

Julie James AC / AM
Y Dirprwy Weinidog Sgiliau a Thechnoleg
Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Eich cyf/Your ref
Ein cyf/Our ref MB/JJ/0975/15

William Graham AM
Chair
Enterprise and Business Committee

11th March 2015

Inquiry into employment opportunities for people over 50 in Wales

Dear William,

During the Enterprise and Business Committee on the 25 February I agreed to provide further details to support the inquiry into employment opportunities for people over 50. Specifically the Committee requested further evidence on:

- the take-up of over 50s on Welsh Government programmes; and,
- information on any assessments that have been undertaken on the impact on over 50s of the decisions to prioritise support for young people.

I have enclosed a paper covering these areas in response to the Committee's request. The paper provides information on the participation by those individuals aged 50 and above in relation to major Welsh Government programmes and/ or services where it has been possible to source such information.

To further aid the work of the Committee, and again where it has been possible to do so, the information provided covers a number of consecutive years. The aim of this analysis is to highlight any underlying trend in behaviour on which to further assess the engagement being made with individuals from the over 50 age group.

I would also like to reiterate the point I made to the Committee that programmes are not age restricted unless stated. This is the case for Jobs Growth Wales which is specifically targeted at unemployed young people.

Jobs Growth Wales was launched in April 2012 as a direct response to the high levels of unemployment amongst young people aged between 16 and 24. Whilst we know that unemployment is an issue affecting all ages, the Welsh Government is committed to supporting young people into work and 16-24 year olds are a priority group. Evidence shows us that it is younger people who are often the most disadvantaged in the labour market during difficult economic times which is a result of a number of barriers including the

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1NA

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English Enquiry Line 0845 010 3300
Llinell Ymholiadau Cymraeg 0845 010 4400
Correspondence: Julie.James@wales.gsi.gov.uk

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lack of proven work experience. The unemployment rate amongst 16-24 year olds is four times that of adults aged 50 and above.

Before Jobs Growth Wales was launched an Equality Impact Assessment was completed which considered all areas of equality including age and gender. There were found to be no issues relating to equality legislation and, as such, no age discrimination was identified. Accordingly, the approach adopted was considered to be a legitimate intervention and response to the issue outlined above regarding the level of youth unemployment.

In regard to publishing the policy actions put forward by the Policy Statement on Skills and underpinned by the Skills Implementation Plan, a series of impact assessments were undertaken covering Children's Rights, Equality, Rural Proofing and the Welsh Language. With these core impact assessments in mind, the effect of prioritising funding to support young people into work was not considered to be any more significant for those aged 50 years and over compared to any other adult group aged 25 and above.

In providing further information to Committee I have attempted to draw out some of the specific areas relevant to those individuals over 50 based on the core impact assessments undertaken. In addition, I have included a perspective on the impact for each key programme in relation to this particular age group whilst being mindful of the needs of the wider population.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight to members the series of Skills Performance Measures which were published in September 2014. These measures include a specific focus on equality and equity which will place a greater emphasis on supporting those individuals with protected characteristics, including older workers. Our aim is to make use of the measures to provide a strong evidence base on which to measure the impact of new policies and programmes and, where appropriate, redirect resources in the pursuit of alternative interventions which provide a greater return on the investment being made.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Julie James".

Julie James AC / AM

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Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology