



**Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru
The National Assembly for Wales**

**Y Pwyllgor Cyfle Cyfartal
The Committee on Equality of Opportunity**

**Dydd Mawrth, 14 Gorffennaf 2009
Tuesday, 14 July 2009**

Cynnwys
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Procedural Motion

Cofnodir y trafodion hyn yn yr iaith y llefarwyd hwy ynndi yn y pwyllgor. Yn ogystal,
cynhwysir cyfieithiad Saesneg o gyfraniadau yn y Gymraeg.

These proceedings are reported in the language in which they were spoken in the committee.
In addition, an English translation of Welsh speeches is included.

Aelodau'r pwyllgor yn bresennol
Committee members in attendance

Eleanor Burnham	Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol Cymru Welsh Liberal Democrats
Ann Jones	Llafur (Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor) Labour (Committee Chair)
Jonathan Morgan	Ceidwadwyr Cymreig Welsh Conservatives
Janet Ryder	Plaid Cymru The Party of Wales
Joyce Watson	Llafur Labour

Eraill yn bresennol
Others in attendance

John Griffiths	Aelod Cynulliad, Llafur (Y Dirprwy Weinidog dros Sgiliau) Assembly Member, Labour (The Deputy Minister for Skills)
Sylvia Howe	Uwch Reolwr Diwygio Lles, Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru Senior Welfare Reform Manager, Welsh Assembly Government
Samantha Huckle	Pennaeth y Gangen Cyflogadwyedd, Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru Head of Employability Branch, Welsh Assembly Government

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

Rita Phillips	Dirprwy Glerc Deputy Clerk
Helen Roberts	Cynghorydd Cyfreithiol Legal Adviser
Denise Rogers	Gwasanaeth Ymchwil yr Aelodau Members' Research Service
Bethan Webber	Clerc Clerk

Dechreuodd y cyfarfod am 9.32 a.m.
The meeting began at 9.32 a.m.

Cyflwyniad, Ymddiheuriadau a Dirprwyon
Introduction, Apologies and Substitutions

[1] **Ann Jones:** Good morning, everybody, and welcome to the last meeting of the Committee on Equality of Opportunity for the summer term. I will just run through the usual housekeeping rules. I remind Members that if they have their mobile phones, BlackBerrys or pagers switched on, please to switch them off as they affect the translation and broadcasting equipment. We do not expect a fire drill today, so, if we hear the alarm, please follow the instructions of the ushers—or you can follow me to the quickest way out, because I will be at the head of the queue if there is a fire. The assembly point is by the merchant seafarers' memorial. We have received no apologies, and there are no substitutions, so we will move on to item 2 on the agenda.

9.32 a.m.

Ymchwiliad i'r Gwahaniaethu yn erbyn Pobl Hŷn ym Myd Cyflogaeth
Inquiry into Older People and Employment Discrimination

[2] **Ann Jones:** It is a pleasure to welcome John Griffiths, the Deputy Minister for Skills, Sylvia Howe, senior welfare reform manager, and Samantha Huckle, head of the Government's employability branch. Thank you for attending. John, if it is all right with you, we will go straight to questions, because there is quite a lengthy list of them—unless you have anything to add to the paper that you submitted.

[3] **The Deputy Minister for Skills (John Griffiths):** Not really, Chair. It would be only by way of outline, so I am quite happy to go straight to the questions.

[4] **Ann Jones:** Okay. Let us move on then. I will start with the first question. The key aims of the first and second phases of the strategy for older people cut across the remits of a number of Welsh Ministers and Deputy Ministers. What internal mechanisms are in place to enable you and your officials to work with other Welsh Assembly Government colleagues to achieve the aims of those strategies?

[5] **John Griffiths:** The single equality scheme applies right across the Welsh Assembly Government and all its responsibilities, Chair. That means that all Ministers and all departments have to mainstream policy to address discrimination, including discrimination on the grounds of age. It is an approach that has been mainstreamed right across the Welsh Assembly Government.

[6] In addition, we work particularly closely with the Department for the Economy and Transport in trying to tie up skills and training provision and business support. That is the key for us, because many of the concerns to do with the economic status of older people are affected by those two strands of governmental activity.

[7] **Jonathan Morgan:** The first phase of the strategy for older people included a number of aims for the recruitment and retention of older people in employment, and for the development of IT skills, ensuring that they have the capacity to continue to work and learn for as long as they want to. What were the main outcomes of the first phase of the strategy, and how were they evaluated?

