling. The lack of part-time programmes—there's a reduction of 50 per cent of the funding for the FE programmes this academic year—is going to mean that those with caring responsibilities, whether they're childcare responsibilities

or elder-care responsibilities, are going to be less able to reskill and retrain, and that's going to be a real gap that's going to have to be addressed in the next Assembly term. As the post-16 budget is rejigged and reformulated as a result of the Diamond review, we would hope that we would see some renewal of funding for generic retraining and reskilling programmes for the over-25s, which would, obviously, include the over-50s. So, that's an absolute priority and we hope that the Government will take that into account going forward.

[107] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** You may be closer to the Diamond review than we are, sitting here, but is your confidence well placed? Do you believe that a recommendation in this further report, if we may, or in our communication with the Minister as a result of this particular evidence session—that a recommendation from this committee along those lines would be helpful?

[108] **Dr Walker:** Yes.

[109] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** Thank you.

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

[111] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Thank you. Just to go back a few minutes to the comments on Jobs Growth Wales, clearly I agree with what you said about its structure and development—very much about providing opportunities for work-ready young people. But there was another arm to it that is also about helping those small businesses, particularly, to expand as a result of the subsidy that was paid through public funds. So, whilst I think there would clearly be practical problems in expanding Jobs Growth Wales as it is now for older workers, do you think there are aspects of the scheme that could be utilised to, perhaps, enhance Work Ready or some other type of development?

[112] **Mr Davies:** Thanks for that question; it's one I feel a bit more confident in asking and answering when it comes to the role of employers. I think the subsidy clearly helps potential employers get over the hump of maybe employing the first person or the second person. That is one of the barriers to employment, not just the particular skills, or lack of skills or experience, of the individual, but the ability of a firm to change its working practices to expand to the first employee or in terms of multiple employees. That adds extra complexity, and adds extra cost, but it understands that the challenge is not just the individual learner, defined by their age, but that

individual in the context of the workplace and the labour market that they live in. I think the danger of saying, 'We will have Jobs Growth Wales for over-50s', as a good pronouncement, is that it is incredibly generic and doesn't get to grips with the challenges that both the business—the employer—and the employee face. There's no doubt, in all the research that's there, that if you can, not necessarily make it just cheaper to take somebody on, but remove the initial hit in terms of national insurance and in terms of costs and opportunity costs, and possibly put them towards the end, maybe a year or two later, it actually will smooth the transition into re-employment for any age group.

10:30

[113] **Mr Protheroe:** Jobs Growth Wales is a programme that is linked to growth, and part of the process of agreeing with an employer to take on individuals is to look at growth plans as well. But I suppose if an employer is looking to grow, then they will take on individuals regardless of age.

[114] **Mr Davies:** I think it's important to say, Chair, as well, with all the considerations the Welsh Government have to make, of course—the mediation, the capacity to identify, to link both supply and demand when it comes to Jobs Growth Wales and the changes made quite recently—that's an extra complexity and a question of capacity that exists and now comes through the Business Wales gateway. So, the Welsh Government would have to consider that, not just in the Department for Education and Skills but also the implications that it has for EST-funded projects. So, adding an extra programme such as this is a genuinely complex thing to do as well as an expensive thing to do. I think that, on that basis, at this point in time we would accept that those are the reasons why. There's no other reason why the Jobs Growth Wales version for over-50s has been turned down. There's nothing sinister to it.

[115] **William Graham:** Right. Thank you. Eluned.

[116] **Eluned Parrott:** Thank you. I wonder if I can just return to an answer you gave a little earlier about the kind of support would be preferable to a Jobs Growth Wales programme. You talked about blended learning approaches and making sure that there is access to those, but to what extent do the over-50s have access to those kinds of approaches now?

[117] **Mr Protheroe:** Well, as part of the current programme, or the main

programme that is delivered within work-based learning, which is aimed at that older age group who are work ready, currently a lot of the provision, although it has an employment-outcome focus, can be delivered within a sort of centre-based environment. So, a lot of it is intensive sort of support. But as we move to Skills for Employment Wales, where the idea is that we get people out into the work placement—and, ultimately, that person needs to be in employment and that employer needs to see that person in work—then we're going to have to work towards seeing how we can deliver things more innovatively if we are to address the essential skills needs and deficits that these individuals may have. Now, what we wouldn't want to do, in a short programme such as what Skills for Employment Wales will be, is to put them into an employer and then to bring them out of the employer to start working on the essential skills. So, there needs to be some work that the network and the providers need to do to try and deliver some innovative solutions to learning.

[118] **Mr Davies:** You'll be aware, I think—and Greg can probably substantiate this better than I can—that we have concerns about the provision within the FE network, centre-based and college-based, which is clearly a route that, if you're not in employment, would be easier to access. I think that we have some concerns about that and we simply get asked, through this committee and through all Members, for the current Government and the Assembly itself to recommit itself to genuine lifelong learning and supporting that through adequate provision, both in work and for those who, sadly, don't find themselves in employment at the time.

[119] **Eluned Parrott:** I think that was the point of the question: there seems to be a contradiction between what you're telling us, that these kinds of routes are available to people and yet there are huge cuts to the FE opportunities for people over the age of 24. If we look at the Welsh Government's framework for co-investment in skills, the Deputy Minister has accepted a recommendation in principle that we should be monitoring the impact of the focus on the 16 to 24-year-olds. Two questions related to that: are you able to already give an idea of what the impact of that direction is; and, secondly, are you content with the statement that says, 'Yes, we will monitor this in a generalised form in the context of everything else', or would you prefer to see a specific monitoring programme to look at the impact of these funding changes and the impact that's had on different age groups?

[120] **Dr Walker:** That would be certainly possible. Obviously, the

Government says that it's going to use its equality and equity measure within the skills priorities programmes to think very carefully about the impacts on different age groups. Certainly, the management information systems are there to be able to disaggregate the effect on different age ranges, and that wouldn't be a problem to do at all. Whether we can do it more as live tracking—. As you're probably aware, the formal issuing of statistics does take 18 months or so from the end of the academic year, so I'm sure that it will be possible to look at the databases that are collected, certainly from the FE sector, to see if there any early issues coming up about differential impacts on different age groups. So, maybe that's something we can work with the Welsh Government on.

[121] **Mr Protheroe:** Again, we would echo the fact that there is continual monitoring of any impact over the move towards funding provision for younger people. In terms of anecdotal evidence from the provider network, there is a move towards engaging more young people within work-based learning, particularly through apprenticeships. There appears to be little resistance from employers with regards to that. There are certain sectors that are adversely affected, be those care or not. But interestingly one of the things that we are picking up from the network is, with some employers—and I guess it fits to this agenda as well about equality and diversity—they are not placing people on an apprenticeship in that age bracket because they're then unable to put other people in the wider workforce on to it. So, they are standing back and saying, 'Well, actually, we're not going to make this decision between young people and old people, so we'll just not engage at all', which is interesting. But it's very early stages and very anecdotal. So, both people are being affected.

[122] **Eluned Parrott:** I think this committee recognises that the care sector is one of those sectors most likely to be affected, because there are relatively few people going for the higher level apprenticeships that are still available to those over the age of 24. I'd welcome, obviously, more evidence, as it emerges, on that.

[123] Another element, obviously, of the co-investment framework is that it is a co-investment framework and that it obviously requires investment to be coming in from other sources. At this early stage, are we happy with the direction that that is taking, and that it is providing the opportunities that we hoped it might?

[124] **Mr Davies:** It's going to be tough, again just reflecting on previous

experience of engaging with employers. It remains a tough economic environment, not just for the FE sector, but obviously for the small businesses that were looking to both take on and then upskill individuals and actually contribute to that as part of their bottom line. I think it's probably safe to say that the jury is still very much out, not just on the practice of co-investment, but on whether the principle, as established over time—it's not the first time we've been here—will actually deliver anything different to the programmes that were established decades ago. How we persuade more and more businesses to put their hands in their pockets and at what level will remain an enduring challenge, I think, for the remainder of this Assembly term and the term that is to come. It's a reality that has to be confronted, but whether it's delivering any real benefit at the moment, I think, is a question of asking for the right statistics and the right returns from Welsh Government.

[125] **Dr Walker:** We're six months in, obviously, so, it's a little bit early to definitively say what the impact is going to be, but, certainly, the anecdotal evidence coming through is that there is some sort of cultural resistance and potentially some financial resistance to co-investment. Everybody's signed up to the principle of co-investment and that employers have a responsibility to upskill and train their staff, of course, but the long track record of having low-cost or no-cost programmes available—people have got used to that, culturally and in their mindset, and being able to wean people off that is going to take a number of years. There will be quite a cultural shift that will have to take place for people to really change their views.

[126] **Mr Davies:** And, of course, co-investment exists at level 3, so if we're looking at essential skills, low level skills at level 1 and level 2, then it doesn't come into play, but we are looking, as we've mentioned, at higher level skills and training and accreditation in healthcare, and then it becomes an issue. Obviously, where that is being provided by the NHS or local government funded services, that's a further demand back on to the public purse, but there is an element, of course, that is provided by private care, but that is contracted from the NHS. So, we're back into this question of where do we want the share of the Government budget cake and funding to go? Will we be better off, in the long run, investing more in skills across the age ranges in an attempt to address social, economic, health and wellbeing issues? Do we simply focus on the problem, or do we try to rearrange and reconfigure our funding of Government programmes, including skills, to be a bit more pre-emptive and a bit more preventative?

[127] **Mr Protheroe:** I think it's important that the issue of co-investment has been raised, because, ultimately, it is about, certainly in terms of the Welsh Government's slice of that co-investment, where they prioritise funding. But it's interesting, certainly, that some of the feedback that was given to the committee initially was about the opportunities that are available through apprenticeships for people over the age of 25. Committee members may well be aware that we have the advent of the UK apprenticeship levy on the horizon. In Wales, we still don't know the impacts of that and how that's going to operate, and the practicalities of it. But, maybe, with the advent of the UK apprenticeship levy, then maybe there's opportunity for people who are 25 and over to access apprenticeships further down the line, because if the employers are paying into the pot, then I'm sure they're not going to listen to Government to tell them to direct it to 16 to 24. So, they, then, will make the investment where they feel that that fits. So, it's something, I guess, for the committee to consider and maybe explore: how will Welsh Government manage the impact of the UK apprenticeship levy? In essence, you know, if we are to believe what is out there at the moment, if there is a 0.5 per cent, dare I say tax, on payroll, ultimately, employers will decide where they want to spend that. That will not be age-specific, in their eyes. So, there are opportunities there. So, there's something, I guess, for the committee to explore further.

[128] **Dr Walker:** It's difficult to overestimate the potential importance of the levy, Chair, because this could really be a massive boost, potentially, for investment in skills for those over-19. The rulings are very unclear as to how this is going to be run in England, let alone in the rest of the UK. Certainly, we would welcome the committee or whatever is the appropriate committee within the Assembly taking an early look, once there are some announced policies, at how the levy could most effectively work for Wales.

[129] **William Graham:** We're running out of time. Keith, you've got a quick question.

[130] **Keith Davies:** Yes, just a short question, really. I was talking to a college principal last Friday, and we were talking about apprenticeships, but with a very large company. I just wondered: does the co-investment proposal mean that large companies will get involved with colleges, and small companies, SMEs, won't?

[131] **Dr Walker:** Well, we hope not. Obviously, that's the \$64,000 question, isn't it? That would be the fear, that there would be—those companies that

are more able to afford the costs of that provision would continue with it and others wouldn't. But I'll defer to a little bit more knowledge on SMEs to my right.

[132] **Mr Davies:** That's where the Jobs Growth Wales approach, which Jeff alluded to, obviously, benefits both the employer and the employee. So, we wouldn't discount a specific programme in the context of over-50s, only more widely, that helps to bridge that gap. We recognise, in the current framework and in the current way that Jobs Growth Wales is configured, it would perhaps not be most appropriate, at this point in time. Again, this mediative, bridge-building approach between large companies and a lot of small companies, clearly, from the experience of Jobs Growth Wales, which has its weaknesses, but I think many of us would agree has had some tremendous successes—. You know, the Government should be commended on it, I think it's fair to say that. That does need to be looked at as a foundation for future provision in any sector, for any age.

[133] **Keith Davies:** Diolch. Thank you.

[134] **William Graham:** To get through the balance of our questions now, we're going to have short questions and short answers, if we may. Just explain if you would, recommendation six, accepted in principle—how do you think this could be better or best employed, the communication plan, particularly with engagement with employers?

[135] **Dr Walker:** I don't think it's the highest profile campaign out there, Chair, to be honest, and I think more could be done to reflect the communications more effectively. We'd be happy to use our HR network and the various networks that ColegauCymru have to be able to make sure that that's really well known and that the laudable values and laudable ideas in the campaign are more widely disseminated, but I think a bit more oomph needs to be put into some of this.

[136] **Mr Protheroe:** I think, absolutely, the network would agree with the recommendation and the promotion of the campaign. Certainly, from a work-based learning perspective, if people are in work, then there are programmes to be able to deliver to meet their needs. So, if they're in work, we can train them.

[137] **William Graham:** Thank you very much. Mick.

[138] **Mick Antoniw:** One of the issues that continually arise is the division between the Department for Work and Pensions, UK Government, and ourselves. You'll see from recommendation 10 that we've been continuing to call for devolution of more skills programmes and so on. Of course, we have the Wales Bill coming and, of course, this whole area is going to be something of a focus. What do you think are the implications of the current arrangements? What is your view, actually, on the call for further devolution of these programmes and what would be the benefits to that?

[139] **Dr Walker:** I think, as we said in March in oral evidence in the initial inquiry, we've very much a positive view on the potential of the devolution of aspects of the Work Programme and other skills programmes that DWP have. I think the potential benefit would be that we'd be able to put together a more collaborative, creative set of skills programmes, really melding it and mixing it with the existing programmes—a whole plethora of which the Government has supplied in terms of the work-based learning programmes—and that which FE is conducting for the over-19s. Really being able to co-ordinate and put a coherent offer, which puts together those two offers in one set of options for people, would be truly beneficial. It means that, also, we can, potentially, not just go for the lowest common denominator in terms of cost, but really look for best value in terms of the delivery of the outputs we want to see in terms of re-engagement, unemployment and growth, I think. So, there's a real potential for taking this forward.

10:45

[140] **Mr Protheroe:** Again, from a NTFW perspective, we would certainly continue to call for the devolution of DWP provision to Wales, and I think the main benefits that that would bring are coherence and co-ordination.

[141] **Mick Antoniw:** And whilst we are where we are, the issue of duplication, of course, has been a long-standing issue; I know it has come up many times, and there have been attempts to resolve it. In your view, is there still over-duplication? Is the duplication issue being resolved? If so, how?

[142] **Mr Davies:** My understanding from—. Given that, with some of these programmes, where there the problem is caused is via the ESF area, with the conflict between two programmes—. My understanding is that that has been resolved. As a member of the programming monitoring committee for

European structural funds, we've had those assurances, from WEFO in particular. I think my concern is not the duplication. My concern is that, actually, some people might just miss out, and they will still fall foul of this double jeopardy kind of rule. My only caveat would be, Mick, and I think this is a fair one, that, where most programmes are devolved, they need to be run in such a way as to maximise the skills and the ability and the capacity that exists, not done at the lowest-cost denominator. But, at the same time, they need to be fully funded from Westminster and Whitehall to make sure that we are not compromising the provision that we would seek to offer here in Wales. My experience elsewhere in a previous role is of some elements of welfare being devolved in Northern Ireland and the desire then to over-fund, if you like, in order to compensate, means that that causes pressure elsewhere in a departmental budget. So, 'proceed with caution' would be my personal view, but both organisations in principle I think would accept this idea.

[143] **Mick Antoniw:** So, you support the devolution provided the funding follows—full funding. [*Laughter.*]

[144] **William Graham:** Yes, we've been there before, I think.

[145] **Mick Antoniw:** Just emphasising the point, Chair.

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

[147] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you, Chair. I think most of the question's been answered anyway, but this is my point to the panel. The National Training Federation for Wales is concerned that the Welsh Government has declined the committee's recommendation in respect of the skills strategy and economy activity outcomes, especially for people over the age of 50. What do you all think about that?

[148] **Mr Protheroe:** Well, we've not given any written responses, so I'm not sure whether that's us, if I'm honest.

[149] **Dr Walker:** Certainly, from ColegauCymru's perspective, as we said at the beginning of the session, we question whether a separate skills strategy for the over-50s is necessary and appropriate. We need to have an all-age skills strategy that addresses the needs of over-50s within it, but we're not convinced that a wholly separate strategy is the right option at this moment.

[150] **William Graham:** Thank you very much. Joyce.

[151] **Joyce Watson:** Ultimately, what we're trying to get to is whether there's a marginalisation of older people and the considerations you might meet going on in Wales, and whether you have a view on that.

[152] **Mr Davies:** I think it's probably fair to say that that marginalisation is at greatest risk of happening when we neglect lifelong learning in its entirety rather than simply focusing specifically on one age group. Given the luxury of a fully funded FE, adult learning, work-based learning, then we could perhaps look in more depth at the specifics of that 50-plus age cohort, if indeed such a cohort exists. But, at this point in time, I think it would further compound and create problems.

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

[154] **William Graham:** Thank you very much for sharing with us your reaction to the Government response to our committee.

[155] **Mr Davies:** Thank you.

[156] **Dr Walker:** Thank you.

[157] **Mr Protheroe:** Thank you, Chair.

10:50

**Cyfleoedd Cyflogaeth i Bobl dros 50 Oed—Ystyriaeth o Ymateb
Llywodraeth Cymru i Adroddiad y Pwyllgor
Employment Opportunities for People Over 50—Consideration of
Welsh Government Response**

[158] **William Graham:** Thank you very much for joining us this morning and sharing with us your response to the responses from the Government to our previous committee report. Our first question is from Jeff Cuthbert.

[159] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Thank you very much. Good morning. A broad question to start with. In your response, you say:

[160] 'Whilst there is much to welcome in the response there are areas where the Welsh Government must go further to improve employment

opportunities for people over 50.'

[161] Could you just outline briefly those areas that you do welcome, in terms of the Government's response, and then, of course, those areas where you think they can go further?

[162] **Ms Rochira:** Right. Thank you very much. I'll try and give a succinct response to a broad question. So, obviously, we very strongly welcome the Welsh Government accepting seven of the 11 recommendations within the report. We particularly welcome the £50,000 they've offered to put aside to support the Age Positive campaign, and I think in no small part their acceptance of the report reflects the increasing understanding of the importance of this issue.

[163] I guess if I was to say 'but'—and there's often a 'but' within that—I guess the three areas for me where I think we in Wales need to do more are as follows: first of all, we need to take a strategic approach to this issue. We need to stand back and look at it in its totality, and that's very different from a range of actions taking place. Why do I say that? Well, I think the figures—and we gave some of those in our evidence, but I'll share a couple with you—absolutely warrant that. This is one of the starkest ones for me: people made redundant over the age of 50 are more likely to die than find another job. There are four times as many people not in education, employment or training over the age of 50, and 65 per cent of people believe age discrimination still exists in the workplace. Every time we talk about good practice, we talk about B&Q; that's not to take away from the work that B&Q is doing, but I'd like to see some other responses, particularly when you think that only a third of employers have a human resources strategy for managing their older workforce. And, really importantly, it's not about it just being good for individuals; we know we have a massive skills gap ahead of us—not just within Wales, but within the United Kingdom as well. There are huge reasons why we need to take a strategic approach that joins up a whole range of action. So, that's my first thing, I guess, that I would want to see grow more. It's the sum of the parts, if you like, the synergy that comes from work.

