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Introduction

Victoria Lloyd, Chief Executive, Age Cymru



Victoria Lloyd

More people are working for longer than ever before. For some this is through choice while, for others, a combination of economic factors and policies such as the raising of the

State Pension age mean that continuing to work is a financial imperative.

While many older people continue to enjoy fulfilling careers there are others who face discrimination and find they're unable to continue in their job or find new employment. For the country this is a waste of skills at a time when many sectors are experiencing skills shortages, and for the individual it's often devastating in relation to personal finances, health and self-esteem.

Age discrimination in employment is illegal and the default retirement age was abolished in 2011. However, perceptions and stereotypes of older workers – usually negative – are still held and challenging these is of great importance. Ensuring that older workers aren't forced out of the labour market and providing appropriate support to those who do find themselves unemployed, is vitally important and takes on increasing significance as a result of demographic change and the rising State Pension age.

To create an age friendly Wales, Age Cymru believes that everyone should be able to remain in work as long as they desire and are capable of doing so, and that no-one should be disadvantaged because of their age. Tackling prejudice and discrimination is an essential part of making work better. We welcome Welsh Government's Strategy for an Ageing Society¹ which highlights:

'If Wales is to have a workforce that is fit for the future, employers must consider the health and caring implications of this demographic shift and identify ways to create more age friendly workplaces and combat ageist stereotypes'.¹

In this issue of EnvisAGE, we examine the issues around employment and older people, and shine a spotlight on a range of services and approaches that can help to support and improve the working lives of older people.

In our opening article Dr Martin Hyde of Swansea University presents an overview of employment trends and challenges for our ageing workforce. Research studies show that ill health and caring responsibilities are two of the main reasons why people aged 60-65 aren't in employment, however workplace accommodations, such as flexible or part-time working, mentorship and training and support can help people with long-term health conditions to remain in work. The article also investigates the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on older workers.

Jill Salter of Business in the Community Cymru (BITC) and D'Yon Dowell at Legal & General provide an insight into the Age at Work programme, where Age Cymru and BITC are working with employers in Wales to ensure they're creating workplaces where older workers can thrive. The Age at Work programme helps employers to understand the benefits of recruiting, training, and retaining individuals aged 50+, and to equip older workers to remain in, or return to, work. The article highlights the Age at Work programme put into practice in the workplace of Legal & General and the actions being taken to create an age-inclusive workplace.

Shavanah Taj at Wales TUC focuses on older workers and the menopause at work. The article emphasises that greater recognition is needed of the challenges that the menopause presents and the need for proactive action in the workplace and shows how trade unions have made the menopause a workplace priority.

Claire Morgan of Carers Wales explores the relationship between employment and caring, and the importance of providing support for older carers who work. Adopting carer-confident policies and practices in the workplace can help keep valuable skills and expertise in the workforce and increase productivity. The article features the Employers for Carers scheme.

Kayleigh Jones draws attention to the barriers that older people can face to employment and provides an insight into the work of PRIME Cymru, which provides bespoke support to older people in Wales to set up in business, find employment, or develop new skills through training and volunteering opportunities.

In our final article, David Hagendyk of the Learning and Work Institute (Wales) provides an insight into lifelong learning and all age apprenticeships. The article highlights that learners need to be encouraged, inspired and supported, and that a range of interventions, including apprenticeships, Personal Learning Accounts (PLAs), flexible learning opportunities, and advice and guidance all need to be in place to support everyone at the different stages of their lives.

Our thanks to all the authors who've contributed their expertise to highlight the issues around employment and older people and have shared good practice in providing a valuable insight into the support available to improve the working lives of older people.

EnvisAGE is a discussion journal edited by Age Cymru. It aims to explore issues affecting older people, stimulate discussion and share good practice.

For more information on our vision for an age friendly Wales or any topics covered in this journal please contact us on 029 2043 1555

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www.agecymru.org.uk/agefriendlywales

Employment trends and challenges for our ageing workforce

.....
**Dr Martin Hyde, Associate Professor of Gerontology,
Centre for Innovative Ageing, Swansea University**
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Throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s workforces in most of the so-called ‘high income countries’, such as the UK, USA and Japan, have been ageing and shrinking. Lower fertility rates meant that there were fewer younger people entering work, whilst the availability of relatively generous early retirement schemes meant that workers were leaving well before the official retirement or State Pension age.

In response to this many governments enacted reforms to increase the labour market participation rates of older workers up to and beyond State Pension ages. The result has been a fundamental shift from an ‘early exit culture’¹ to a culture in which the expectation of extended labour force participation by older adults is the norm.² In the UK the government scrapped the default retirement age in 2011, increased State Pension age (although at a

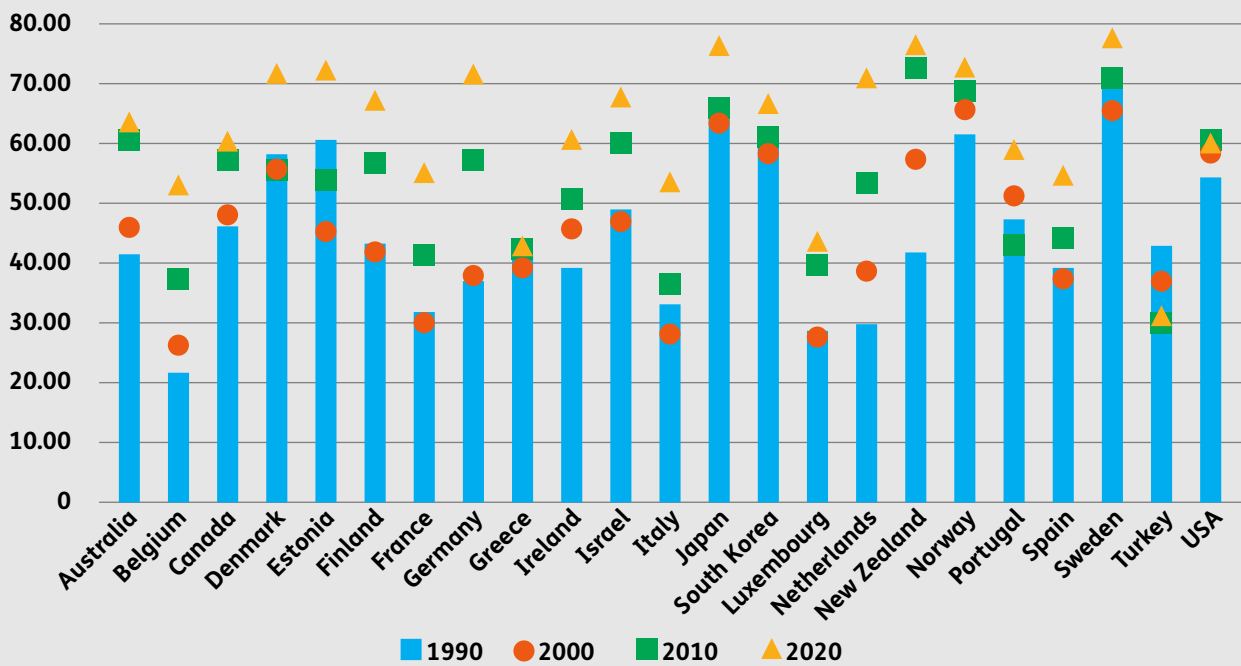
faster rate for women as it sought to equalize pension ages for men and women), and launched its Fuller Working Lives strategy³ to support people to remain at work for longer. Whilst these policy initiatives appear to have had the desired effect of increasing employment in later life, older workers still face a number of issues, which are likely to have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Labour market trends

As Figure 1 shows there’s been a notable rise in employment rates amongst the 55-64 year old age group across the high-income countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) area between 1990 and 2020. In the UK this has largely been driven by increases in the employment rate of older women. Since the mid-1980s the employment rates amongst older male workers has increased from around 70% to 75% in 2021. In comparison, the employment rate amongst older women went from 42% in 1984 to 67% in 2021 (Figure 2). However, despite these increases there are still around a quarter of men and a third of women in this age group who aren’t in employment. The situation is somewhat more pressing in Wales than in other parts of the UK. Prior to the Covid-19 outbreak Wales had the third lowest employment rate of those aged 50-64 years in the UK (70.2% amongst all people; 73.9% amongst men; 66.5% amongst women).