[8] **John Griffiths:** The strategy is evaluated by the particular department of the Welsh Assembly Government. As far as I am aware, we would not have conducted a departmental evaluation, although I stand to be corrected by officials. As far as I am aware, we would have fed into Brian Gibbons's department, presumably, and Gwenda Thomas's department particularly, given her responsibility for older people in Wales. Previously, I was the Minister with responsibility for older people, and so I know that evaluation and monitoring were built into the process of taking the strategy forward, with other departments feeding into that process.

[9] On employment, retention and recruitment, you will have seen from our written evidence that the Welsh Assembly Government's performance stands up to scrutiny on this front. We have done some important things such as abolishing the mandatory retirement age for Welsh Assembly Government employees, which was a big move in the right direction. Our monitoring of internal and external applications from people aged 50 and over and of the proportion of staff that they make up as a segment is positive. Later this year, we will collect and record more information on internal and external applications from people aged 50 and over. So, our performance is very positive.

[10] On the effects of the recession on this age group, the last statistics that I saw showed

that, in general, it is younger people who have been disproportionately affected by losing their employment during the recession across Wales. The last statistics, which I saw just yesterday, showed that, over the past year, for people aged 50 and over, there was no drop in employment, which was very much at odds with the figures for other age groups. Over the last quarter, namely February, March and April, the drop in employment for people aged 50 and over was marginal at 0.1 per cent. So, it is a reasonably positive picture for that particular age group.

[11] **Jonathan Morgan:** According to the evaluation that was done, what were the main outcomes of the first phase of the strategy?

[12] **John Griffiths:** I do not have the statistics on that, and I do not know whether either of my officials has them. Do you?

[13] **Ms Huckle:** We have looked at how we positively drive the main thrust of this issue, looking at older workers, through our programme development. We have looked at the issues around recruitment with Jobcentre Plus, and we have been working on local employment partnerships to see how we can mainstream evidence through a delivery mechanism that benefits the customer group. We have submitted evidence on the work that we are doing on local employment partnerships, but we have also looked at how we work with the public sector to unlock the potential recruitment activities that it could undertake with this group and a number of others. Jobcentre Plus has a field force on local employment partnerships, which looks at employers' recruitment techniques and application processes to make them a lot friendlier to this particular group. One area that we have been trying to consider is the particular sectors under local employment partnerships, where older workers would have various transferable skills, as in the area of care.

9.40 a.m.

[14] **Jonathan Morgan:** One part of the first phase of the strategy states,

[15] 'To help more older people to set up their own businesses and to encourage the transfer of knowledge and experience from older/retired business people to new entrepreneurs'.

[16] What has the Assembly Government done to help more older people to set up their own businesses, and how can it demonstrate what has been achieved within that strand over and above anything else that might have been done by the UK Government's Department for Work and Pensions?

[17] **John Griffiths:** The way in which you phrased that question, Jonathan, is interesting. We work very closely with the Department for Work and Pensions to take this forward. Such schemes as Prime Cymru are very important and have been valuable in enabling older people to set up their own businesses. There is also the self-employment credit operated by the DWP. Therefore, in general, we work very closely with the DWP and Jobcentre Plus in Wales on a range of activities and schemes. If you tried to separate the element of value delivered by it as opposed to us, it would be an impossible equation.

[18] **Jonathan Morgan:** With all due respect, Deputy Minister, I think that this is absolutely crucial. This is the Assembly Government's strategy for older people in Wales. I accept that parts of it will have been influenced by United Kingdom Government policies, as delivered through the Department for Work and Pensions, but this is your strategy. I have not heard a single thing so far this morning that demonstrates the positive impact of the strategy on older people, enabling more of them to stay in work longer, to stay learning longer, or to set up their own businesses. I asked about the outcomes and how you could demonstrate

them, but it seems clear to me that you cannot do that.

[19] **John Griffiths:** No, a big part of it involves joint working with the DWP, but we have particular schemes that keep older people in work. ProAct is a scheme that is generally applicable, but many people aged 50 plus benefit from that in Wales. It keeps them in employment and gives them training. ReAct has also been accessed by considerable numbers of people aged 50 plus: 24 per cent of approved applications were from people aged 50 plus. On self-employment, 41 people over 50 years of age completed ReAct-funded vocational training. That is for the 2008 calendar year. ReAct, one of our flagship schemes, has very much benefited people who are aged 50 plus. Quite a number of European social fund schemes seek to give people training and get them into employment and people in the 50-plus age group are a target group. All that is distinctive Welsh Assembly Government activity, although it complements the work of the Department for Work and Pensions.