[164] The second thing, which is linked to that, that I would like to see a much stronger focus on is a real focus on outcomes—real, measurable outcomes—and, linked to that, a nuanced understanding of the issues that older people face. I know, Joyce, that you'd raised the issue about impact assessment, and it's in no small part linked to that—that big question: how

effective are we in what we're doing? How nuanced and effective is our understanding of the interventions and the support that we're providing? And that fundamental question that should always be pushed to Government, and commissioners and others: what difference is what we're doing making? So, a strategic approach, much greater focus on impact assessment and wider impact, and I'd like to see a much stronger—much, much stronger—reflection in the work that takes place and has taken place of a nuanced understanding of older people. We are large enough as a group to merit some more detailed narrative about us in what can feel like generic strategies, statements, policies and intent. So, those three areas.

[165] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Fine, thank you. When you say that recommendations have been accepted, of course that's in principle, which means they don't object, as such, to it, but there are, maybe, practical issues to be resolved in taking things forward. What we've heard as well, today, I think is an acknowledgement that, of course, the difference between people aged over 50 and younger people under the age of 24 is, perhaps, the vastness of their experience in different types of work, and that seems to me to be one of the areas of concern on a practical basis—how you actually identify in terms of public resources where you're going to invest things to get the best impact, particularly in essential skills, for example, and ICT. So, what is your current state of negotiations with the Welsh Government in terms of taking this matter forward in that area?

[166] **Ms Rochira:** Thank you. Just to comment on your point about skills, there's a phrase—I didn't make it up; I read it somewhere, but it was good enough to steal—which talked about the vibrant potential of an ageing workforce. And it links very much to the work I've done recently around 'Say No to Ageism'. That has to be our starting point. Our economy needs to better use and acknowledge the vibrant potential that we're missing at the moment, and it's an important starting point. I met with the Deputy Minister, Julie James, after your very insightful report was published. I have offered to work with her on a number of the areas, so the Age Positive campaign, for example, bringing our knowledge and experience to that, and also particularly to work with her on things such as the Skills for Employment Wales programme. I am disappointed, as you know from my evidence, that we don't have a skills strategy for older people; it was promised in the older people's strategy, phase 3, but, if we can use the Skills for Employment Wales programme and get that right in its nuanced understanding, then we have something that we can build on. So, I think we have some really positive areas of work that we potentially can build on there.

[167] I also spoke in some detail about recommendations—I think, from my notes—1, 3 and 7 about the whole area of research. There is, in no small part, a huge amount of research out there, but, actually, what we don't have is a lot of Welsh-specific research, and what we don't have is that research brought together in a clear, crisp, simple narrative that we can help to use to inform what we should do and what impact it would have in a time of financial austerity. And I've just written to the Minister saying that we will have an outline research proposal up to her by mid-November. So, I'd like to see it as partnership working, but, of course, these responsibilities are ones for Welsh Government to discharge. I can support in those; I have my own statutory duties, but so does Welsh Government.

[168] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Finally from me, if I may, clearly, it's a no-brainer that employers play a critical role here in terms of providing the opportunities and, of course, retraining their workforce. Are you working directly at all with employers and/or their organisations—the FSB and CBI, for example?

[169] **Ms Rochira:** Perhaps I might ask Terry to say a few words here in terms of the work of the Opportunities for Learning and Employment group, which is part of the Ageing Well in Wales programme, which Terry chairs. Terry.

[170] **Mr Mills:** Yes, if I may. As part of the Opportunities for Learning and Employment group—Business in the Community are members; the Wales Trades Union Congress are members; the Federation for Small Business are members and the Department for Work and Pensions. We've got all of the key people in Wales involved in that group. So, we are working with employers; that's going to be a major issue, particularly with the work on the Age Positive campaign, to ensure that it's work that employers can relate to and that it will have an impact. But, we are involved with that.

[171] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Thank you.

[172] **William Graham:** Thank you. You will know that recommendations 1, 3 and 7, which were accepted in principle, are to do with improving the evidence base, and your own comment was that up-to-date and accurate analysis is urgently required in order to make evidence-based policy decisions. Could I ask you just to enlarge on that a bit?

[173] **Ms Rochira:** Okay. Thank you. I've already just made reference to the fact that we'll be sending a proposal up to the Minister. In a sense, what we

have at the moment is a huge amount of knowledge; it's at a UK level, and what we've not, historically, I think, been very good at doing is drawing it together. There's been a recent report published in England, 'The Missing Million', and, actually, in no small part, that's what it did. What we need to do is bring that together into a Welsh context, but, really importantly, what we need to do is make sure—and this is what I think we're good at in Wales—that we put real people's voices at the heart of that; real people who can talk about the barriers they face; real people who can talk about why the intent is good, but, as you mentioned, when it trickles down to the practical issues, why it can get so difficult. Terry, do you want to say a little bit about the work that PRIME Cymru is doing on that?

[174] **Mr Mills:** Yes, I could do that. At present, they're working with 500 older jobless people, doing some in-depth research, with focus groups working with individuals. They hope to have a report out—some next time month it's launched. That, as far as I am aware, is the only piece of substantial research that's actually done in Wales, but the initial reports, because they're also a member of the Ageing Well in Wales group—. The initial indications are that there's not much difference between the barriers identified in Wales and those in the rest of the UK. So, it looks like it may be reinforcing the messages that are in the UK research, which is very substantial over the last 12 months.

11:00

[175] **William Graham:** Quite so. That's good. Thank you.

[176] **Ms Rochira:** And, just to say, I'm very happy, when we write further to the Deputy Minister in mid-November, to share that with you—

[177] **William Graham:** That would be very helpful.

[178] **Ms Rochira:** —as Chair, and with the committee.

[179] **William Graham:** Thank you very much. Joyce.

[180] **Joyce Watson:** Good morning, both. I'm just wondering, Terry, when they have that evidence, that 500, which is great, whether it would be worth looking at some definitive links, like caring—you know, caring for older people, I'm sure, will be the same as it is for younger people—and other forms of discreet discrimination, I shall call it, that are clearly evidenced

through that research, but also clearly evidenced through research that others have done in this field, whatever their field might be—whether it would be worth considering that, so that we remove the barriers, but for everybody, as well as, obviously, and importantly for you, the 50-plus.

[181] **Mr Mills:** Yes, I think that's the strategy we're looking at: to identify the barriers and then look at ways to remove those barriers or to help people directly to overcome them. Part of the work will be with employers, but also with the individuals to address their own issues that they need to address—whether it's through essential skills, whether it's through the discrimination. But, caring responsibilities are coming out in all of the research as one of the major barriers, as is health, and flexible working seems to be one of the solutions.

[182] **Ms Rochira:** And, if I may, just to pick up on that, I touched a moment ago on a generic approach—. There's a phrase we use a lot: 'One size doesn't fit all'. In fact, I would argue, one size very rarely fits anybody. We need to build into the programmes that are going on this really nuanced understanding—. You're right, people who are carers, for example, people who have mobility problems, for example—and, actually, I would argue one of my key five areas where we need to significantly strengthen our overall approach is about that nuanced understanding, and it is the difference between intent and the reality on the ground. It's often a cumulative reality on the ground, as well, which is why so many people become pushed out of the workplace when, actually, they want and need to stay there. I think the whole issue about impact assessment, about understanding the difference between genders and people's specific backgrounds, is crucially important to getting this right. If I look at the skills performance measures, for example, which I know the Deputy Minister referred to as something Welsh Government was doing—I like performance indicators, so do older people; they just never pick the ones that we pick. There is a degree of specificity lacking for me, in that, and from that comes understanding, and from understanding come better policy and better practice and better lives.

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

[184] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** If I could look at recommendations 4 and 6—. Recommendation 4:

[185] 'The Welsh Government should work with the Older People's Commissioner, the Department for Work and Pensions, major Welsh

employers’

[186] and so on,

[187] ‘to do more to try to challenge age discrimination’.

[188] You’ve given an overview of the kind of co-operation that you might see happening; have you sensed an additional engagement, an additional realisation, of the challenges we face from Government, as a result of the evidence that was pointed out in this committee’s report?

[189] **Ms Rochira:** Okay. I shall choose my words carefully here. Your report has been a very welcome report. It has helped support the position that I’ve been pushing for a long time; it’s why it’s one of the five areas in Ageing Well in Wales. I’ve long held the view we haven’t focused enough on this. It’s been very welcome. It has led to those discussions—and they were productive discussions—with the Deputy Minister—. Early days; I would hope that the Government would use this as an opportunity to deliver on a real commitment to older people, and that commitment was made in the older people’s strategy, phase 3—as a Government document, Government intent, Government promise made—and, when you look at the older people’s strategy, phase 3, it’s very specific. So, I think it’s a beginning; but, actually, it’s all in the delivery for me. I would hope it will give us a new meaningful discussion, relationship and approach. But, I’m very clear: Welsh Government has to, in no small part, step up its work around this. We are not yet strategically focusing on what is, as people keep calling it, the huge elephant in the room.

[190] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Recommendation 6:

[191] ‘Either on their own, or with the Department for Work and Pensions, the Welsh Government should run an Age Positive campaign.’