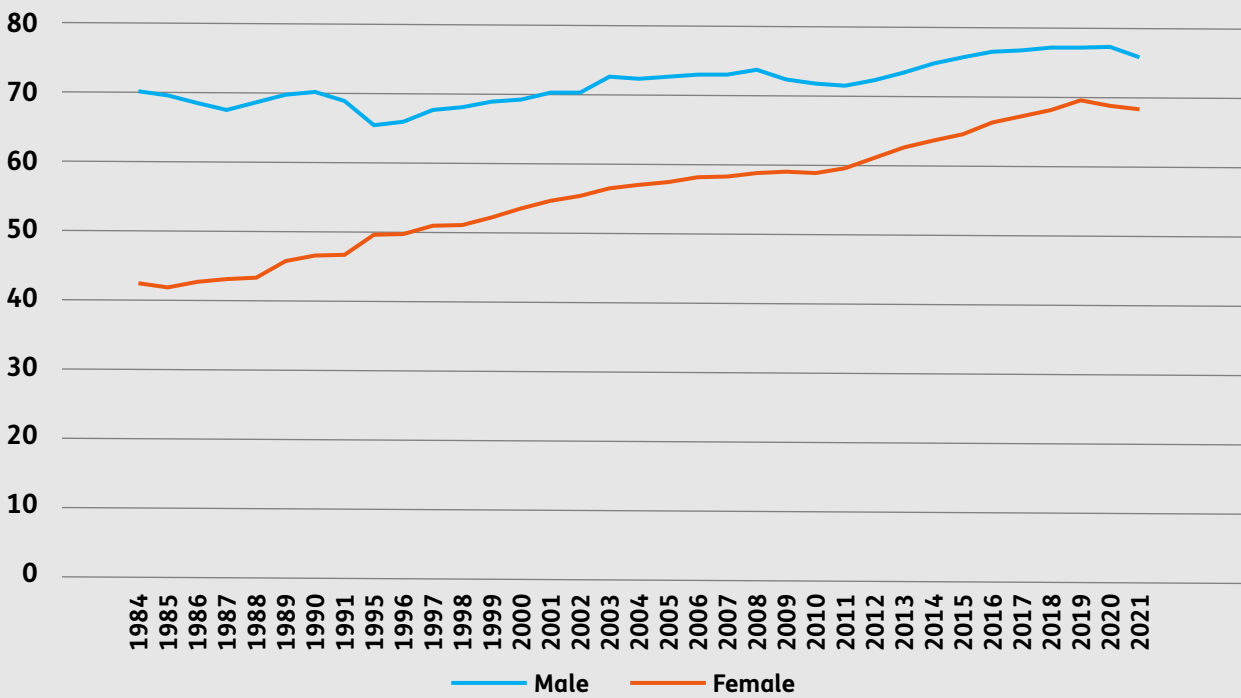
Figure 1: Employment rates for those aged 55-64 in selected countries 1990-2020



Source: OECD (2022) Employment rate by age group (indicator)

<https://data.oecd.org/emp/employment-rate-by-age-group.htm> (Accessed on 15 February 2022)

Figure 2: Employment rate amongst those aged 50-64 from 1984-2021



Source: Department for Work and Pensions <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/economic-labour-market-status-of-individuals-aged-50-and-over>

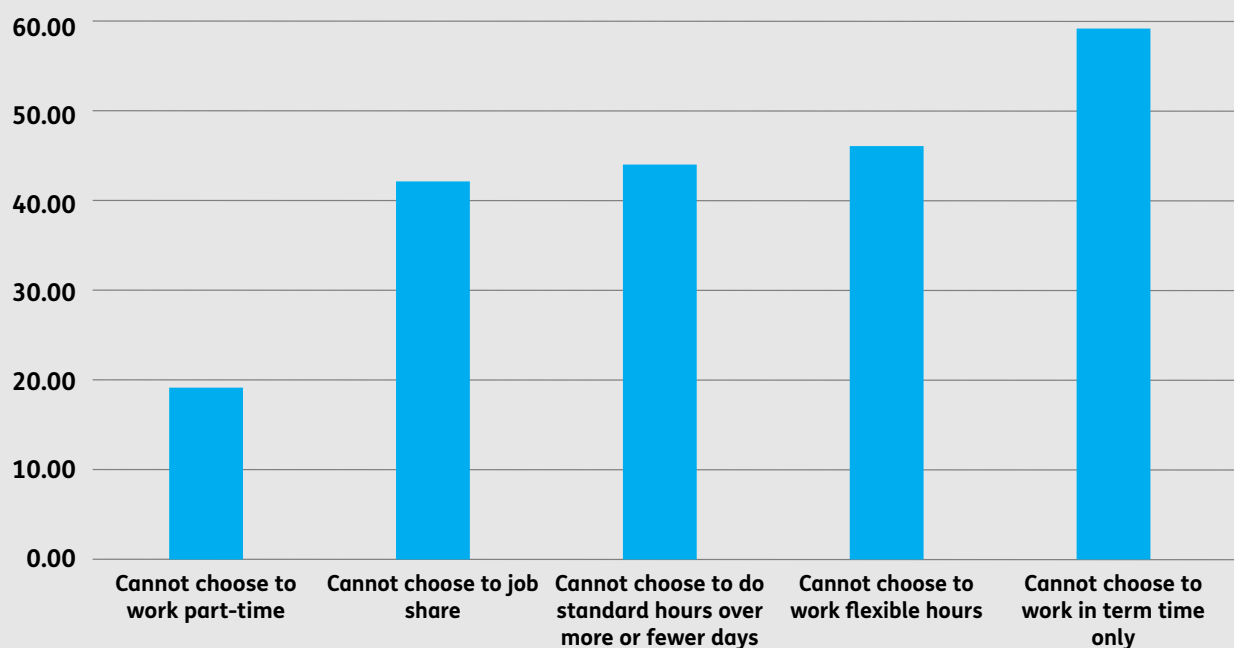
Analysis by the Trades Union Congress (TUC) for the UK as a whole shows ill health and caring responsibilities are two of the main reasons why people aged 60-65 aren't in employment.⁴ Almost a quarter of economically inactive people in this age group were out of work because of long-term sickness or disability and more than one-in-twenty women approaching State Pension age has had to leave work because they're looking after a family member. Amongst the UK regions Wales has the fifth highest rate of long-term sick and injured amongst those aged 60-65 (13.9%). This equates to around 33,222 people in this age group who are prevented from working due to their health. However, recent research has shown that workplace accommodations, such as flexible or part-time working, mentorship and training and support can help people with long-term health conditions to remain in work.⁵