[20] **Jonathan Morgan:** That takes us to my next question, which is to do with the over-50s and the second phase of the strategy. I accept that the second phase runs from 2008 to 2013. You mentioned ReAct, and although it is not specifically designed for the over-50s it touches on them. ReAct was designed principally because of the recession, so it is not inextricably linked to the strategy for older people; it just happens to complement the strategy. On the capacity of the over-50s to continue to work for as long as they wish, what are you doing that is specific to them during the lifetime of that second phase of the strategy to achieve that objective? I accept that ReAct was principally about the recession but, beyond that, what are you looking to do that is specific to the strategy in that five-year period to help over-50s to stay in work for as long as they want to?

[21] **John Griffiths:** Just for the record, although we have enhanced ReAct because of the recession, it has been around for several years and was really important before the recession in providing the employment subsidy and re-training moneys. Many people aged 50 plus have benefited from that. We run several training schemes that benefit older people and, as I said, they have targets within them, which we want to meet for that age group. However, our whole approach to dealing with discrimination and possible disadvantage in any of the equality strands is about mainstreaming. We have done things such as abolishing the upper age limit for apprenticeships in Wales, so that apprenticeships are now open to people aged 50 and over. We have made sure that Skillbuild does not have any age limit, and that is our major training programme for unemployed people, to get them back into work. We have done a great deal on the mainstreaming front as well as within our own Welsh Assembly Government employment practices. So, it is a mainstreaming approach, but, within that, there is a targeted approach to ensure that people aged 50 and over benefit from it.

[22] **Jonathan Morgan:** Now that we are in the second phase of the strategy, what would you say are the top three or four challenges facing the over-50s in Wales with regard to employment and, generally, economic activity—in the sense of being in employment or going through training with the hope of being in employment—compared with other age groups in Wales? What should be the main drivers in meeting these challenges?

[23] **John Griffiths:** One probably has to do with perceptions. It is really important to get across the positive message that people aged 50 and over have a great deal to offer because of their life experience and accumulated wisdom. I do not think that it is too strong to put it in those terms. We work with organisations such as Age Positive, because it gets across the truth of the matter, which is that people aged 50 and over have a tremendous amount to offer. B&Q is the employer that people always think of and cite in this context as a good example, and we see some employers that understand what older people can bring. They tend to be very reliable and committed as employees, as well as having the experience that I referred to earlier.

[24] Through mechanisms such as the corporate health standard, it is also important to make employers understand that they need to work at retaining and supporting people aged 50 and over, whether that is because they have caring responsibilities or particular health or disability issues. People who have been in a particular workforce for some time understand the way that the firm operates, so there is a huge amount of value that they can add to the operations of a company. We must ensure that employers in Wales realise that. A great deal of it is about perception, and the older people's strategy is designed to ensure that older people are able to contribute across the board in terms of activity and full citizenship.

[25] It is really important that we support the income levels of people aged 50 and over in Wales. All of that targeted training and skills provision, getting people into employment and keeping them there, is really important on that front. Careers Ladders Wales will be evaluated in terms of its impact on people over 50. It is our new integrated employment and skills scheme that, first, gets people closer to the labour market, if that is necessary, and then into work, and then supports them to advance when they are in employment, through training provision. That will be crucial in the development of opportunities and in supporting the income levels of older people.

[26] The other aspect is ensuring that, as an administration, we continue to be about lifelong learning. We are bringing forward our adult community learning strategy this autumn. We know that around half, or sometimes just over half, of the people on those adult community learning courses are older people—people over 50. It is about everything that lifelong learning brings. It is about employment opportunities and advancement in employment, but it is also about the full citizenship agenda, which is crucial to the older people's strategy.

[27] **Janet Ryder:** You may have touched on this in your answers so far, Deputy Minister. Your paper states that, in 2007-08, 6.7 per cent of participants in all work-based learning programmes were aged 50-plus. Do you think that that percentage is representative, given the age make-up of the workforce in Wales?

9.50 a.m.

[28] **John Griffiths:** No, I would not imagine that it is. That is one statistic that I noticed in going through the briefing before the meeting. We need to improve on that. As I say, we wish to take a mainstreaming approach, and if we see that people aged 50 and over are not accessing any aspect of our skills and training delivery as we would expect, that will show that there is room for improvement and that we have to work on it.

[29] **Janet Ryder:** Several organisations that have contributed to the committee's inquiry have provided examples of discrimination against older people, one of which is the lack of workplace learning opportunities. You have also identified that. How do you plan to tackle the discriminatory attitudes of some employers, which can act as a barrier?