[192] You, of course, only last week launched your own campaign, ‘Say No to Ageism’. Was that campaign launched in the absence of any real signs of Government campaigns that, perhaps, should be doing that work for you?

[193] **Ms Rochira:** I think we are duty-bound, all of us in public service, to fight all sorts of ageism, as we are to fight racism, sexism and other completely unacceptable practices. I have a role to play, and that’s me playing my role within that. I do think Government has a role to play. In no

small part, it's done that through an older people's strategy and through having a commissioner, but it's much more than that. Actually, one of the things—. I've got five strands to my ageism work, and one of the things that I'll be doing, I guess probably February/March time, clearly in the run-up to a new Government here in Wales, is publishing guidance to that new Government on age-proofing its policies and how it can strengthen its approach to challenging ageism in all forms.

[194] One of the reasons I launched the Say No to Ageism campaign was—it was partly because of what I saw as institutionalised ageism, but also what I've called casual ageism and the fact that we just seem to get forgotten. I'll just give you an example of what 'just seem to get forgotten' means. We had a huge group of people—hugely stark figures that I shared earlier. I often read reports and strategies, and I get to the bit where I think, 'Now we're going to have the section on older people', but then there never is the section on older people. We have got to, through the breadth of Government policy, strengthen our nuanced understanding of what a really tightly targeted approach looks like. So: a beginning, but a huge way to go. And, actually, Government should be standing tightly alongside me, taking its own action to challenge ageism.

[195] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Presumably, you would be looking for clear synergies between your campaign, as a commissioner, and any Age Positive campaign that the Government would launch, either officially or softly.

[196] **Ms Rochira:** Absolutely. I've said many times: I'm an independent statutory commissioner, and I hold my independence dear, as you all know, but I've never thought that precludes working with people. Actually, our intent—all of us, regardless of political persuasion—I think, is absolutely the same in Wales: social justice, fairness and equality. Those run through the heart of Welsh devolution. We already adopt, I think, a very joined-up approach. The Welsh Government was one of the founder members of the Ageing Well in Wales programme; we'd clearly like to see more support to that. I'll continue to work with people, because, actually, sometimes, together we are stronger, and that alignment is really important, particularly in difficult resource times.

[197] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Quick point on funding: our previous witnesses this morning, representing ColegauCymru and the National Training Federation for Wales, were very accepting of what they saw as an inevitability, in that financial constraints made it very difficult to concentrate any specific efforts

on the over-50s—that that might be a matter of regret or it might not, but we are where we are. What’s your response to that? Do we just have to accept, in a way, that there’s only so much we can do and, perhaps, this demographic is one step too far—just at this moment in time?

[198] **Ms Rochira:** As you might expect, as Older People’s Commissioner for Wales, I’m not going to accept that—full stop. But, actually, there are real rational reasons for not accepting that. If we see—and this was at the heart of the first stage of my Say No to Ageism campaign—our older people as that vital asset, as people who we desperately need to stay engaged within the Welsh economy, we start from a different place. I noted in the Deputy Minister’s follow-up response to the committee report, that she talked about those resource constraints. She said:

[199] ‘What must also be recognised is the pressure on the overall skills budget and the need to take some tough decisions as to how our programmes are prioritised.’

[200] Well, I’d like to see us start from that value base, because, when we prioritise older people alongside younger people—. I’ve never fallen into the trap—there is a danger we fall into the either/or trap—but, when we prioritise older people as well, it is good for them; it is good for the economy, because we have skills in the economy, we have less pension dependency, we have less poverty, we have less pressure on our welfare budgets, we have better intergenerational cohesion and we have higher living standards as well. When you focus on older people as an equal group with equal rights—and all I’m asking for is parity and equality—it is good for the individual, it is good for the Welsh economy and it is good for Welsh society as well. If I was a business, I would be listening to that argument, because I think that’s an enormous return on investment.

[201] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** We may well come back to issues of funding for training again, but finally from me, the Deputy Minister’s response on tackling ageism points to the Ageing Well in Wales programme and the national partnership forum, neither of which receive direct Government funding. What does that tell you, and what areas need to have the funding issue addressed?

[202] **Ms Rochira:** Terry, you can speak for the national partnership forum. Terry is also chair of the national partnership forum, which shows how joined up and aligned we are in our work. The Ageing Well in Wales programme is

coming, in a sense, to the end of its first stage just before Christmas. I call it a programme; it's a movement, really—a loose coalition of partners, all focused on five very specific outcomes. It comes to the end of its first stage with the publication of 22 local authority Ageing Well in Wales plans—no small feat; actually, huge credit to local authorities; the only country in Europe to be in this position—and a range of national and local commitments. That £50,000 is a very good example of a Government commitment to that. It comes to the end of the first stage.

[203] After Christmas, I will be writing to those collaborative partners, particularly the Welsh Government, but others as well, saying, 'We're moving to the next stage. This is what I need now from you. I am playing my part, but you cannot play a collaborative partnership approach unless it is a two-way process'. So, I've had support so far. As we move into the next stage, that support will need to look different; it will need to look more tangible; and it will need to look more aligned as well. I'm very clear: one of the things that the Welsh Government can do is deliver on what it's written in its older people's strategy, phase 3. I'm also going to be writing to Welsh Government shortly, asking them whether they are going to publish an update on the implementation plan linked to the older people's strategy, phase 3.

[204] So, for all of us, after Christmas, including the Welsh Government, it'll be time to step up and align more. It doesn't have to be cash support. Actually, alignment across portfolios is hugely important, which goes back to a narrative I have pushed for a very long time, and it's why I so strongly welcomed your report, which was, in no small part: every time we talk about older people, could we not just talk about health and social care? Pushing it out across portfolios doesn't cost cash, but has a huge impact.

[205] **William Graham:** Thank you very much. Jeff.

[206] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Yes. Thank you. About the issue of the employment context of older people and, in particular, one of the recommendations—it was recommendation 5—about the Welsh Government considering something equivalent to Jobs Growth Wales for older workers. We've heard mixed views on this and, of course, Jobs Growth Wales was indeed designed to enable job-ready young people to get valuable work experience and, at the same time, through the wage subsidy, allow companies, particularly small companies, to grow. What's your view on the appropriateness of a similar type of model for older people? If you thought that was a goer, what sort of changes might you want to see to make it appropriate for the older

workforce?

[207] **Ms Rochira:** Okay. Just so you know, Terry, I'm going to ask you in a moment to speak in a little bit more detail from an older persons workforce perspective. For me, the interesting thing about Jobs Growth Wales was that it was a targeted programme at younger people. It fundamentally said that there are groups within society who we need to nuance our response around; and that's exactly the same thing that I'm calling for in relation to older people. If not Jobs Growth Wales, then we need to make sure that we do have responses that meet the circumstances in which older people find themselves—appropriate.

[208] I know from talking to the Deputy Minister that she had concerns about changing a programme that she felt was working well and was targeted at a group. If not that, then we need something that is going to meet the needs of older people. It's that point in principle reflecting that one size doesn't fit all. I know, from having read the Deputy Minister's supplementary response, that she said that we'll continue with the plans we have in place whilst ensuring we factor in the needs of particular groups of individuals at all ages as we further develop our policies and programmes. As we further develop them we do need to nuance those in, because one of the things that we know is that the barriers that older people face are often different than other groups face within society. So, I think that we do need to have a specific programme, but we also need to be much better at monitoring, and we don't have the data about the uptake of older people in other programmes. I don't know how many older people, for example, take up apprentice places in Wales, because we don't publish the data. I have a suspicion—the research will tell us this—that it's probably not very many. The question is 'Why?'

[209] Terry, do you want to say a bit more about nuanced issues?

11:15

[210] **Mr Mills:** Yes. I can help with the numbers of older people who take up apprenticeships—people over 50. It's approximately 3 per cent. It's an excellent apprentice system we have in Wales that is available to all ages; however, it's not necessarily marketed at all ages. Most of the people over 50 don't even realise they'd be eligible to be an apprentice. They're working until 67 or 68; there's plenty of time to re-skill and take on a new trade or profession.

[211] So, part of it isn't the fact that the system, particularly an apprenticeship, isn't there, it's just not necessarily well marketed. So, it's not necessarily any major cost issue to Welsh Government to change the way that some of these all-age provisions are actually marketed to ensure that older people could also apply for these things. It's the same with quite a lot of the work out there. I think only 4 per cent of the Wales union learning fund goes to learning workers who are over the age of 50, even though they make up 38 per cent of the workforce. So, a lot of the stuff is already there, but it's not necessarily marketed and targeted.

[212] I think there is a need, particularly, to have something like Jobs Growth Wales for people who are 50 plus, but it would look like a very different animal; it has to be written for that group, addressing the barriers they get. I can't see it being anywhere near the cost implications that Jobs Growth Wales has, and it would be more about people voluntarily going on to the programme. People over 50 are not a homogenous group; they're hard to find. There are 206,000 people between 50 and state pension age who aren't working in Wales at the moment. Roughly 22 per cent are there by choice; the other 78 per cent would like to be doing something—they'd like to be working. But, less than 10,000 are on jobseeker's allowance, so the Department for Work and Pensions aren't in contact with these people. So, there's no point of contact; Jobs Growth Wales has a really good contact through the Department for Work and Pensions. So, a lot of it is signposting and producing the scheme, so that people know it's there and what is available to them, and relatively soft support, whether it's mentoring schemes or other programmes that are relatively inexpensive to produce compared to Jobs Growth Wales, but available to people over 50 if and when they want them.

[213] **William Graham:** Eluned and then Keith.

[214] **Eluned Parrott:** Just briefly, obviously, I'm not sure all of us on the committee were anticipating a carbon copy of Jobs Growth Wales, but as you say, a more nuanced programme. Two questions, one of which you've partially answered as to what the most essential elements of that older person's programme might include, but the second is: how are we going to actually reach out and contact those people who we don't currently have a route to, because that is the majority, in fact?

[215] **Ms Rochira:** Do you want to go first?

[216] **Mr Mills:** It is a nuanced approach. Things like Careers Wales, just the title of Careers Wales; they do a great job when you get in through the door, but research shows that a lot of people in their 50s and early 60s who are looking for a job don't think of Careers Wales, because careers is something you do when you're in school; it's not something that they see as relevant to themselves. So, a lot of it is actually making people aware of what support is out there. Changing some of the photographs on the apprenticeship marketing material—there's not necessarily any cost to it. So, that's a major thing on how it's nuanced: how you contact people.

[217] There are other ways. There are 65,000 people who are on employment and support allowance at the moment, so you do have a contact for that group of people. Some of the major barriers coming through are caring responsibilities and health issues. But some of the support is simple stuff, like confidence building and the essential skills. It's not necessarily an enormous amount of support: it's a critical friend, sometimes, just to help somebody through the process of how you get back into work.

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

<p>[219] Keith Davies: Diolch yn fawr, Gadeirydd. Gwnaf i ofyn yn Gymraeg. Diolch am eich papur ychwanegol. Roeddwn i'n dwlu ei ddarllen e. Mae dau baragraff rwy'n credu sy'n bwysig iawn i beth rydym ni'n trafod fan hyn. Gyda phoblogaeth sy'n heneiddio a dim digon o bobl ifainc yn gadael addysg, 7 miliwn, i lenwi'r amcangyfrif o 13.5 miliwn o swyddi gwag ar lefel y Deyrnas Unedig yn y ddegawd nesaf, ymateb i beth yw gofynion y wlad, efallai, ac nid ateb gofynion pobl dros 50—. O ble ym ni'n mynd i gael y bobl hyn?</p>	<p>Keith Davies: Thank you, Chair. I'll ask my questions in Welsh. Thank you for your additional paper. I enjoyed reading it. There are two paragraphs there that I think are very important to what we're discussing here. With an ageing population and not enough young people leaving education, 7 million, to fill the estimate of 13.5 million vacancies in the UK in the next decade, responding to the needs of the country, perhaps, and not meeting the needs of people over 50—. Where are we going to find these people?</p>
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<p>[220] Wedyn, pan fyddwn ni yn edrych ar bobl dros 50, rydych chi'n dweud rhywle fan hyn fod pedair gwaith fwy o bobl dros 50 yn NEETs</p>	<p>Then, if we look at people of over 50, you say somewhere here that four times more people over 50 are NEETs than those between 16 and 24 years</p>
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na phobl rhwng 16 a 24. So, mae yna ddau bwynt pwysig yn y fan honno, byddwn i'n dweud. Beth mae'r wlad eisiau? Mwy o bobl i weithio. Dyna beth rydych chi'n dweud fan hyn. Wedyn, fel rhan o hwnnw, dylai fod pobl dros 50 yn cymryd eu rhan. A ych chi'n gwthio hynny, achos ffigurau Lloegr, rwy'n credu, yw'r ffigurau sydd gennych chi ym mharagraff 12? Efallai byddai'n werth inni gael ffigurau i Gymru a dweud faint o blant sy'n gadael addysg a faint o swyddi gwag fydd ar gael yn y ddegawd nesaf.

of age. So, there are two important points there, I think. What does the country want? More people in work. That's what you're saying here. Then, as part of that, people over 50 should be taking their part. Are you pushing that, because I think these are figures for England that you have in paragraph 12? Perhaps it would be valuable for us to have figures for Wales that say how many children are leaving education and how many vacancies will be available in the next decade.

[221] **Ms Rochira:** I mean, this is part of the comment I made earlier about needing to draw together what we have and develop a Welsh narrative: something that we can own and see within our context that paints our picture, for us, here within Wales. But, the reason we talk about that a lot is because this has to be the starting approach, and I've touched on it a number of times. It's good for the individual, you know, but, actually, our economy desperately needs our older people in oh-so-many ways. It's interesting, when we talk about older people, as part of my ageism campaign, you know, I look around the table and, with respect, because this is a good thing for me, there are many of us here, but we're called commissioner or Assembly Members. Actually, when you stop being economically productive and you become an older person, your value diminishes within society, yet, as an economy, we desperately need people back.

[222] There are, for me, three headline things we need to focus on, and five key things, and this is where, in a sense, what we have at the moment is not enough. It is not that big, strategic response that individuals want and our economy needs. The phrases that have been used by others, and I use them are: retain, because that should be our starting point; retrain; and recruit people back in. If we're really going to do that, for me, there are these five areas: the evidence and the research, the Welsh narrative, because, actually, there's no hiding from that, either; it holds a mirror up in terms of what we need to do. The second thing is we need to reframe how we see older people, and we've just spoken about that. We need to empower and upskill older

people, both to stay in the workforce and to quickly get back to the workforce before their confidence diminishes. We need to work with employers so that we've got things like age-friendly policies, as much flexible working, skills and opportunities for people. But we also need to plan better, as well, and I talk about this on a whole range of issues. We need to plan for the next five, 10, 15 and 20 years in Wales. It's difficult with the cycles we all work within, but, actually, we know what demographic change looks like and we know what a lot of the economic shortfalls will be.

[223] That's what a really big, stepping up, strategic response looks like: good for individuals and good for the economy. If we don't take that big, strategic step up, which is much more than some of the things that Government are doing, we're going to have a huge skills shortage in the future, and we will wish we had done it.

[224] **Keith Davies:** Thank you.

[225] **William Graham:** Our final question is from Oscar.

[226] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you, Chair. My direct question is for the commissioner. What are your reasons for saying that the Deputy Minister's decision not to publish a skills strategy specifically for people over the age of 50 and specific outcomes is 'regrettable' in respect of recommendations eight and nine?

[227] **Ms Rochira:** Well, it's regrettable for a number of reasons. It was promised. It was promised in the older people's strategy phase 3. We said we would do it, so we should do it. I understand that we have the skills statement and we've had a skills implementation plan since that, but, for me, as I mentioned earlier, that nuanced understanding of the issues that matter to older people was missing within that. The umbrella view missed out on huge opportunities to grow our understanding within that.

[228] The issue you mentioned about outcomes—well, is it not for all of us in public service about outcomes? It's not just about intent; it's about the difference that we make on the ground. In years to come, all of the work that we do and that Government does, all of the things we'll have talked about—but for me, accountability sits with Government; that's why people pay their taxes. I'm very clear, and have consistently been clear, on that. The real question will be: if you are an older person, do you stay in your job instead of moving out of your job? If you are an older person and you move out of

your job—and we know the evidence is that over half of older people are involuntarily workless—are you able to get back into work more quickly? The real test will be as an economy—do we see older people as worth investing in because we understand that, without them, actually we’re going to have some challenges that we’re not going to be able to meet. It was promised. We should not make promises we do not keep. If we have an alternative route, that is absolutely fine. Sometimes plans change. But I want to see hard metrics behind those so I can see that promises made have been delivered.

[229] **William Graham:** Thank you very much. Are there any other comments you’d like to make?

[230] **Ms Rochira:** No. I’ll pass to you, Terry, in a moment. Just to say thank you for your report. This has been a forgotten area, and for the first time we’ve shone a light, and I think with really good reason behind it, on the need for us to see this as one of our key priorities as we move forward—not just for this Government, but for the next Government and beyond. So, diolch yn fawr. Thank you very much.

[231] **William Graham:** Thank you very much for your attendance today.

11:28

**Cyfleoedd Cyflogaeth i Bobl dros 50 Oed—Ystyriaeth o Ymateb
Llywodraeth Cymru i Adroddiad y Pwyllgor
Employment Opportunities for People over 50—Consideration of Welsh
Government Response**

[232] **William Graham:** Thank you very much for coming to see us this morning, Minister. Could I just ask you and your officials to give your names for the record?

[233] **The Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology (Julie James):** It’s really nice to be here, William. I’m Julie James, the Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology.

[234] **Mr Morris:** I’m Huw Morris, director of skills, higher education and lifelong learning.

[235] **Dr Garside–Jones:** I’m Rachel Garside–Jones, head of skills policy engagement.

[236] **William Graham:** Thank you very much. The first question is from Mick Antoniw.

[237] **Mick Antoniw:** Thank you, Minister, and thank you for your response to the inquiry recommendations and the supplementary paper. You accepted in principle a number of the recommendations, and a number were rejected. None of them were accepted in full. Can we take it, Minister, that you were not very impressed with the paper or the recommendations?

[238] **Julie James:** No. On the contrary, we completely agree with the recommendations that we've accepted in principle. It's just that some of them cut across programmes that are already running or are a little open-ended for where we are at the moment, so the only reason that they're 'in principle' and not 'in entirety' is because we wish to do a bit more work to see how they align with where we're currently going, rather than duplicating things that we're already doing. I'm more than happy to come back to the committee, probably in a few months' time when we've sorted that out, to tell you exactly how that alignment works. But that's the only reason for the 'in principle' decision.

[239] **Mick Antoniw:** If I could take—. One of the recommendations that was accepted in principle, recommendation 4, was that the Welsh Government should work with the older people's commissioner, the Department for Work and Pensions, major Welsh employers, employer-representative bodies and trade unions to do more to try to challenge age discrimination. That was one that was only accepted in principle. I wonder if, perhaps, you could outline why you felt that one was only accepted in principle, as opposed to in full.

11:30

[240] **Julie James:** Because we already do a lot of work with a large number of those organisations, and what we want to do is have another look at exactly how we're doing that work. I think you've taken some evidence this morning from the older people's commissioner, and we've met together—I'm sure she mentioned it—subsequent to the responses to the committee. For example, one of the things we've discussed is the ability of Careers Wales to attend some of the meetings that she has, and how we might take that forward. So, we didn't want to accept the recommendation outright until we'd had a series of conversations around how we could support that.

[241] The committee will know that Careers Wales, for example—and it's only one example of many I could give—has experienced budget cuts over the last couple of years and, as a result of that, the Government has changed its remit letter. So, we wanted to have the ability to have conversations with them about how they could best support the process, which we're very much in favour of them doing, whilst living within their means. So, that's the sort of conversation we want to have. Had I accepted it in full, I would have felt obliged to tell Careers Wales to completely co-operate with that, and I'm not sure we're in a financial position to be able to do so.

[242] **Mick Antoniw:** Thank you for that answer. Can I ask you again, just in general, on this point about the recommendations overall? On the position with regard to Europe, because a lot of this funding, of course, is European funding, is one of the issues that you have to deal with the fact that this is not really very high up the agenda of the European Union in terms of its own funding priorities, with very much the focus on youth unemployment? Does that impact on what Government can do or is able to do with regard to our older persons, and is that an area where, perhaps, there should be further work done?

[243] **Julie James:** Well, it's possible to view it in that light. So, for example, one of the recommendations you've made is a programme that would look a little like Jobs Growth Wales, and Jobs Growth Wales is supported by the European Union, because one of the priorities is youth unemployment—you're absolutely right to say that, Mick. But, it's not the only reason, or even actually one of the most predominant reasons. One of the biggest reasons that we've accepted in principle is because we think that the recommendations are sensible and realistic, but we think that they align with a large number of things that we're already doing, and we didn't want to give the impression that we were going to do something else as well as a result of accepting the committee's recommendation. So, it's just as simple as that.

[244] In terms of the European Union support, for example European Union support will be sought for the Essential Skills Wales programmes, and they're all-age programmes. So, those programmes will support older workers—both unemployed older workers and those already in work—and there's no reason why that shouldn't continue. I don't know if you want me to develop that point. I'm sure you're going to ask me about my meeting with the older person's commissioner. We had a long discussion about the Jobs Growth Wales recommendation and we came to a variety of conclusions, one of which is that she is going to put together a research brief, together with the

chair of Ageing Well in Wales, which the Government will then look to see whether we can support with our existing research programmes or, indeed, we can supplement with some of our statistical programmes, with a view to getting empirical evidence about the needs of older workers. I'll just reiterate that one of the reasons I haven't accepted some of the recommendations is that we don't feel there is a business case at the moment for developing a one-size-fits-all solution like Jobs Growth Wales for older people, because, for youth, we know that the biggest problem facing the majority of young people is their lack of work experience. There are people with more complex needs, but an enormous number of them have that same problem. That's not the case, it seems to me, for older workers. Some of them may have work experience issues if they're returning after a long time, but, actually, older workers mostly have a variety of complex barriers to employment or advancement, including caring responsibilities, disability, ill health—you know, a variety of things. So, we don't think that a one-size-fits-all programme like Jobs Growth Wales would work in the same way as it does for young people.

[245] **Mick Antoniw:** It was surprising, Minister, from the evidence we had just earlier on apprenticeships, which are open to all, that only 3 per cent are from the over-50s. Do you have a view on that?

[246] **Julie James:** Well, actually, we think that that picture will change quite rapidly in Wales, because, as you know, the way we concentrate very much our money into higher apprenticeships. Actually, only yesterday, I was at an event where the Principality have supported six people through the higher apprenticeship route. I was at their graduation ceremony and it was very pleasant. Wales, we know, needs those higher levels of skills, and, of course, those programmes are open to everybody, and, indeed, although we only collect the statistics for the over-25s, most of the people on those programmes are in that older group.

[247] I wonder, Chair, if you'd indulge me. On that basis, I was at the Council for Economic Renewal yesterday, talking to them about the skills policy for the workforce in general, and one of the things I shared with them was a route-map, which looks a bit like a tube map. I've brought enough copies for the committee, so if I hand them around, carefully keeping one for myself—. It's a concept stage for something that I've discussed with the committee a number of times before and it impacts on a number of inquiries—I think Eluned Parrott raised it in one of the committees I attended—which is the complexity of provision out there and who it's aimed

at and so on. You'll see that this route-map is an attempt to map where people are in their journey towards work, or to progress in work, and what they might access. What you're looking at there—I'm sorry; all of you haven't got it yet. What you're looking at there is a paper view of what will be an online tool, and each one of the nodes will open up and tell you what that programme looks like and how you access it. You see that they all lead in the same direction. We've been working on this for a little while and this is part of our work, which is why we've only accepted some of your recommendations in principle. Apologies for the smallness of the print; I'm having the same difficulty myself. It's because it's come off a screen. The detail of it isn't important, really; it's the concept of it that's important, and you can see what we're trying to do.

[248] So, basically, there are various routes to progression in work or into work in the first place. They all go to the same place in the end, and the idea is to make it much more transparent—how you move between them, and also how you move along the pipeline. That piece of work will assist us in identifying and helping older workers—where they are on that journey; mapping them on to the journey; and assisting them along the route of either job progression or into work. So, you can see there's a lot of work being done, and so I reiterate that's why the 'in principle', because we didn't want to cut across a lot of the things we're already doing.

[249] **William Graham:** Clearly, there's a profound agreement that more research is needed. Can I ask you for your comments here? Age Cymru said that substantial gaps in the published knowledge base mean that a detailed assessment of issues as they specifically impact on Wales is problematic or impossible. Would you agree with that?

[250] **Julie James:** It is difficult to isolate some of the research because older people are so diverse a group, as I said. So, for example, 'over-50s' also include people who are 90, who are retired and very happy to be so. No doubt there might be the odd 90-year-old who would like to be in work, but, as a group, it's actually quite a wide age group. You know, I'm in the over-50s group, and a fair number of the people in the room, I dare say, are as well. *[Interruption.] [Laughter.]* I know; it's very hard to see them, isn't it? *[Laughter.]* So, it's a very diverse group of people and it's a very wide age range. You're talking about a 40-odd-year age range, and a lot of the statistics are collected across that piece, so it's very difficult. The other problem is that the statistics are collected for England and Wales, so that's also difficult. And that's why I've agreed with the older people's

commissioner—I'm sure she told you about it—that we will do the exercise, to see what's out there already; whether we can add some value to what's out there already, and actually scope a research project, because, at this point in time, I don't know what that looks like. I've got no idea whether we're talking about a few hundred pounds or several tens of thousands. And, Chair, you will know that we're waiting for the comprehensive spending review and I'm not in any position to commit funding at this point.

[251] **William Graham:** No, but basically what you're saying is that you're committed to research, as and when it can be achieved.

[252] **Julie James:** Yes.

[253] **William Graham:** That's fine. Thank you very much. Dafydd.

[254] **Yr Arglwydd Elis-Thomas:** Lord Elis-Thomas: Thank you very Diolch yn fawr, Weinidog. A gaf i much, Minister. May I thank you ddiolch i chi yn arbennig am y papur especially for the additional paper ychwanegol a gawson ni yn dilyn i that we received following up on the fyfny yr ymateb ysgrifenedig original written response by the gwreiddiol gan y Llywodraeth? Un o'r Government? One of the things that pethau rydych chi'n gwybod ein bod you know that we try to do in yn ceisio ei wneud mewn pwyllgorau, committees, and we have been on ac rydym wedi bod ar bwyllgorau committees together in the past, is gyda'n gilydd o'r blaen, yw ceisio try to influence the Government more dylanwadu ar y Llywodraeth yn fwy effectively and, in the short term, in effeithiol ac, yn y tymor byr, ar bolisi. terms of policy. And so I've been Ac felly rwyf wedi bod yn dilyn yr hyn following what you've been saying rydych wedi bod yn ei ddweud ynglŷn with regard to research. Would you ag ymchwil. A fyddech yn dweud, say, perhaps, that a project of what efallai, bod project o beth fydden ni'n we would call 'active research' is ei alw yn 'ymchwil gweithredol' yn more important in this area than a fwy pwysig yn y maes yma nag statistical inquiry to try to ymchwiliad ystadegol i geisio disaggregate the figures between dadwneud ffigurau Cymru a Lloegr Wales and England or disaggregate neu geisio dadwneud y gwahanol the different ages within the groups oedrannau sydd o fewn y grŵp yr that you have statistics on at the ydych chi ag ystadegau arnyn nhw ar moment? That we're concentrating, hyn o bryd? Hynny yw, ein bod ni'n in other words, on the way that canolbwyntio ar edrych ar y modd y research can be targeted to develop gall ymchwil fod wedi'i dargedu i policy, rather than looking for

ddatblygu polisi, yn hytrach na bod general statistics.
ni'n edrych am ystadegau yn
gyffredinol.

[255] **Julie James:** Yes, I think that sums it up nicely. I've agreed with the older people's commissioner that they will put a research brief together based on the research that they know is out there and where they know the gaps to be. Also, we will assist them with telling them what we've already got and see whether we can refocus that research to assist our policy formation—absolutely—rather than as a piece of knowledge just out of interest. I was very happy to make that agreement with her. We have another meeting—we're in the process of trying to get our diaries to coincide to have another meeting—to, for example, talk about lifelong learning, which was not entirely part of your inquiry this time, but, obviously, impacts on the ability of older people to get into work or, indeed, progress in work or, indeed, in life. So, I'm just going to wait to see what that piece of work looks like when it comes back to us, and I'm expecting it to be very helpful in terms of influencing our policy development in both the short and medium term.

[256] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** So, all the evidence we've heard this morning about developing the evidence base maybe emphasises too much the search for an evidence base rather than developing—what the commissioner called 'developing a Welsh narrative' to deal with the issues.

[257] **Julie James:** Yes. I think that's right. I also think—. For example, one of the things I agreed with her to do, and I was extremely happy to do that, was to actively support her Ageing Well in Wales campaign and to relook at our communications plan—we're in the process of putting the plan for next year in place—and to redouble our efforts, really, in that plan to ensure that it appeals in the right way to people in older age groups. One of the points she made, which I thought was a very good one, was that the name Careers Wales over the overarching website in itself may be a barrier to older people, so we've agreed to look again at how we market our skills gateways and so on. They will still be hosted by Careers Wales, but we will be looking to see how we can ensure that older people know that they're included—very much included—in that policy initiative.

[258] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** Finally, I've obviously listened to Ministers in more than one place justifying not doing anything and accepting things in principle, but it seems to me that you've brought to this committee this

morning, and in your previous note, a clear reasoning behind accepting in principle; in other words, that we were recommending things that may or may not have been sitting with the way policy was being developed in your portfolio. Therefore, it is obvious that, if you are to pursue individual recommendations, they have to work within the context of what the Government is doing, although they clearly may influence that as well. Would that be a fair summary?

[259] **Julie James:** Yes, I think that summarises it very nicely; that's exactly how we feel about it.

[260] **Lord Elis-Thomas:** Thank you.

[261] **William Graham:** Thank you very much. Oscar.

[262] **Mohammad Asghar:** Thank you, Chair. Minister, how will the Welsh Government incorporate an Age Positive campaign into their existing communication plans with employers? Will these be extended to future years, please?

[263] **Julie James:** As I said, we're working on the communications plan at the moment. As a result of my meeting with the older people's commissioner, we will be working alongside her to make sure that that office is very happy with our communications plan. So, that's our plan for the immediate communication plan. Indeed, we intend to continue to work with her office to ensure that our programmes are fit for purpose in reaching the people that we're aiming them at. As I've said in this committee many times before, unless otherwise stated—so, there are a few that are age specific; Jobs Growth Wales being the most obvious one—all our programmes are all-age. So, what we want to do is redouble our communications efforts to ensure that people understand that and that, in particular, employers understand that. I've already lent my individual Assembly Member support to the Ageing Well in Wales campaign that has been going on over the last week or so, and my ministerial office will be co-operating with the older people's commissioner in pushing that agenda, with which I entirely agree, I have to say.

[264] **William Graham:** Thank you very much. Mick. No?

[265] **Mick Antoniw:** Sorry, I do apologise. It was really just a comment on the comments from Age Cymru, really, about the lack of specific supports

that there were for some. You've covered part of this, I think, in your answer, but there was clearly a concern amongst some of the bodies that are involved that the supports that exist aren't specific enough. Is there anything further you could add to that that you haven't already added?

11:45

[266] **Julie James:** Not really. Our difficulty is, as I said at the beginning, that we don't have specific research to show us what 'specific enough' would look like. I remain of the view that a one-size-fits all programme, like Jobs Growth Wales, simply wouldn't work for older people. We might make the job opportunities for them in full-time jobs in small firms, for example, and they would not be able to access those jobs due to caring responsibilities or disabilities or need for other support. So, what we need is an evidence base that shows us whether a big Government programme of that sort would work—my view is that that evidence base is likely to say that it won't, and that, therefore, we need to target specific smaller cohorts of people over 50 in order to assist those with specific needs, for example, people with caring responsibilities, or people with disabilities. You've only got to look at the statistics for the numbers of people on disability living allowance, or whatever the latest iteration of that is, to see that there are very large numbers of older workers in those categories. So, what they need is a very different thing to what younger people, who are fit and able to work but lack the job experience, need.

[267] **Mick Antoniw:** I suppose that follows on from the point that was made earlier about accepting in principle—in actual fact, there is still a strategy there that is actually working on these things, that it's not really a question of pushing something to one side, that there is a focus on these areas, but it's a question of a practical focus—.

[268] **Julie James:** Oh yes, absolutely. I'll reiterate again: I think that the committee's recommendations were sensible and realistic. We agree with them, but what we didn't want to do is give the impression that we were going to do something new as well. Instead, what we're doing is looking to align them into the programmes and inform our programmes accordingly. The committee has made some sensible suggestions about how that could happen and we'll be taking those forward.

[269] **William Graham:** Thank you. Rhun, and then Joyce.

[270] **Rhun ap Iorwerth:** Just in addition to that, I think you've been very honest, in general, since your appointment as Deputy Minister, about your frustration at not being able to do some things that you would clearly like to do. But to what extent would you say that you are, inevitably, parking some problems that you might like to address now, when it comes to upskilling and re-employing over-50s, just because you haven't got the resources to take action, and that we just have to accept that?

[271] **Julie James:** Well, the biggest frustration for us at the moment is the conversation with the DWP about the Work Programme and its iteration in Wales. Actually, we've moved that conversation forward very much. Officials in DWP have been working very helpfully with officials here, and I'm sure Huw might want to add something, because he's the one who does some of the work. What we're looking to do—we hope we'll have this agreement—is influence the next iteration of the DWP contract here in Wales so that it lines up with our programmes better, without the devolution to us, with a view to it being devolved to us the year afterwards, when we've understood fully how those things work and what the financial implications are. But there's no doubt we are frustrated by how long this is taking to sort out.

[272] We know that the Work Programme fails older people—actually, the success rate isn't very good in Wales at all, but it's even worse for older people, and that has a whole complexity of information behind it, again alongside the barriers to work for older people, their complex needs, and so on, which we are still seeking to understand. So, that is a bit of a resourcing issue, because it depends how much money comes with the programme to us, what we can do with it, but it's more of an inter-governmental issue, really, and that's the biggest frustration we've got at the moment.

[273] In this particular area, my frustration that you've heard me express in Plenary many times is more around the part-time and work-based learning opportunities for older people, which is not quite where your inquiry is.

[274] **Joyce Watson:** Moving on, quite nicely, really, to the things you have control over and the things that might frustrate your desire to do something, which you don't—. Now, one of the things is the new UK apprenticeships levy, which is due out soon, and you aren't having control over that, because the UK—. It's, as we heard earlier on, a 0.5 per cent tax on the employers—that's how it was described to us; I'm just repeating that. That ought to bring—or so we hope—some levels of money here, for you to use. So, first of all, do you know that that's going to be the case? Do we know if there's

going to be an impact of that levy on the way that we can use budgets? Is it going to be even an additional budget? Do we know anything?

[275] **Julie James:** Well, the short answer is, 'No, we don't know'. We're currently being told that that it will come back to us via the Barnett formula, and that could actually be a cut, therefore, because it depends on the overall Barnett formula and how it looks like, but we don't know that. We have no certainty over what size employer or indeed how they're going to work out whether that employer is or isn't in Wales. I don't know whether—. Huw knows a bit more about some of the internal bits of this than I do. So, for example, there's an assumption that its employers with over 250 people, but we've heard proposals to go as low as 50 employees. We know that it affects public sector organisations as well, so we have a slightly difficult situation where we would have the health boards, the Welsh Government and so on paying the levy. We're not entirely certain how that will come back to us. So, basically, the British Government will give us RSG, we'll give it to them and they'll pay it back in the payroll. It just seems a bit of a complete nonsense to me. But, actually, we're very unhappy about the fact that it cuts across our apprenticeship programme completely. We've worked very hard to get our current investment strategy going. Large numbers of our employers are on board with that, and we feel very strongly that if they are forced to pay the levy through their payroll they will stop investing in our programmes. We're having what can only be described as a 'robust' discussion with the UK Government at this point in time about our point of view about this.

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

[277] **Julie James:** Huw, did you want to add anything?

[278] **Mr Morris:** No, I think that that's a very effective summary of the issues.

[279] **William Graham:** Jeff, do you have a short question?

[280] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Yes. Indeed, I think I could probably bring in my main question now, as it is relevant, which is about the relationship with the DWP. Clearly, for someone out there in Wales who's looking for a job, regardless of their age, they're not interested in whether the programme is a UK one or a Welsh Government one. They just want the right programme for them, and I know that there is enormous frustration. But do you have any indication from the DWP about movement towards devolving, with the money to go with it as

well, of course?

[281] **Julie James:** Well, I shall let Huw add to what I just said to the committee because he's got much more of the nitty-gritty detail than I have.

[282] **Mr Morris:** The conversations at the moment are about exploring the possibilities of co-commissioning for the period from 2017 to 2019. So, colleagues have been working with DWP officials on what that would look like, mindful that similar processes of conversation are happening with Scotland and with London and with Manchester. Our concern about the Work Programme at the moment goes back to the diagram that the Deputy Minister circulated earlier. The Work Programme operates on the basis of a black box, which means that those people who are providing it don't have to reveal all of the detail of what's done or how the needs of individuals are assessed. What we're trying to do with colleagues in DWP and with other agencies is to get a common language and a common approach to categorising and assessing people's needs regardless of age so that we can then put them on the right route to employment. For some that will be about support with care; for others it will be about upskilling; for others it will be about health or social service interventions as well.

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

[284] **Julie James:** Chair, if you don't mind, I'll add the political dimension to that. One of the other arguments is that I personally am vehemently opposed to mandation onto work programmes, and, obviously, the Work Programme is a mandated programme. So, there is going to be a political discussion about how we would devolve it. All of the nations and cities looking to have it devolved to them don't want the mandation element. So, that is the complication for how you'd fund the programme, basically. So, even if we can work out the official difficulties, there's a difficult political discussion to be had as well.

[285] **Jeff Cuthbert:** Thank you.