Working conditions

Flexible working doesn't only benefit those with long-term health conditions but can also help people with caring responsibilities. The survey of more than 12,000 workers aged 50 and over, for the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), found that more than three-quarters (78%) said they'd like more flexible hours, and 73% said they wanted to see more part-time positions offered.⁶ This fits with research by Timewise and the Centre for Ageing Better which found that 72% of older workers said flexi/part-time working helped improve work-life balance, 34% said it helped with caring responsibilities and 29% said it helped with health issues.⁷ However, that same report found that flexible working conditions aren't always available or advertised to older workers. Indeed, the pre-pandemic figures from the National Survey



Figure 3: Percentage of workers aged 50-64 years in Wales who are not allowed forms of flexible working by their employer



Source: National Survey for Wales (2020) <https://gov.wales/national-survey-wales>
 Author's calculations.

for Wales show that, with the exception of allowing part-time working, there's only moderate employer support for flexible forms of working (Figure 3). Around four-in-ten employers did not allow job share or flexi-time arrangements. Arrangements for part-time working are better, but still around a fifth of employers did not allow this either. However, where these flexible forms of working are allowed there are reasonable levels of uptake. Around four-in-ten older workers in Wales reported that they work part-time or work flexible hours, and a quarter were able to spread their standard hours over more or fewer days, e.g. a four-day working week.

Figures from the same survey show that access to employment benefits for older workers in Wales also varies. Nine-in-ten work for an employer who provides a workplace pension and eight-in-ten get paid annual leave. However,

only two-thirds get sick pay and just four-in-ten get paid leave to care for a family member, other than a child, e.g. a parent or spouse, in the event of an emergency. Given that poor health and caring responsibilities are two of the main reasons why older workers leave employment before State Pension age these are potentially worrying figures. Hopefully, more employers in Wales and the UK generally will see the benefits of offering flexible forms of work to their older workers. There are some examples of good practice from the Timewise and Centre for Ageing Better study which has also produced a toolkit to support employers to help them develop and deliver flexible working.⁸ There's also the recently established Business for Health (<https://www.businessfor-health.org/>). This is a 'business-led coalition of socially responsible employers, purchasers, investors and innovators supporting long-term

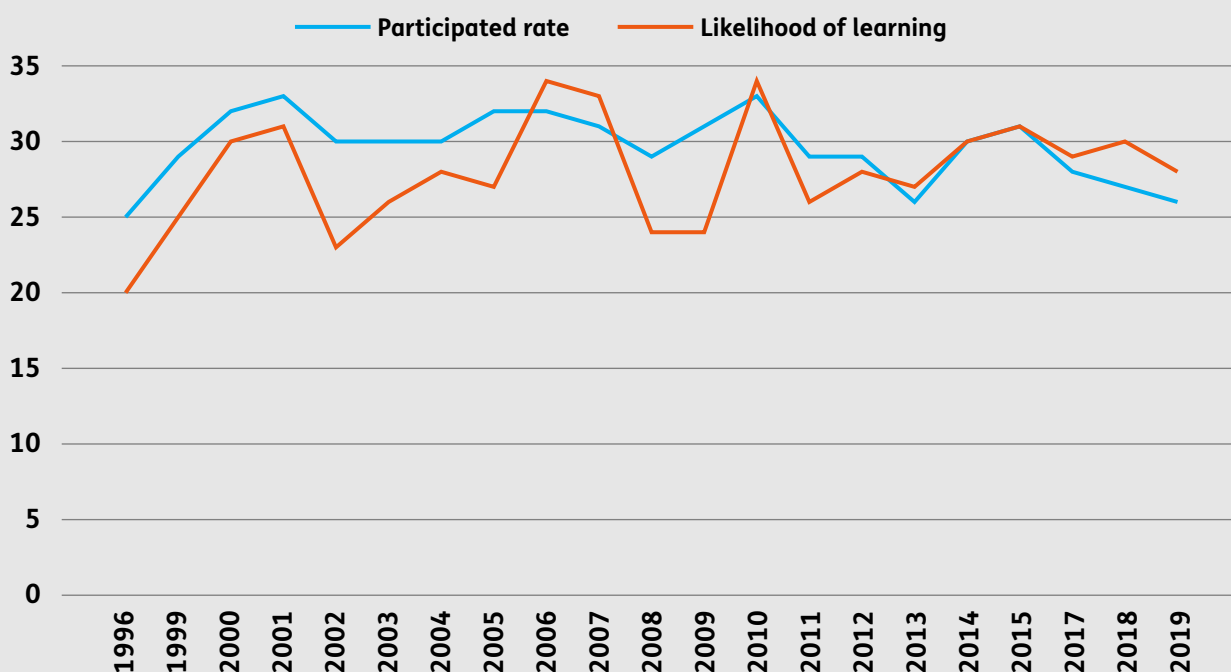
sustainable innovation and investment in preventative health and care. Its aim is to enhance the health and economic resilience of the UK, catalysing and facilitating business contributions to reduce health inequalities and add five years to healthy life expectancy.

Training and skills

As we're likely to be working until later in life it's been argued that we'll be required to update existing skills/knowledge or learn new skills.⁹ Results from the aforementioned BEIS study show that 63% of older workers said there should be more training and retraining schemes to help them gain new skills and deal with technology. However, there are concerns that participation in training is far lower among older employees than among younger employees.¹⁰ Figures from the National Adult

Learning Surveys show that around 30% of those aged 55-64 years undertake some form of learning (Figure 4). This proportion has remained fairly constant since 1996. However, there was a notable decline following the global financial crisis of 2008 and there appears to be evidence of a similar decline from 2014 onwards with rates of participation in learning in 2019 being equal to the lowest point following the global financial crisis. The figures for the proportion of those aged 55-64 who report that they're likely to undertake some learning in the coming three years show a similar trend. When asked about the main motivations for undertaking any learning only around 10% of those aged 55-64 report that it was for work-related reasons. The most common response (around 20%) said that it wasn't their choice, which suggests that much of

Figure 4: Percentage of those aged 55-64 who participated in some learning activity in the past 3 years and percentage who say that they're likely to take up some learning in the next 3 years



Source: Learning & Work <https://learningandwork.org.uk/what-we-do/lifelong-learning/adult-participation-in-learning-survey/rates-of-adult-participation-in-learning/>

the learning undertaken in this age group is mandatory training at work, e.g. first aid. Participants in this survey were also asked what the main barriers were to taking part in any learning. Worryingly, each year, around a fifth of those aged 55-64 say that they consider themselves 'too old' to undertake any learning.

Figures from the 2019 National Survey for Wales paint a slightly more positive picture. Around eight-in-ten older workers in Wales report that there are good opportunities for development at their work, and six-in-ten say that there are good opportunities for progression at work. 43% of older workers in Wales report that they've recently taken steps to develop work-related skills and 37% said that they'd like to develop work-related skills. Amongst those who hadn't learnt new skills, the vast majority (42%) were happy with the skills they had or felt that they didn't need any new skills for their job. Very few said that they'd experienced any barriers to learning. However, 7% report that they didn't have enough time and 6% report that their employer didn't offer any training opportunities.

Ageism and discrimination

There's real concern that older workers face age discrimination at work.¹¹ Ageism not only has a negative impact on the health and well-being of older workers it can harm their performance and influence employers' hiring decisions.¹² Figures from the National Survey for Wales (2019) show that the majority of older workers in Wales don't feel that they work in ageist organisations. More than 80% report that younger and older workers are treated the same. However, there is evidence that ageism at work affects around 12% of older workers in Wales. Based on Statistics Wales figures that there are just over 316,000 people aged 50-64 in employment in Wales,

this would mean that almost 38,000 older workers feel that they've been treated less well at work because of their age. Equally concerning are the figures that show 11% of older workers (around 35,000) have been bullied at work (although not necessarily due to their age). Even though these figures are relatively low they're still too high. No older worker should experience ageism or bullying. Luckily there are organisations, such as The Age of No Retirement and Business in the Community, who are working with employers to develop more age-positive workplace cultures.

Unemployment and job search

Despite the aforementioned improvements in employment rates amongst older workers in Wales prior to the Covid-19 pandemic there were still around 2.2% of those aged between 50 and 64 who were unemployed. As already noted, poor health is one of the main reasons for not being in work in this age group. It's also a major reason for not being able to get back into work. Data from the National Survey for Wales, shown in Table 1, reveal that 42% of older unemployed workers in Wales said that having health problems or a disability was the main reason why they found it difficult to find work. Following this, around one-third said that their age was a barrier to them finding work. The third main reason that older unemployed workers found it difficult to find work was because they had caring responsibilities. Other reasons included a lack of locally available work, transport problems and lack of skills or confidence.

Amongst those who felt that their age was a barrier to finding work almost two-thirds (65%) felt that this was because of ageist attitudes by employers, around a third (28%) said that their age made it difficult to do the kind of work that they'd previously done and around a

Table 1. Reasons why older unemployed workers in Wales find it difficult to find work

Reasons why it is difficult to find work	%
Health problems / disability	42.55
My age	28.57
Caring responsibilities	12.89
The kind of work I want isn't available locally	9.32
I don't have the right qualifications	8.54
Transport problems	8.54
I don't have the right skills	6.83
Lack of confidence	6.21
Can't find jobs with the right working pattern	5.75
I don't have the right experience	5.59
Other	3.57
Alcohol or drug issues	0.93
Criminal record	0.47

Source: National Survey for Wales (2020) <https://gov.wales/national-survey-wales>
 Author's calculations.

quarter (27%) said that the jobs they were qualified to do were no longer as readily available as they once were. These findings fit with evidence published by the Centre for Ageing Better.¹³ They also found that around one third (36%) of 50 to 69 year olds said that their age would disadvantage them in applying for jobs and 15% thought they'd been turned down for a job due to their age.

Pandemic impact on employment and training

In addition to the horrific impact that Covid-19 has had on health and well-being it has also exacted an economic cost. As with health these economic impacts haven't been borne equally across all age groups. It's been the younger and the older workers who've been

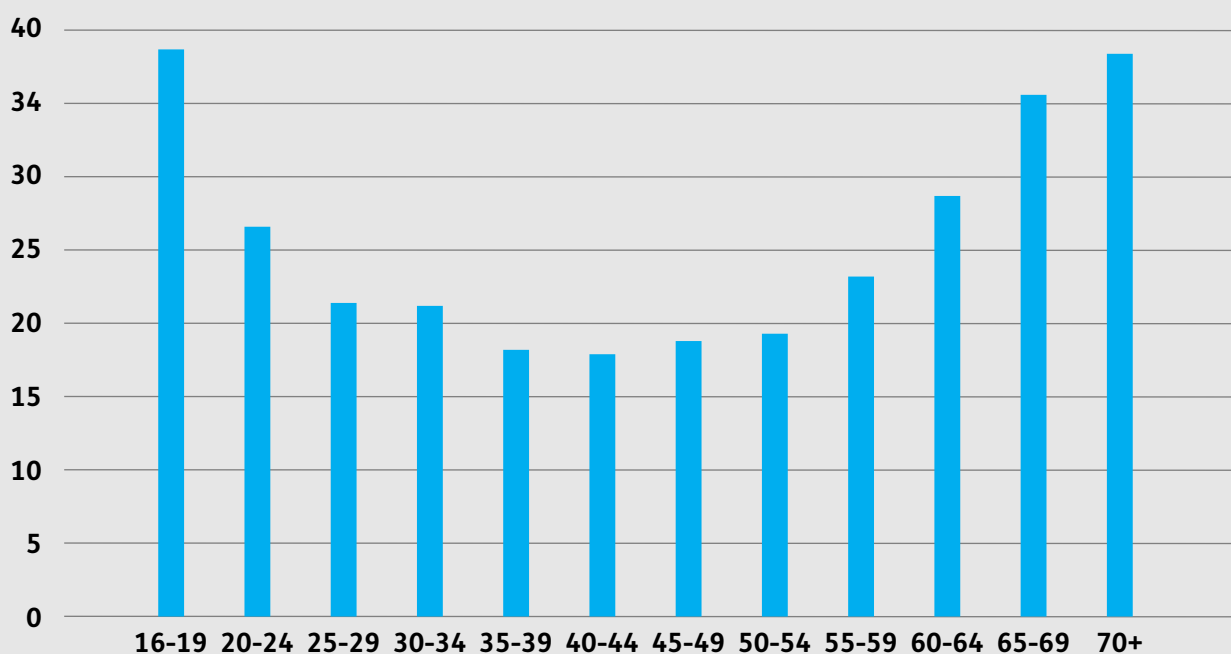
most likely to have been furloughed during the pandemic (Figure 5). HMRC Official Statistics showed that, at end of June 2021, a total of 1.9 million jobs were being furloughed through the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS), representing 6% of eligible employments. Amongst workers aged 50 and over, more than 600,000 jobs were furloughed, representing more than one third of workers on furlough (34%), and up from 31% at the end of May 2021. Analysis by the Office for National Statistics¹⁴ reveals that employees aged 50 years and over were more likely to report working fewer hours than usual (including none) because of Covid-19 than those aged under 50 years. Worryingly, three-in-ten of older workers on furlough said that they thought there is a 50% chance or higher that

they will lose their job when the scheme ends. This is of particular concern as older workers who become unemployed are more likely to be at risk of long-term unemployment than younger workers.¹⁵ Hence, it's vital that any initiatives to help people back into work as the pandemic recedes don't exclude older workers.

Figures aren't available to indicate whether the current Covid-19 pandemic has impacted on the rates of participation in learning and/or skill development activities. On the one hand it's possible that, for those on furlough, the pandemic presented an opportunity to learn a new skill or take an old hobby back up.

There's certainly lots of anecdotal evidence that this has been the case. However, evidence of the effect of the previous economic crisis suggests that there'll be fewer work-related training and learning opportunities for older workers as employers seek to recoup any losses.⁹ The good news is, however, that Learning and Work Institute and the Shaw Foundation have launched a programme to support more than 6,000 adults across the UK who are looking to find a new job, change career or retrain as a result of the pandemic.

Figure 5: Percentage of people in employment who are temporarily away from paid work April to June 2020



Source: Office for National Statistics Analysis of Labour Force Survey <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/people-temporarilyawayfrompaidworkintheuk/august2020>

Skills, knowledge, and perspective – business is recognising the benefits of supporting staff over 50

Jill Salter, Age at Work Programme Manager, Business in the Community Cymru
and D'Yon Dowell – Senior Manager Corporate Communications, Legal & General

With people over 50 making up one third of the workforce, and this proportion increasing, Wales' workforce is getting older; so recruiting, training, and retaining over 50s is essential for business and for the wider economy.