[30] **John Griffiths:** It is about changing attitudes, as I said. We know that there is a big basic skills problem in Wales and that older people are slightly more lacking in those basic skills than is the general situation. We have an all-age basic skills strategy, which is part of the mainstreaming approach, but within that we have the employers' pledge and the Wales union learning fund, which has been very effective at reaching people aged 50 and over. It is targeted at those people as well as at other groups that face potential or actual discrimination. We have built that scheme with the funding available, and the funding will increase over the next few years. That is an example of our understanding how workplace learning must deliver in a better way for people aged 50 and over, through the involvement, crucially, of the management and trade unions working together. The union learning representatives will have a role and they are trained to understand the need for this scheme to reach groups that are

particularly targeted, such as those aged over 50. That is one example of how we are ensuring that a big chunk of our workplace learning activity meets the requirements of people aged over 50.

[31] **Janet Ryder:** Through those initiatives, or other initiatives, will you be encouraging more employers to offer flexible working opportunities in public and private sector organisations, to enable people to access training?

[32] **John Griffiths:** Local employment partnerships, which are key to our engagement with employers and making opportunities available—that can be opportunities for focused work interviews, work experience or actual jobs—have to meet the needs of people aged 50 and over. It is about changing and shaping the perceptions of employers to understand the needs of people aged 50 and over. There is a general drive towards flexible working for all employees in any event, but it would particularly benefit those aged over 50.

[33] **Janet Ryder:** Do you monitor or track any of those initiatives?

[34] **John Griffiths:** Yes, they are monitored and evaluated.

[35] **Janet Ryder:** So, we may be able to see some feedback on them.

[36] **John Griffiths:** I am sure that we could get you statistics on them.

[37] I will just say one other thing, if I may, and this goes back to the time when I was Deputy Minister with responsibility for older people. I heard time and again from older people that they wanted a degree of flexibility, as Janet mentioned, when they were coming towards the end of what would be seen as the normal working life. That means flexibility in working hours and days but also in the type of work that they do. Many older people told me that, having done one job for a long time, they felt that they wanted to do something different and try a different career, perhaps on a part-time basis, with a lot of flexibility. That is the sort of approach that a lot of older people would like to see spreading among employers in Wales.

[38] **Eleanor Burnham:** Byddaf yn **Eleanor Burnham:** I will be speaking in
siarad yn y Gymraeg. Welsh.

[39] **Ann Jones:** I am sorry; I should have said that simultaneous translation is available on channel 1 of the headsets.

[40] **Eleanor Burnham:** Mae popeth yn **Eleanor Burnham:** Everything sounds so
swnio mor berffaith. Pa waith a gyflawnwyd perfect. What work has been undertaken with
gyda chyflogwyr ac undebau llafur i sicrhau employers and trade unions to ensure that
bod pobl hŷn yn gallu manteisio ar y older people are able to take advantage of
rhaglenni sgiliau a chyfleoedd dysgu sy'n existing skills programmes and learning
bodoli? Dylid ystyried hyn yng nghyd-destun opportunities? This should be considered in
y cwotgi mawr ar golegau addysg bellach, y the context of further education college
ffaith bod llawer o fiwrocratiaeth o gwmpas cutbacks, the bureaucracy around some of the
rhai o'r rhaglenni, a'i bod yn gallu cymryd programmes, and that it can take time for
llawer o amser i bobl allu manteisio ar y people to take advantage of the programmes,
rhaglenni, sy'n swnio'n wych ar bapur. which sound fantastic on paper.

[41] **John Griffiths:** We would not say that everything was perfect, Eleanor, you might be amazed to learn. The general mantra is 'much done, much yet to do', which is a fair description of this area of Government activity.

[42] In terms of employers and trade unions, we have placed much emphasis on the Wales

union learning fund, and there is quite a lot to it. We fund the Wales Trade Union Congress in terms of its educational and training activities. We fund the training of union learning representatives and their activities. We fund engagement with employers and schemes in workplaces. Much of the work is around basic skills, which reaches people aged 50 and over. It is about building partnerships. As always, it is genuine partnership that delivers—employers must take on board the messages from the top to the bottom of the management structure, rather than someone at the top signing up to it but it not filtering down. It is when that it is a genuine commitment that it works well. We are very pleased with it, and the evaluation is very positive.

[43] On bureaucracy, the UK Commission for Employment and Skills has understandably targeted bureaucracy as a real issue around business support and employment and skills training initiatives. The commission has an ongoing simplification project, which seeks to tackle the complexity of provision, and also the bureaucracy that is involved. The Wales Employment and Skills Board is very much part of that work, which will be important.

[44] It is a very difficult time for funding across the board at the moment, and it is also very difficult for further education. I hope that our adult community learning strategy, which will be issued in the autumn, will build stronger and better partnerships that will do what we talk a lot about, namely ensure a more rational and planned approach, so that there is less duplication and that it adds value in terms of whatever provider is involved.