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

[287] **Eluned Parrott:** Thank you. I wanted to return to the issue of the availability of training programmes for older people. Obviously, you've quite rightly discussed that the majority of the training opportunities are open to all ages, but would you accept that something being open to all ages is not

the same as something being suitable for all ages, or indeed attractive to all ages? You've talked about some of the communication tasks that you want to take forward to make sure that older people feel that some of those interventions are available to them and attractive to them. But what research have you done to find out why older people aren't engaging with certain programmes, like, for example, apprenticeships in very big numbers?

[288] **Julie James:** Well, we do have older people engaging in apprenticeships, actually. And—

[289] **Eluned Parrott:** Three per cent, I think, was the figure given by—

[290] **Julie James:** Yes, but, as a percentage of the workforce—. It's interesting how you look at that. Actually, until very recently—Rachel will be able to tell you a bit more about the stats—Wales has had a really strange profile in its apprenticeship model, because, actually, more people over 25 than under 25 have been on apprenticeships. So, one of our issues is actually redressing the balance the other way.

[291] There is a difficulty in that we collect the stats as under-25s and over-25s, so it is difficult to deselect over-50s for all of our programmes, but we know that, for example, quite a few of the people who are on the Essential Skills in the Workplace programmes are also older workers. They might be in their late 40s rather than over 50, but they're older workers all the same, and those programmes are out there for all of them. But I have agreed with the older people's commissioner—I'm quite happy to reiterate it—that we do need to make sure that the marketing and targeting information that's going out emphasises the fact that it's open to everybody, and also, in our conversations with employers about co-investment and their training programmes, emphasising some of the facts that we know against some of the myths that are out there. For example, if you recruit a younger person, they're likely to stay with you for a long time, whereas, if you recruit an older person—you know, obviously, if you recruit somebody who is 50, they'll only be with you for 15 years. Very few people who are recruited at the age of 20 are still with the same company at 35, so, actually, you're much more likely to get loyal, longer service if you recruit an older worker. So, those sorts of messages are what we're going to be talking about reinforcing. As I said before, we're completely on board with doing that. Rachel, do you want to say something about the stats?

[292] **Ms Garside-Jones:** Yes. Just that, across the programmes, we've done

an analysis of older workers and how they access programmes. So, it's quite variable across those. For example, for further education learning in 2013–14, that figure was 29.3 per cent. So, it varies across and that's something we can continue to monitor. Through our skills performance measures that we published last year, the performance measure specifically for equality and equity is something we'll be able to monitor uptake of programmes with, keep an eye on that and try and analyse the reasons for that, but it does vary across apprenticeships, work-based learning and other EU-funded programmes.

[293] **Mr Morris:** Can I add two other statistics? For those who need essential skills provision, for the over-50s in 2013–14, the figure accessing was 28.9 per cent and then, amongst apprenticeships, for higher level apprenticeships, the rate in 2012–13 was 11.7 per cent, which, I think reflects the fact that older workers may have prior qualification. For work-based learning, which is a category that includes apprenticeships, the figure for 2013–14 was 6.7 per cent, and for participants aged 50 and above, the total number was 4,880, according to our numbers. So, I think there is access, but perhaps not at the lower level apprenticeship route.

[294] **Eluned Parrott:** Can I be plain? I think that the data that are available to us tell us a little bit about the 'what' that is happening, but what they don't tell us anything about is the 'why'. And, when we look at the responses to our report, of course, you've accepted in principle the research-based recommendations, but there is a concern, obviously, that the data that are available in the context of the Welsh Government's current data collection won't inform the policy in the way that we need them to, because we won't understand why it is that there is a barrier to older people accessing particular kinds of routes. What work can you do—and I assume you might wish to do this in collaboration with the older people's commissioner—to provide that answer to the 'why' questions there?

[295] **Julie James:** Yes. That's very much part of the conversation we're having with the older people's commissioner and the piece of research that she's gone away to scope. A conversation will need to occur after they've scoped it about how we can add to that, as I explained earlier, and I'm sure that the 'why', as you put it, will be very much part of that. Indeed, we want to know how we can best reach and support older people. I'm not attempting, in any way, to say that the Government doesn't want to do it. We very much do want to do that; it's just that, at this point in time, I cannot commit to putting enormous Government resources into that research. So, I

think it's a good compromise to have done it via the older people's commissioner. She was very happy for us to do that.

12:00

[296] As soon as they come back with the scoping of that piece of work, we can have a look and see how we can support that with our research or, indeed, in any other way and, at that point, we will also know what the comprehensive spending review looks like, so I'll have a better idea of what our budgets look like. That's why I wasn't prepared to commit to it up front, but that's not to say that we wouldn't like to do it if we possibly could. Perhaps that is one of the areas I should have said to Rhun where we would like to do it, but, actually, I really do need to wait and see what this budget round looks like before we can commit to it.

[297] **Eluned Parrott:** In terms of 'The Strategy for Older People in Wales', clearly, there's a commitment in there to develop a skills strategy for people over 50. That is something that you have declined as a recommendation, and it's something that the older persons' commissioner is very concerned about, because, clearly, it was a promise made in a former strategy, and now that's not going to be delivered. Can you explain to us why you've decided that that's not appropriate?

[298] **Julie James:** Because we think it was superseded by our policy on skills and our skills implementation plan that's already been issued. Indeed, one of the things I've agreed with the older people's commissioner I will do is meet with her—as I said earlier, we're having a conversation at the moment about when that meeting can take place—about work-based learning and skills provision, which is outside this inquiry, but, nevertheless, a very important part of it. I'm aware that she's not happy that we've done that, and I don't want her to be unhappy about it. We are very firmly of the view that our policy on skills and our skills implementation plan supersede that and mean that we don't need to do it, but I'm more than happy to continue the discussion with her, because, you know, it's not our intention to make the older people's commissioner for Wales unhappy, nor is it my intention to exclude older people from the skills plan. So, I'll continue that correspondence and communication and set of meetings with her and, if, as a result of those meetings, we need to do something, then I'm very happy to do it, but I'm not convinced, at this point in time, that we need to do that.

[299] **Eluned Parrott:** Well, you will have heard, perhaps, that she said in

evidence to us exactly that. She is not happy that that is not going forward. You said to us earlier that you recognise the very great complexity of the needs facing older people when looking at re-engaging in work, that the challenge is huge and that you're more likely to die within a year than get a new job within a year if you are made redundant over the age of 50—that is absolutely shocking, and I'm sure it appals you as well. But, earlier on, you told us that you didn't think a one-size-fits-all approach, like a Jobs Growth Wales, for example, would work for older people, and yet what you're telling us is a one-size-fits-all strategy is absolutely fine. Do you not think that, at the very least, there should be threads within that broader strategy that are specifically targeted at the challenges that are facing older people, given the fact that it is absolutely clear that there are at least as many challenges facing that age group as there are facing the younger age group, which you do have nuanced and targeted approaches for?

[300] **Julie James:** Well, actually, the strategy is one strategy for all age groups across Wales. I'm not a big fan of having a different strategy for every different community or cohort of people. I mean, you'd have a skills strategy for the disabled, for young people, for women, for disabled workers or whoever. That's not the idea. The idea is we have a single skills strategy that encompasses the way that we approach skills in Wales and then an implementation plan for doing it. But, as I'll reiterate, I'm more than happy to keep talking to the older people's—I always get this around the wrong way, the older persons'—commissioner, to make sure that she is happy with what we've got in the plan and to take her concerns on board, whilst looking at the overarching need, in my view, to have a simple, straightforward, obvious strategy for the whole of the skills sector that doesn't get—as you yourself have said about some of the provision—so complex that people have no idea which bit of it they fit into.

[301] So, I suppose the answer to your question is, sort of, 'yes' and 'no'. I absolutely accept that it's got to be clear in that strategy where older people sit, but I don't think that having a different set of strategies for each different cohort of people is a good idea, and we don't plan to do that.

[302] **Eluned Parrott:** Actually, Minister, what I said was that, if you didn't want to have a separate strategy and you wanted to keep it as a whole, would you look at the principle of including threads within that holistic strategy that were specifically targeted at particular-need groups—for example, older people?

[303] **Julie James:** So, what I'm saying is—partly accepting what you're saying, Eluned—that I'm committing to continue to discuss this with the older people's commissioner and reaching an agreement with her about, you know, what she thinks the best fit for that is. And then I'm more than happy to come back to the committee once I know what that is and tell you how that went. So, I'm not going to say 'yes' to what your specific proposal is until I've had that set of discussions with her.

[304] **Eluned Parrott:** Okay. Thank you.

[305] **William Graham:** Thank you very much, Minister. We're most grateful for your help today in explaining—

[306] **Julie James:** It's a pleasure.

[307] **William Graham:** —the reasons for your—for the way in which you have described your acceptance or not of our various recommendations. It looks like a very good way forward. Thank you for your undertaking and offer to come back in due course—

[308] **Julie James:** I'd just like to reiterate, William, that I was very grateful for the work of the committee, and I did think it was both sensible and practical. The fact that we haven't accepted any of the recommendations in full is not in any way a reflection of our view of the work of the committee. The suggestions were helpful, sensible and practical and we will be taking them forward, albeit perhaps not in quite the way that the committee worded them.

[309] **William Graham:** Thank you very much for those kind remarks.

12.05

Papurau i'w Nodi Papers to Note

[310] **William Graham:** Can I ask Members just to look, please, at papers to note? I comment there that we haven't had replies to either yet.

[311] **Joyce Watson:** No, we haven't. They were very good letters, though.

[312] **William Graham:** That brings our formal part of the committee to a

close.

Daeth y cyfarfod i ben am 12:05.

The meeting ended at 12:05.