Evidence shows that multi-generational workplaces are more innovative and productive, with colleagues of all ages bringing a range of benefits and perspectives to the workplace.

So, considering the ageing workforce and benefits of a range of age groups working within teams and organisations, it makes business sense that employers take steps to ensure older workers are included and supported as a key part of a diverse and dynamic workforce.

Working with employers

The **Age at Work** programme – delivered by responsible business network Business in the Community and Age Cymru – helps employers take action to ensure their organisation can support older workers to stay at work as long as they wish to, and to appeal to over 50s seeking a return to work. More than 40 employers have been involved to date.

The programme helps employers to understand the benefits of recruiting, training, and retaining individuals aged 50+; to put

policies and practices in place to ensure age diversity and inclusion are valued; and to equip older workers to remain in, or return to, work.

By completing a Business Age Self-Audit at the initial stages of engaging with the programme, employers can identify gaps and can highlight strengths in their approach to age inclusion, providing a clear framework for age-inclusive action in specific areas, where needed.

Recruiting and keeping older people's talent

With many organisations currently struggling to recruit talent, there's an opportunity for employers to widen their prospective talent pool and to take measures to increase their appeal to people over 50 who bring skills, knowledge, a different perspective, and resilience to the workplace.

When recruiting, it's important that organisations consider the language and images used in job advertisements, ensuring they're not discriminatory or unintentionally exclude older people.

Organisations can retain valuable older employees by ensuring they have practices and policies to support them to remain in work, such as flexible working and support for those with caring responsibilities or for those experiencing the menopause or health and wellbeing issues.

Skills, knowledge, and perspective.

Businesses are recognising the benefits of supporting staff over 50.



The Responsible Business Network Cymru



Age at Work encourages employers to offer training opportunities to older workers, helping them transfer their skills to different roles, be resilient to change, and ensure that their skills are up-to-date and relevant.

Via a range of tools and support services offered free-of-charge, thanks to support from the National Lottery Community Fund, Age at Work is supporting employers in Wales who have recognised the importance of building age inclusion into their wellbeing, diversity, and inclusion agendas. Many organisations in Wales – including Legal & General, RHA Wales, South Wales Police, Coleg y Cymoedd, Kingspan, Wales & West Utilities, Castell Howell Foods, Gower College Swansea, Dŵr Cymru, and Monmouthshire Building Society – are already taking action for a more age-inclusive workplace.

A view from an age-inclusive employer: Legal & General

At Legal & General, our aim is to create a workplace where we can all perform at our best, no matter who we are. Inclusivity is at the heart of this, and age is no exception. We believe that no matter what people's stage in life, it is them who enable us to be brilliant.

It's not just about Gen Z

Which is why in Wales, we're actively recruiting more people over 50. We're doing this because having a diverse workforce is hugely beneficial to our business and our customers. It enables better decision making by bringing different mindsets and backgrounds to the table, and it ensures we match our customer profile. We want people who can empathise with our customers in an authentic way. Our experiences shape who we are, and we need people as diverse as our customer base to bring different perspectives and to enable us to connect with people from all walks of life.

“As we look to support customers creating long-term value by saving for retirement, enabling them to plan and then live a more vibrant future, we need an employee base of all ages to mirror our diverse customer profile. We're partnering with Rest Less to specifically attract the 50+ age profile for roles in our customer services teams in Cardiff in order for us to encourage greater diversity in our teams providing direct support to our customers.”

**Rachel Humphrey, HR Director,
Legal & General Retirement.**

We also know we're in a highly competitive recruitment market, especially in Cardiff. If we don't look beyond our traditional hires, we won't bring in the talent we need to succeed. The pandemic has meant that many people over the age of 50, who've worked for decades in industries like travel and hospitality, now find themselves out of work. We want to tap into the strong interpersonal skills, expertise and life experience of this group and support them in their return to work after a difficult time.

The over 50s cohort is also interesting for Legal & General as we know a lot of people at the later stages of their career are not just looking for a 'job', but a job with purpose. As a company with a clear purpose – to use our long-term assets in an economically and socially useful way to benefit everyone in our communities – we believe that what we do resonates with people and gives them a reason to show up every day. We're passionate about creating a world where people can thrive, regardless of their life stage, and our people are connected to that passion.

Normalising the 'M' word

Recruitment is only one aspect of age inclusivity though: our other focus is on ensuring that people over 50 thrive at Legal & General once they've joined us. We've a clear retirement policy to support our older workers and to signpost them to tools that can help them to prepare for retirement – specifically financial planning tools, managing their wellbeing, and flexible-working discussion aides.

We've also developed a menopause policy to support our female workers and provide tools and education for line managers to help them understand how they can support employees going through menopause. For us, tackling issues like menopause is about normalising

what happens to people as they get older, so it becomes easier to talk about it in a work context.

“I was convinced I had early onset dementia when I first started experiencing symptoms of the peri-menopause, but I was suffering with severe ‘brain fog’. One in ten women consider leaving their job when they go through the menopause, so having a policy in place signposting to tools and resources is a highly valuable resource. I was able to access the support I needed to get me back on track, which was a lifeline.”

Rebecca Shipston, Digital Marketing Acquisition Manager, Legal & General.

Demystifying retirement

Other initiatives we've taken in Legal & General to support our over 50 employees and customers include our vulnerable customers programme. This provides support to our customers who need it most, including older customers who may need extra support.

We've also invested in a suite of retirement materials to help demystify this often-stressful stage of life. This includes our [Rewirement podcast](#) and [articles](#) to help people make the most of their retirement. And working with the Open University to design a free '[Retirement Planning Made Easy](#)' course that breaks down the steps to take to understand how much you need in your pension pot and ways to provide an income when you retire.

Building places for everyone

We know we have an ageing workforce across the UK. At Legal & General, a quarter of our people in Cardiff alone are over the age of 46. We also recognise that the age range of our customer base means that if we recruit and

Taking action for an age-inclusive workplace

Through Age at Work.



support older workers, we can improve the excellent service we offer our customers.

Which is why in Cardiff we've ensured our new office at The Interchange is built with inclusivity at its heart. We want to provide a space where people of all ages feel welcome and can bring their best selves to work. The technology in the building will enable a more flexible workforce, and we've considered diversity and inclusivity in how we design different workspaces for different types of people and their needs. We see the future of work as one that is flexible, so that you can balance your responsibilities at work with those at home, whether that's caring for parents, children, or grandchildren.

With this new office and our other initiatives, we hope to provide our employees in Wales – across all age groups – the tools, culture, and environment they need to thrive.

Let's make age inclusion a reality in Wales

Employers can benefit from the following support through Age at Work:

- **Age-Inclusive Learning Network** – Brings together HR, inclusion, and wellbeing professionals to discuss challenges, share good practice, and learn from each other
- **Business Age Audit** – A self-assessment tool to identify gaps and highlight strengths in current operations regarding older workers
- **Age-Inclusive Toolkit** – A guide to good practice around age-inclusion. Provides tips and suggestions, good practice examples, and signposts to useful resources for supporting staff
- **Mid-Career Review Webinars** – For individuals over 50, these webinars allow them to reflect and consider their current circumstances regarding wellbeing, work, and finances, helping them to make the later life they envisage a reality.

Further information

Visit www.bitcni.org.uk/agecymru or contact jill.salter@bitc.org.uk for more information on how to get involved in the Age at Work programme.