[45] **Eleanor Burnham:** Mae'n ddigon hawdd dweud hynny, ond efallai nad oes gan rai pobl hŷn fregus unrhyw ddulliau trafnidiaeth. Gwyddom eich bod yn cwtogi ar arian colegau addysg bellach, a'u bod yn colli llawer o'u rhaglenni o ganlyniad, felly nid wyf o'r farn y gallwch ddweud fod popeth yn iawn. Mae'r colegau hyn o dan y lach ac maent wedi gorfod cwtogi yn barod—mae rhai colegau yn fy rhanbarth yn y gogledd yn colli nifer sylweddol o bobl sydd yn dysgu'r cyrsiau i'r bobl yr ydym yn sôn amdanynt.

Eleanor Burnham: It is easy to say that, but some older vulnerable people may not have any form of transport. We know that you are cutting funding for further education colleges, and that they lose many of their programmes as a consequence, so I do not believe that you can tell us that everything is okay. These colleges are under threat and are already having to make cuts—some colleges in my region of north Wales have lost a substantial number of people who teach the courses to these people.

[46] **John Griffiths:** I would not pretend that there are not a number of issues at the moment, because of a particularly difficult funding time. However, we find that, where further education colleges are reducing their adult provision, they work with the department of education's area teams so that we can discuss with them whether they are leaving gaps, or whether, in conjunction with the local authority and the voluntary sector, they can talk about local provision so that any gaps that they might create can be filled by others.

10.00 a.m.

[47] That is very much the approach that we will take with our adult community learning strategy in the autumn. It is a matter of making sure that, when you look at the totality of provision and the number of providers involved, it delivers what should be delivered for people aged 50 and over. In our discussions and our work, we have been able to create a fairly positive picture thus far. However, we all know that funding will get very difficult over the next few years, so we have to ensure that we deliver more with the funding that we have. A lot of Government policy at the moment is directed to that end—transformation policy in education and training, building learning partnerships. That is the sort of approach we will see with adult community learning.

[48] **Ann Jones:** We need to move on.

[49] **Eleanor Burnham:** Nid ydych wedi f'argyhoeddi, oherwydd mae'r sector dan y lach gymaint â'r colegau. A fedwch ddweud mwy am y rhaglen Adeiladu Sgiliau a sut y gall pobl fynychu? A oes bwriad i ehangu'r rhaglen i gynnwys mwy o bobl hŷn? Os felly, pryd?

Eleanor Burnham: You have not convinced me, because the sector is under as much pressure as the colleges. Can you tell us more about the Skillbuild programme and how people can attend? Is the intention to expand the programme to include more older people? If so, when?

[50] **John Griffiths:** Skillbuild is our major training scheme for unemployed people of all ages. We will ensure that it delivers for those aged 50 plus in particular. We are increasing the resources available to Skillbuild as part of our response to the recession. So, I think that I can give you positive answers to all of those questions on Skillbuild, Eleanor.

[51] **Eleanor Burnham:** Pa fuddsoddiad sydd wedi ei nodi i gynnal y polisïau i gynyddu gallu pobl dros 50 oed i barhau i weithio? A yw'r buddsoddiad hwn yn ddigonol i'ch galluogi i gyrraedd eich nod o ran cronfeydd strwythurol Ewropeaidd a chronfa gymdeithasol Ewrop? Mae'r rhain yn cael eu defnyddio i gyflawni nod eich strategaeth i gyflogi pobl hŷn. A allwch egluro hyn, os gwelwch yn dda?

Eleanor Burnham: What investment has been identified to support the policy to improve the ability of those aged over 50 to continue to work? Is this investment sufficient to enable you to reach your goal regarding the European structural funds and the European social fund? These are being used to achieve the aim of your strategy to employ older people. Can you explain this, please?

[52] **John Griffiths:** We make substantial use of European moneys for training and to get people into employment. We often work closely with the Department for Work and Pensions and Jobcentre Plus in Wales. In general, a great deal of provision has been in place for some time. We have also responded to the recession, which has seen major new moneys being allocated to training, skills and to get people into employment. So, the investment is there, Eleanor. There is a lot of investment, particularly at this time. We have to ensure that it helps those aged 50 and over. That is why, within those schemes funded by European money, there are targets for those aged 50 plus to ensure that they deliver for them.

[53] Many of the schemes that are spatial and address the areas of Wales that have the biggest problems of unemployment are often areas that have relatively more people aged 50 plus in their local populations. The Heads of the Valleys is a prime example. So, there are schemes such as the Future Jobs Fund, on which, again, we will work with DWP, which is a major new investment to create jobs for people. We are currently putting forward bids in Wales for that funding. Much of it will benefit the Heads of the Valleys areas and then that will mean that, disproportionately, people aged 50 plus will benefit because they make up a considerable chunk of the population in the Heads of the Valleys area.

[54] **Eleanor Burnham:** A ydych, felly, yn monitro ac yn gallu profi eich bod yn cael gwerth am yr arian Ewropeaidd yr ydych yn ei ddefnyddio?

Eleanor Burnham: Therefore, do you monitor the European funds that you use and are you able to prove that you receive value for money?

[55] **John Griffiths:** Yes, indeed.

[56] **Jonathan Morgan:** The single equality scheme, which is a three-year strategy running from March this year, includes a number of commitments, one of which interests me and is outlined in paragraph 4.12 of the strategy. The scheme sets out a number of projects that will engage with external partners in a range of sectors to deliver support to economically inactive and under-represented groups to enable them to gain employability skills and enter

sustainable employment. On that strand of the single equality scheme, what are you doing to meet that objective?

[57] **John Griffiths:** Again, this relates to the range of initiatives that the Welsh Assembly Government is employing and creating to get people into employment schemes and training. As I said, many of them, particularly if you look at the European social fund schemes and that route of funding, make up a substantial part of activity in these areas. That scheme includes targets for those aged over 50, which need to be met. We will then monitor and evaluate it to ensure that that is the case.

[58] **Jonathan Morgan:** On the figures in that scheme, paragraph 4.12 states that there are initial targets to engage 23,000 participants and to help 8,300 to enter sustained employment and 1,200 to enter further learning. I suspect that those figures relate to under-represented groups in their entirety. Have you split those into specific under-represented groups or do you have a broad aim to include everyone in the under-represented groups?

[59] **John Griffiths:** I will ask officials to come in on this, but there is a big area of overlap. The most obvious relates to disability and those who are aged 50 and over. Many of the schemes are directly targeted at people on incapacity benefit, of which the Want2Work scheme is the best known example. That very much benefits the 50-plus age group. So, inevitably, there will be a degree of overlap. However, I will ask officials if they are aware of whether those groups are divided in that way.

[60] **Ms Huckle:** If you look at the European programmes, you have reporting lines against factors such as disability, gender and older workers or the over-fifties; you have those specific targets. However, generally, we have a fairly broad-brush approach. Although, on Careers Ladders Wales, we have decided to take a segmented approach to policy and the first area that we have looked at under the policy is NEETs or those not in employment, education and training.

[61] The second area that we are currently looking at is disability. We are working with the Department for Work and Pensions on its disability advisory programmes, pathways to work programmes and some of its current work on access to work. So, we are now looking at that particular segment.

[62] The third segment that we have prioritised on the work plan for this year is older workers. So, we have a segmented approach to the policy, through the Careers Ladders Wales structure.

[63] **Jonathan Morgan:** Within that category of older workers, you would have, for example, older women and disabled people or carers who are over the age of 50 and who might have been out of work for whatever reason. For example, people with a caring responsibility might find themselves in a position where they want to re-enter the labour market. Has anything been done to identify more specifically groups of older workers who face those particular challenges such as disability, caring responsibilities or by virtue of their gender?

[64] **Ms Huckle:** We analysed the DWP's flow data on the unemployed and economically inactive groups. We also have data on groups who are in employment. As I said, the next stage for us will be to cut those data to look at the issues facing this particular group and what the solutions are. For example, to help someone who is over 50 and has been in work for some time, the best solution could be careers advice and guidance. If someone were experiencing their first episode of ill-health, then they could be helped through occupational-health-type activities. That is a big piece of work, which we have already done on the NEET strategy. That is our potential approach. We will not produce a strategy on this, but an action

plan.

[65] **Jonathan Morgan:** I have one final question. The Deputy Minister's paper refers to an older person's wellbeing monitor for Wales. What scope is there for that monitor to evaluate the impact of Welsh Assembly Government policies aimed at improving the wellbeing of older people through gaining employment or maintaining a job?

10.10 a.m.

[66] **John Griffiths:** Part of that wellbeing monitor's role, Jonathan, will be to look at the economic impact on older people.

[67] **Ann Jones:** Joyce?

[68] **Joyce Watson:** You have already answered quite a few of the questions that I was going to ask, Deputy Minister, particularly about the employment of older people in the Welsh Assembly Government. I was pleased to hear you say that, while those figures do not really tell us anything about the recruitment of people over 50 to the Welsh Assembly Government, you are going to address that issue. At least, that is what I thought I heard earlier. When might we see the recruitment process, and when might you put it in place?

