

Report on the Inquiry into Employment Opportunities for People over 50

July 2015

The Enterprise and Business Committee of the National Assembly for Wales looked at the problems which people over 50 experience when they are looking for work.

What are the problems?

It can be difficult for people who are over 50 to find a job, especially one which uses all their skills. We need to see what can be done about this because people are living longer and pensions are smaller, most of us will have to work for longer. Things are changing, people have usually retired at 60 or 65 but they don't have to and employers can't force them to retire.

Why are they happening?

The Committee looked at why it can be difficult for people over 50 to find work. They found that people over 50 may not have the IT skills to work in a new type of job. Employers can often think that they will have health problems when this isn't actually true. Many people over 50 have to look after children and their elderly parents which can mean that they are less flexible in when they can work. It can also mean that they are able to work in the evenings when young parents cannot. Many employers think it is better to invest money into training a young person because they will stay with the company for longer. However, an older person is less likely to change jobs than a younger person.

What should be done?

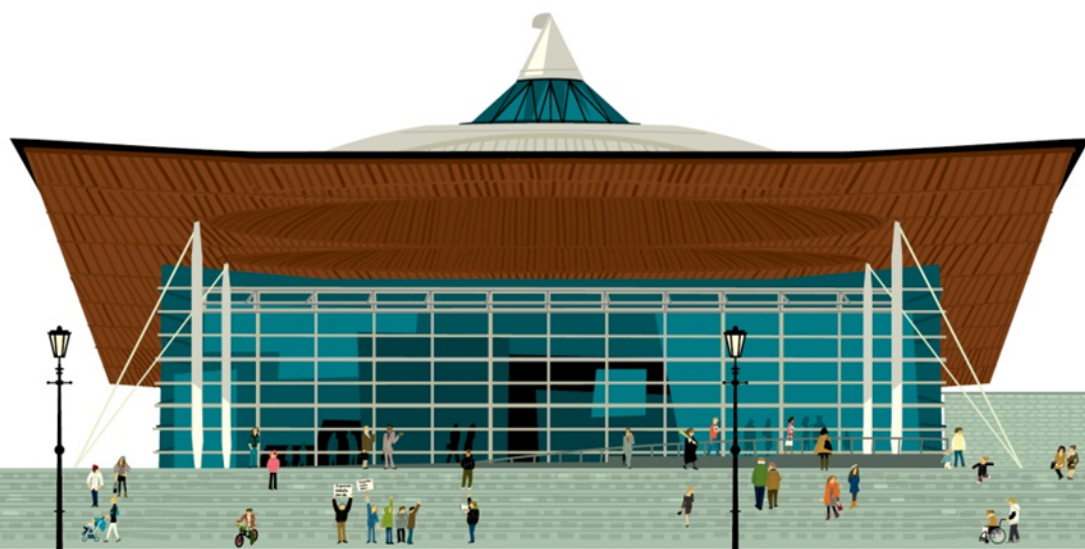
We need to learn more

We would like to know more about the difficulties which people over 50 are going through when they look for work. One thing which many people told us is that there is not enough evidence about the problem. Only by looking at how and why these problems exist can we try and solve them.

We want to know what sort of work is available to people over 50, whether or not it is easier to work for yourself and whether people are forced to work because they cannot afford to retire. We also want to know if the situation is different for men and women. They should look at what help there is for people over 50 who want to start their own business.

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Helping the young and old

Many people told us that employers don't give them a chance if they are over 50. This is discrimination, and we want to find out how real this problem is. We want the Welsh Government to do more to stop discrimination against people over 50 looking for work.

The Welsh Government has said that they are concentrating on helping unemployed young people to find work and that this is the most important group to help.

We want the Welsh Government to consider designing a scheme similar to Jobs Growth Wales but for people over 50 who want a job.

If the Welsh Government gives young people the first chance to take up an apprenticeship then they should make sure they know what effect this is having on older people who can't get an apprenticeship.

Campaigns

We are asking the Welsh Government to launch an 'Age Positive' campaign to encourage employers to employ older people. Together with the Older People's Commissioner they should have a campaign which will increase the number of work placements and apprenticeships for people over 50.

They should write a skills strategy for people over 50 which says how they will help those people get the skills they need to get a job.

They should also look into whether or not there is enough money available for people over 50 who want to start their own business.

What happens next?

Everyone agrees that we have to try and solve these problems as soon as we can. There are going to be many more people over 50 looking for work and we need to make sure that they can use their abilities in the best way. If we don't try and solve these problems we could find that people over 50 are in low-paid jobs or none at all instead of using their experience to earn a wage, help younger people in the workplace and contribute to the Welsh economy.

That's why the Committee will be asking the Deputy Minister for Skills and Technology what she will do about what we have said in the Autumn. Keep an eye on our website and Twitter feed for updates.

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