Older workers and the menopause at work

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Shavanah Taj, General Secretary, Wales TUC
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For many women, there have been massive societal changes over the last 50 years. Women make up 51% of the population and current generations are amongst the first to work at this intensity, with so many hours, and as many responsibilities.

As people live longer, they rely on younger family members to care for them as they age. Working parents rely on grandparents for childcare, and larger mortgages often mean that women are now working later and longer into life. Often this sandwich generation of women will be juggling all these roles. So, when the menopause hits it can feel insurmountable.

The sleepless nights bathed in sweat and anxiety don't make for a comfortable day in work. The PPE that protects workers from Covid is hot, often badly fitting, uncomfortable and bothersome to remove. So, the predominantly female workforce who require it try to drink and go to the toilet less just to carry out their duties.

Disabled women face the unsure interaction and side effects of hormonal treatment with their other medication and younger women going through the menopause are often dealing with the stigma, coupled with grief for the type of family they thought they may have had, or with intense pain from operations or treatments that have caused the menopause.

And this is before we even consider the structural racism that prevents Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic women from accessing proper treatment, or the transphobia that denies that the menopause is even an issue for trans people.

This is why trade unions have made the menopause a workplace priority.

In Wales, if you work in the devolved public sector you are protected by workplace menopause policies – the only country in the UK to have such an agreement.

This is in stark contrast to research carried out by Wales TUC in 2016 which found fewer than 5% of workers believed they were protected by workplace policies. The report, which was based on a survey of almost 4000 workers, found that 88% of women workers who've experienced the menopause felt it had an effect on their working life. Around six in ten had witnessed the issue being treated as a joke in the workplace.

Policies matter. They can often be a start for more proactive action. For example:

- Unions have negotiated paid leave for women to attend peer support menopause cafes
- Unions have collectively bargained for pay parity and to close the gender, ethnicity and disability pay gaps which all create the inequality leading to poorer health outcomes

- Unions have negotiated reasonable adjustments for women who need to avoid the stressful morning commute as tiredness, anxiety and fatigue impacts on day-to-day life
- Unions have campaigned for workers' uniforms to be made out of more comfortable and cooler natural fibres rather than hot and sweaty materials
- Wales TUC has also developed courses on the menopause, from the ten-minute e-note to raise general awareness to the two-day course which teaches you how to negotiate and make a difference for those going through the menopause
- Trade unions in Wales have also worked with the Welsh Government to raise awareness on the lack of compulsory training that GPs have on the menopause, or indeed on women's gynaecological issues more generally
- You'd also be surprised how hard unions have had to fight just to get water, fans and ventilation on the agenda – let alone clean and accessible toilets.

But if this all sounds abstract, the real developments are those which happen at the heart of our workplaces.

I once delivered training to a group of male union reps who started the session looking like they were trying to find the nearest black hole to swallow them up in. By the end, they were fully engaged and planning what practical actions they could take.

A few weeks later one of these reps contacted me for advice on how to represent a woman who was enduring challenging symptoms related to her menopause and was being badly treated at work. She was on her final warning for taking too much sick leave. The woman

had an unblemished record, wanted to remain at work and had clearly been badly affected by the menopause.

I worked with the rep and his union and a few weeks later he contacted me again to say that this woman was now being reimbursed for all the annual leave she had been forced to take, had a new pattern of working with reasonable adjustments in place and her record had been cleared. She was delighted, the rep was delighted, and I was delighted because in too many cases women have left work without feeling supported or protected.

So, there's an ambitious agenda developing now for greater recognition of the challenges that the menopause presents and the need for proactive action in workplace. We would like to hear from any – union member or not – who wants to join us in developing our menopause campaigns and help us become a menopause friendly country.



Shavanah Taj. Copyright © Wales TUC

Further information

For further information please visit www.tuc.org.uk/wales

Why supporting working carers matters

.....
Claire Morgan, Director, Carers Wales
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The number of people balancing paid employment and unpaid caring responsibilities (working carers) in Wales has been increasing for many years. An ageing population coupled with a higher retirement age means that people are living and working for longer. Carers UK research found that the average person in Wales has a 50:50 chance of becoming a carer by age 45, long before retirement age. The peak age for caring is 45 to 64, a time when most people are also at the peak of their working life with a vast range of skills and experience.

It isn't until caring happens that you realise how hard it can be. Caring is unpredictable; it can happen overnight or gradually, and it can be short or long term. Without the right support at the right time carers will be under pressure and something will have to give – and it is often their job.

Balancing work and unpaid care responsibilities can be incredibly difficult, so much so that employees will often significantly reduce their hours or leave work altogether, resulting in the loss of experienced and skilled staff. The consequences of not addressing support for carers at work negatively impacts both the employee and the employer. It also has a damaging effect for the economy. Business in the Community (2015)¹ said 'Older workers are vital for the future of the economy. The need

to develop a long-term strategic approach to retaining older workers is crucially important. Industries need to adapt their practices quickly to ensure they can recruit and retain the older workers who are fundamental to their workforce'.

Carers face huge pressures, ranging from financial strain to emotional stress and physical exhaustion. Our research found that, if unsupported, caring for as little as five hours a week can impact on a carer's ability to work, with those caring for ten hours experience a significant effect. In 2018, Carers Wales surveyed working carers to ask them what would help them at work; the top five answers were:

1. Flexible working practices
2. Flexible/short notice leave
3. A carers policy
4. Paid care leave
5. Carers awareness training for managers.

Our survey highlighted that when a carer feels supported in the workplace, working while caring can have a positive impact on not only the carer, but the cared for person and others in the care circle. Carers spoke about their increased self-esteem, the pleasure the whole family derived from sharing news about their day and having new things to talk about. Working didn't reduce the level of busyness but being out of the house with something else to think about was motivating, energising and good for their mental health and the family environment.



“I love spending time with [my son] doing everything that he needs to do and helping him to progress, making sure that he has all the attention that he needs. I also need to do things for myself though. Work really helps with that, in terms of meeting other people and feeling like I’ve achieved something myself”.

A concerning element that the survey highlighted, was that carers feared employers would not be understanding of caring needs

for example, if a carer needed to urgently leave work to be with their cared for or attend appointments. These fears had impacted on working carers’ career progression and finances, with respondents telling us that they hadn’t taken promotions due to their caring responsibilities, which meant they hadn’t progressed at work or received salary increases. Many had eaten into savings to subsidise their income.

Before the Covid-19 pandemic there were around 223,000 working carers in Wales, equating to one in seven of the Welsh workforce.

However, the number of working carers in Wales has increased substantially because of the pandemic. A Carers UK survey found that 6% had given up work to care and 3% had reduced working hours. This equates to 149,812 people in Wales who have given up work to provide unpaid care and 74,906 people who have reduced their working hours to part-time because of unpaid caring responsibilities.

Adopting carer-confident policies and practices in the workplace can help keep valuable skills and expertise in the workforce and increase productivity. Supporting employees with caring responsibilities isn't just the right thing to do – it makes good business sense too.

Established in 2009 by Carers UK and a number of large corporates, 'Employers for Carers' is a subscriptions-based membership scheme which provides information, consultative services, training and the sharing of good practice to enable employers to be more 'carer-confident'. In 2018, Carers Wales was provided with a one-off Welsh Government grant to establish the Wales Hub of Employers for Carers. The Wales Hub offers all the benefits of the existing scheme, with the added benefit of providing all resources in the Welsh language, having Wales-based support via a Wales Hub Manager and offering Wales-based events.