[69] **John Griffiths:** To clarify, Joyce, we do have statistics for the percentage of external and internal applications that come from those who are 50 plus, as well as for the extent to which those people make up our workforce. We hope to have further and better information about applications in the future.

[70] **Joyce Watson:** That is great, because we all know that people hang on to their jobs, so telling us that we currently have people who are 50 plus employed does not mean anything in terms of our commitment to recruit people from this age group. We all know that in some respects, though not in all, the recession appears to have had a disproportionate impact on people who are over 50. You have mentioned some of the steps that you are taking to address that situation. Is there anything that you would like add to the list of things that you have mentioned?

[71] **John Griffiths:** I would just re-emphasise that the Welsh Assembly Government is doing a tremendous amount of work to address the impacts of the recession. All of that work will benefit people who are 50 plus. Some of it will be targeted more at the 50 plus, but the generality of activity will help a great deal.

[72] **Joyce Watson:** The final question that I am going to ask is about the mandatory retirement age. I know that things are moving, because I downloaded something about it from the BBC's website this morning—I see that you have seen it, too.

[73] **Ms Huckle:** Yes.

[74] **Ann Jones:** Great minds think alike.

[75] **Joyce Watson:** What are your views on the UK Government's decision not to abolish the mandatory retirement age immediately? As you have downloaded the same piece, you know that it is bringing it forward a year.

[76] **John Griffiths:** I must trot out the usual line, Chair, about it being a non-devolved matter, which means it remains a matter for the UK Government. I think that the fact that the Welsh Assembly Government has abolished a retirement age for its own employees says a lot about our approach to these matters.

[77] **Ann Jones:** Eleanor has a question.

[78] **Eleanor Burnham:** Mae llawer o bobl yn cwyno wrthyf pan fyddaf yn teithio o gwmpas y gogledd, pan nad wyf yma yng Nghaerdydd, bod gormod o wahanol raglenni cymhleth sy'n cyfyngu'n ormodol. A fyddech yn cyd-fynd â mi y byddai'n well symleiddio rhai o'r ffynonellau hyn, gan ei bod yn cymryd cymaint o amser i gynifer o bobl wneud ceisiadau am y lliaws o raglenni sydd ar gael? Yr wyf yn cyfeirio yn arbennig at y strategaeth dinas. O dan y strategaeth, mae dau gynllun braenaru ar waith yng Nghymru, sef un yn y Rhyl, sy'n wych—da iawn, y Rhyl—a'r llall ym Mlaenau'r Cymoedd, sy'n ardderchog, ond beth am Fae Colwyn yn fy rhanbarth i, sydd yn ystadegol mor anghenus â'r Rhyl? Mae'r ystadegau'n dangos hynny—bûm mewn cyfarfod yn ddiweddar lle y codwyd y mater hwn. Oni fyddai'n well, ac oni fyddai'n gwastraffu llai o amser ac yn galluogi mwy o bobl i gael yr arian, pe na bai cynifer o gyfyngiadau ar hyn?

Eleanor Burnham: Many people have complained to me when I am on my rounds in north Wales, when I am not here in Cardiff, that there are too many different types of complicated programmes, which are overly restrictive. Would you agree with me that it would be preferable to simplify some of these sources, given that it takes so much time for so many people to apply for the multitude of available programmes? I refer in particular to the city strategy. Two pathfinders have been implemented in Wales under the city strategy, one in Rhyl, which is great—well done, Rhyl—and the other in the Heads of the Valleys, which is fantastic, but what about Colwyn Bay in my region, which is, statistically, as badly off as Rhyl? The statistics show that—I was at a meeting recently where this issue was raised. Would it not be better, and would it not save time and allow more people to access the funding, if there were not so many constraints on this?

[79] **Ann Jones:** Do you want to answer that one, or shall I put my Chair's hat on and answer it? [*Laughter.*]

[80] **John Griffiths:** That is what I was just wondering, actually, Chair.

[81] **Eleanor Burnham:** The point I am making is that many people are worrying that such a lot of time is being spent by local authorities, whichever authorities those may be, bidding for small pots of money that are very constraining—

[82] **John Griffiths:** I am sure that the Chair would tell you, Eleanor, that the way that the scheme works is to provide a small amount of what you might call pump-priming funding. It is very much about aligning local partners with a common understanding of what should be delivered. That is very much in line with our general approach of building partnerships, making sure that all the component parts add value, and then ensuring that that is properly planned and thought through. It is a very effective approach. The Heads of the Valleys area is also benefiting, as is Rhyl.

[83] **Eleanor Burnham:** People do worry beyond the confines. A ward might be mixed. In Upper Denbigh, for example, there are poor and quite well-off people side by side. You are using very definite statistics. I am over the moon for Rhyl, but Colwyn Bay is also, statistically, in a bad way. How can you ensure that people outside the small areas that you are very carefully targeting who also need this help get it?

[84] **Ann Jones:** While your officials are passing you the note, John, I am now going to take off my Chair's hat and become the Assembly Member for the Vale of Clwyd.

[85] **John Griffiths:** The note says, 'Let the Chair answer this one.'

[86] **Ann Jones:** Is that what the note says? Eleanor, I think that you are confusing

issues—

[87] **Eleanor Burnham:** No, I am not.

[88] **Ann Jones:** Yes, you are. [*Interruption.*] Just let me finish. The Rhyl city strategy is a Department for Work and Pensions initiative. You asked ‘Why not Colwyn Bay?’ It is because you have a Labour AM and a Labour MP who have worked hard to get the DWP strategy. I will take the politics out of it. There were 15 areas in the whole of the UK that were to take part in that strategy, and Rhyl bid to be one of those areas alongside the Heads of the Valleys. There are only two in Wales. You mentioned Colwyn Bay; Colwyn Bay is part of the coastal regeneration area, which is not part of that strategy. Upper Denbigh and the problems that you were talking about come under the Communities First programme, which is another initiative. For the purpose of our discussion today, the Rhyl city strategy provides an opportunity, as the Deputy Minister said, for pump-priming, which will allow people who have not been in work for quite a long time, who are older people, to develop strategies and business plans with help and support. That is part of the DWP strategy. Everyone ploughs their money into it, and it becomes the umbrella organisation for many things. That is what happening with the Rhyl city strategy. I do not know whether the Heads of the Valleys have a different initiative. That is the issue.

[89] **Eleanor Burnham:** May I just make another point?

[90] **Ann Jones:** It is irrelevant to—

[91] **Eleanor Burnham:** No, it is relevant to this. The local service board day that we had in Denbighshire recently was very telling. The questions that many people were asking, which encompassed the over-50s, related to the fact that there does not seem to be that much improvement. That is what I am getting at, because we are here to monitor the Government and what it is doing. My understanding is that many are worried that, despite the wonderful warm words and the fantastic schemes that you have, there are people who are not developing as one would perhaps expect, including in Rhyl, given all the money that is going into those schemes.

[92] **Ann Jones:** You have made that point, and I do not think that that is relevant to what we are looking at, namely discrimination against the older workforce. We will leave those points as said and move on.

[93] **Eleanor Burnham:** Thank you, Chair.

[94] **Ann Jones:** That is quite all right. I shall put my Chair’s hat back on now. Does anyone else have any other points? I will ask the final question, if I may. Does the Welsh Assembly Government have a role in raising awareness of the unlawfulness of age discrimination in employment, and in combating the negative or stereotypical attitudes towards older people who are in work?

[95] **John Griffiths:** Absolutely, Chair. It is always an important role for the Welsh Assembly Government, in order to try to shape perceptions and to set the tenor for attitudes towards groups that may, and do, face discrimination in Wales. I mentioned Age Positive earlier, which is a charity that has done a great deal of good work to get the right positive messages across. People always challenge us, rightly, at the Welsh Assembly Government to put our own house in order. The written evidence that we have provided to the committee for the purposes of today’s hearing shows that we have done that. That puts us in a position of strength to urge others to do the same.

10.20 a.m.

[96] The strategy for older people wraps everything up together very effectively, and it is looked at with great envy by many other parts of the world. Obviously, we also work with the Equality and Human Rights Commission and I believe that we have a very strong role and it is one that we take very seriously.

[97] **Ann Jones:** Is there anything that we can do to show the private sector what we are doing in the public sector? Can the Assembly Government do anything on that?

[98] **John Griffiths:** That is a big part of the role of trying to set the right approach and attitudes. It obviously has to include the private sector as well as the public sector, Chair. I know that the EHRC would also very much take that view.

[99] **Ann Jones:** I assume that there are no further points. In that case, I thank you for attending the meeting, for the answers that you gave, and also for giving me the opportunity to give an answer. I also thank your officials.

10.21 a.m.

Cynnig Trefniadol Procedural Motion

[100] **Ann Jones:** I propose that

the committee resolves to exclude the public from the remainder of the meeting in accordance with Standing Order No. 10.37(vi).

[101] I see that the committee is in agreement.

*Derbyniwyd y cynnig.
Motion agreed.*

*Daeth rhan gyhoeddus y cyfarfod i ben am 10.21 a.m.
The public part of the meeting ended at 10.21 a.m.*