Here are some key areas of good practice in creating a 'carer-confident' workplace that Employers for Carers can help with:

1. Keeping in touch regularly with employees to see how they are, understanding changing circumstances with their caring role
2. Visible communications and championing of caring by senior leaders to raise awareness, highlight support offered and encourage employees to self-identify as carers
3. Extending health and wellbeing provision for carers, including linking up to specialist sources of support (e.g. Carers Wales) or promoting existing resources more proactively
4. Flexible working arrangements for carers including informal adjustments around work times, days, patterns, and location
5. Offering leave arrangements to carers, including new or additional paid carers leave (or paid special/family leave), emergency leave and longer periods of unpaid leave
6. Giving managers guidance on supporting carers, including initiating a conversation on support needs and implementing workplace support at individual and team level
7. Creating carers networks to enable employees to connect and engage, e.g. via social media, virtual drop-ins, tea and talk sessions and webinars
8. Supporting employees/carers, including staff networks, to use a greater range of technologies to help them communicate with each other and access support
9. Proactive signposting of employees to external sources of information and support for caring, including to local care and support services and carers organisations
10. Regular review and risk assessments of policies, practices and circumstances affecting carers in the workforce.

Employers for Carers research that drew upon the views of more than 200 employers found that rather than compromising business objectives, recognising and supporting carers in the workplace helps attract and retain employees, increases resilience and productivity, reduces stress and absenteeism and improves people management and staff morale.

“At first I struggled to see myself as a carer and felt a bit of a fraud, after all I’m just doing practical things for mum. I struggled to identify myself as a carer but now I realise I am and I accept it and the help that is available. Mum often says she couldn’t live without me and that I’m her lifeline. Knowing that I have the support of my employers makes it better for me. It took me a long time to accept I was a carer and even longer to tell people at work about my situation. I would suggest to anyone that has a caring role tell their manager/HR team as soon as possible so they are aware of the situation and also to talk with colleagues. There are so many people out there going through the same”.

Further information

For more information about Employers for Carers see:

<https://www.employersforcarers.org/about-us/wales-hub>



Supporting older people into employment

.....
Kayleigh Jones, Communications Co-ordinator, PRIME Cymru
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It's no secret that older workers have faced adverse and uncertain times since the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns. It's also widely known that older people are more likely to face barriers to continued full-time employment such as health issues, care responsibilities or age discrimination.

Prior to the pandemic, things were looking progressive, with UK employment levels for the over 50s at an all-time high. However, things started to change last year, with the unemployment rate for 50–64 year-olds peaking at 4.1%. Now, nearly 600,000 more over 50s are unemployed or economically inactive compared with two years ago.

A recent report by the Department of Work and Pensions stated that over the past year, older people have been leaving the workforce earlier. Yet, the Resolution Foundation also found that older workers take longer to get back into work and on average over the last 20 years, workers aged over 50 have faced a 9.5% pay cut at their new jobs after unemployment.

The latest Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme statistics (released September 2021 by HM Revenue & Customs) revealed that one in four older workers have been furloughed, with a higher rate amongst the over 60s. This raises a big concern that older workers will be hardest hit when the furlough scheme ends. In addition

to the Government's proposed cut to Universal Credit, our older population will need increased support.

Younger workers have also faced incredibly tough times and schemes such as Kickstart have been great initiatives to create jobs. However, there's been no equivalent for other vulnerable groups such as the over 50s.

PRIME Cymru has advocated for the appreciation of Wales's older workforce since our beginning in 2001. We recognise that the vast experience and extensive skillset of the over 50s is greatly underappreciated by employers.

HRH The Prince of Wales founded our charity in response to letters he was receiving from those aged over 50, who were facing difficulty securing work because of their age. To this day, many of our clients express frustration that their age can be a barrier to employment. Christopher Harry, aged 62, recently expressed that he felt:

.....
“People just don't want to work with older people”.
.....

Age discrimination is proven to be a prevalent issue today. Research of the Ministry of Justice by Rest Less has found that age discrimination cases to UK employment tribunals rose by 74% between 2019 and 2020. This makes us more determined than ever to ensure that older workers have a fair chance of securing work.



PRIME Cymru mentors. Copyright © PRIME Cymru

PRIME Cymru Chief Executive, David Pugh, said:

“We do not want to see a return to the 1990s where we saw so many people over the age of 50 confined to the scrap heap and the economy losing vital skills and experience in the workplace as a result of an imbalance in the age demographic of employees”.

It is disheartening to learn that recent events have exacerbated employment issues for older people. But we remain dedicated to tackling the problem with practical solutions. Our team of expert mentors and Development Officers work with clients on a one-to-one basis to provide bespoke guidance. We pride ourselves on boosting clients’ confidence, working with them to identify their strengths and possible skills gaps, which we can solve with work-related qualifications or encouragement towards volunteering or further training.

Many older job seekers require some help with CV writing or interview preparation, as it tends to have been a while since they last went through the job application process. For those who are lacking in confidence, it’s moral support and encouragement that they need.

One client, Lisa Phillips, was made redundant last year. She said:

“It was quite a difficult time. Although I’d been looking at other positions, it did come as a bit of a shock when that choice was taken away from me.”

The redundancy left Lisa with a sense of imposter syndrome, making her question whether she was good enough to apply for new roles. This is a common reaction to unexpected job loss, and our mentors are trained to support people through this rough patch.

Lisa was matched with Brian Birtles, a mentor with vast business experience – he understood her ambitions and helped her to set realistic goals. Lisa said:

“I had rejections, but talking things through with Brian, I was able to see my worth and my purpose and to get back on the horse and try again.

“I want people to know that you’re not written off once you’re 50, there are positions out there and there are a lot of transferable skills that women over 50 have that can get them back in the job market.”

For some, employment issues can lead to considering different income options and the idea of starting out on your own becomes all the more tempting. We can support aspiring business people from the initial stages of planning, right through to launching their start-up.

Stephan Parry, aged 59 from Bridgend, had lost his confidence, so he turned his passion for growing microgreens into a family business with the support of Development Officer Debbie Price.

Stephan was so appreciative for the practical support and information he might have struggled to find out for himself. He said:

“Debbie went above and beyond to support me. She has been so helpful and has kept me in the loop about any potential grants that could help me.”

It wasn't all plain sailing for Stephan, as he had to put his business on the back burner whilst he battled cancer and coronavirus. But with an inspirational determination, he has

now established Happy Greens UK and plans to supply local schools and garden centres in the future.

Very often we come across individuals who have been out of work for a long time, and occasionally we encounter those who have never worked at all. For them, the idea of finding a job is very daunting and can even seem impossible.

We encourage people in this position to gain confidence through volunteering or training. Not only can this help people to integrate into their community and feel a sense of belonging, but it can also enhance their CV, making them look more employable to potential bosses.

Jack from Pembrokeshire felt like he was ‘hitting his head against the wall’ whilst economically inactive, with so many rejections or no replies. He found himself getting up later and doing less and less each day. For Jack, volunteering was the remedy. He said:

“My advice for all those ‘between jobs’ – do charity work. It will be the best decision you have ever made. Volunteering work gives you that edge”.

After a year of volunteering, Jack was offered a paid supervisor job within the charity.

PRIME Cymru currently offers a range of free qualifications such as Health & Safety and Food Hygiene to boost skills and self-belief. In response to the current climate, we've introduced a 'New Ways of Interviewing and Working' course to prepare clients for online video calls. We want to ensure that digitally inexperienced applicants are not disadvantaged in today's increasingly computerised world.

We passionately believe that older workers do not belong on the 'scrap heap'. We think more

must be done to tackle age discrimination in the workplace and that the Government must lead the way through actively supporting those aged 50+ back into work following a very difficult year.

In Wales, and the UK as a whole, our population is rapidly ageing. Wales Trade Union Congress estimates that one in three Welsh workers will be over the age of 50 by 2025. We must adjust the stereotyped view that older workers are out of touch, and instead recognise the immense wealth of experience and skills that they've to offer.

Moving forward, employers must adopt an age positive culture, actively working to create an inclusive workplace with zero tolerance for discrimination. The over 50s must be given the same opportunities as younger age groups, including targeted support to re-enter the workplace or retrain.

At PRIME Cymru, we'll continue to offer bespoke support to anyone who needs some guidance to progress into employment, set up a business or wants to attain new skills and experience through training or volunteering.

Further information

To find out more about PRIME Cymru, please visit our website

www.primecymru.co.uk

To get in touch, please call 01550 721813 or email enquiries@primecymru.co.uk



PRIME Cymru client Carolyn Barker with her New Way of Interviewing and Working certificate. Copyright © PRIME Cymru

Lifelong learning and all age apprenticeships

David Hagendyk, Director for Wales, Learning and Work Institute

For successive Senedd terms the Welsh Government has committed to the delivery of a comprehensive apprenticeship programme. In both 2016 and 2021 the commitment to deliver a specific apprenticeship target was put front and centre of the election campaigns by different political parties and this has helped to establish the apprenticeship programme as an integral part of the skills landscape in Wales.

Back in 2016 I was General Secretary of Welsh Labour and in the run up to the election we debated the extent of the commitment we could make in relation to apprenticeships. 100,000 was felt sensible and deliverable. It tried to strike the right balance between a target that would have a real impact on more people's life chances, but that was actually achievable and would be credible (if still challenging) with the sector.

More importantly though was the intent and the detail behind the pledge. The years previous have been continuing the recovery from the financial crash and real effort into protecting young people in the labour market. As the 2016 election approached we had the news of a threat to thousands of steelworker jobs at different plants across Wales. It put an acute focus on the support that was available to mid-career and older workers. The decision to promise an all-age apprenticeship programme

came about as a result of needing to offer clearer pathways for young people into good, sustainable employment but also an offer for older workers facing disruption and change in the labour market.

There's no doubting that in terms of raw numbers the apprenticeship programme has been a success. Over the last Senedd term the 100,000 target was surpassed (despite the impact of the pandemic) and there was sufficient confidence in the provider network and in employer demand to promise 125,000 over the next five years.¹ However the extent to which the programme is genuinely all-age, or at least the extent to which it meets demand from mid-career and older workers for bespoke employability support and training, is still up for debate.

The recent evaluation of the Apprenticeship Programme carried out on behalf of the Welsh Government noted that the target for older apprentices had been comfortably exceeded. On the surface this is an example of success.² However, given that the target was only for 0.5% of total enrolments to be from learners over the age of 55 and that the total achieved was 2.3% of enrolments, it suggests a degree of caution should be exercised when assessing the scale of the impact of the programme on chances for older and mid-career workers / learners. The most recent data from the Welsh Government do indicate that older learners (and generally those over the age of 25) are

well represented at the higher levels of learning (Level 4+). As might be expected there's also demand for management and professional apprenticeships from learners over the age of 25, likely reflecting the demand for progression in their careers and that this is a pathway that is attractive to employers.³

For younger learners (16-19 years) the overall proportion is higher than those for their older counterparts, although providers recognised that demographic changes had made recruitment harder. However, the evaluation found the perception of apprenticeships was that they were seen as being predominantly for younger people and 'that Apprenticeships needed to be made more easily available to older age groups.' It's reasonable to conclude that while the data (relative to the target set) suggest the programme has been a success, significantly more work is needed to provide the comprehensive support needed for older people. As one respondent to the evaluation stated there hasn't been 'a particularly well-developed conversation about the notion of All Age Apprenticeships.'

There's clearly scope for the apprenticeship programme in this Senedd term to build on the relative success of the last five years. As another stakeholder involved in the planning and delivery of the programme told the evaluators, there's greater capacity for apprenticeships to help equip mid-career and older workers with the skills needed for them to keep up to date and to retain employment, as well as supporting employers to create a more 'age diverse workforce.'

There's scope for some innovation in how apprenticeships are delivered in this Senedd term to help make them more attractive and practical for older learners. For example, the Welsh Government has committed to increasing



the number of shared apprenticeships. These may be attractive to older learners who want to be able to combine family and caring responsibilities alongside their careers. Similarly, the expansion of the Degree Apprenticeship programme, whose initial introduction we have been part of evaluating for the Welsh Government, is a potential vehicle that could support older learners to progress to higher levels of learning.⁴

However, apprenticeships are clearly only one part of the answer to supporting older workers to access lifelong learning and to manage the challenge of a rapidly changing world of work. A broader set of interventions and investment in bespoke employability advice and support are all part of the answer. Apprenticeships will clearly be the solution for some but perceptions of them as being primarily for younger age groups will put some people off. While more can be done to break down negative perceptions and to raise awareness of what apprenticeships can offer, the solution is to have a greater range of options and pathways for older workers and learners to pursue.

One of the most important interventions developed by the Welsh Government over the last few years has been the creation of the new Personal Learning Account (PLA) programme.⁵ This offers access to free training courses for people in work to gain new qualifications and skills to be able to start new careers. It's for people of all ages and on low incomes. While the evaluation of the programme is underway and not yet published, anecdotally it would appear that take up has been stronger amongst those workers under 50 years old. Unlike an apprenticeship PLAs aren't tied to a particular employer and learners take courses while still employed in their current jobs.

As well as Personal Learning Accounts the Welsh Government funds the Working Wales service, which is run by Careers Wales and offers free advice and guidance to help people into work and to progress with their jobs and careers. The access to advice and guidance is crucial for older workers, especially at transition points in their lives. The Welsh Government has committed to a Young Person's Guarantee to help with rebuilding after Covid. This will guarantee 16-24-year-olds the offer of education, training, a job, or self-employment. A similar mid-life guarantee could be developed to help give people at the important transition stage the right to access high quality advice and guidance. This would include advice on career and training options (including an apprenticeship), as well as broader advice on financial planning and preparation for retirement.

Meeting the employability and skills needs of people in their mid to later careers will also require an investment in two other key areas: in the skills of the employability workforce to enable them to provide a bespoke specialist service and also in flexible learning provision to help people manage their family and caring

responsibilities. For older people there will also be a need for skills for life as well as for work. Opening up access to lifelong learning must also include equipping people with new digital skills, to manage their own health and wellbeing, and to become more involved in their community.

Meeting the needs of mid-career and older workers isn't like the film *The Field of Dreams*. If you build it there isn't a guarantee they will come. Instead learners need to be encouraged and inspired, supported with independent advice and guidance to make the decision that is right for them, and given access to flexible learning provision. Fundamentally they also need access to a range of choices. All age apprenticeships will be an answer for some but they won't be for everyone. A range of interventions, including apprenticeships, PLAs, flexible learning opportunities, and advice and guidance all need to be in place to support everyone at the different stages of their lives.



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Lifelong learning and all age apprenticeships

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