

# Written response by the Welsh Assembly Government to the Equality of Opportunity Committee's report: Older People and Employment Discrimination

I refer to your letter of 25<sup>th</sup> November which enclosed a copy of the Equality of Opportunity Committee's report of its inquiry into Older People and Employment Discrimination. I would like to extend my thanks to the Committee for its very thorough and informative report which I am sure will assist officials with setting future policy direction.

There is no doubt in my mind that older people can play a full and active part in society. Often, older people possess a well rounded, practical knowledge of life that can prove invaluable for our younger workers many of whom are yet to experience life to its full.

DE&T, DCELLS and other interests welcome this report as supporting individuals from under represented groups access and be supported under our start up service is a key priority. Consideration needs to be given on how we raise awareness and engage with older people and engage them in economic activity to help renew the Welsh economy.

You requested the Assembly Government's response to the conclusions and recommendations set out in the report. I set those out below on behalf of the Welsh Assembly Government:

## Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Assembly Government needs to reduce the barriers to older people working and settling up businesses through the identification of their needs and provision of specifically tailored support.

### **Response:** Accept

Currently older workers are identified as an Under Represented Group (URG) in terms of business start up. Under Flexible Support for Business specific activities are targeted at raising awareness of business start up to older people through campaigns, focus groups and dialogue with representative groups. Additional discretionary support through FS4B's Inclusion Challenge Fund, is available to older

people to help overcome specific barriers that they may have in terms of participating in business start up activities.

**Financial implications:** Additional support for underrepresented groups, including older people, is provided for within our current budget via the Inclusion Challenge Fund under the Creating Sustainable Business BEL for 2010/11. No additional financial implication has been identified in accepting this recommendation.

## **Recommendation 2**

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government ensures that the development of all employment and related policies and programmes specifically considers the particular challenges facing older people, and encourages the same across the public and private sectors.

**Response:** Accept

Whilst we accept this recommendation, we believe we should adopt an all-age approach in relation to our support programmes (as does the DWP). We should also highlight that the current Ministerial focus is on youth unemployment. Further, we draw the Committee's attention to the importance of self-employment.

Employment policy is a reserved responsibility of the UK government. However, the Assembly Government is responsible for a number of complementary policy areas including skills and careers advice. Actions taken by the Assembly Government are not restricted by age and therefore older people of working age are able to access programmes such as Skillbuild and ReAct.

Similarly, the Department for Work and Pensions operates a number of employment schemes including the Flexible New Deal, Pathways to Work, Workstep/Workprep, Local Employment Partnerships and the Jobcentre Plus Support Contract; all of which are all-age programmes for their clients (18+). The Assembly Government will work with DWP and Jobcentre Plus to ensure that all client groups are given equal access to these programmes.

There is some significant activity within the Minister for the Economy and Transport's Enterprise department to support older workers. Equality and Diversity advice is provided free of charge to SME's through Flexible Support for Business (FS4B) under the Business Growth EU funded project. The nature of this advice promotes the development of employment policies and practices that ensure equality of opportunity to all. This includes fair employment and retention policies that cover older workers and fairness in selection for

redundancy. The FS4B Regional Centre service provides face to face information to all business and advisory support for small local business which includes advice and support from an equality advisor.

The delivery of the FS4B Start Up service covers all groups of people; however older people consist of one of the identified Under Represented Groups. As such specific activities are aimed at engaging with older people, promoting self employment as a positive option and working with business start up providers to ensure that they deliver a service that meets the needs of older people.

Two projects have been run with Prime Cymru Wales, one in South West Wales and the other in Mid Wales, to engage with older people, this has included focus groups and mentoring support. Discretionary funding is also available to provide additional support for older people to help overcome the barriers to participation in business start up activities. The demographic information of all individuals supported through the FS4B Start Up service is gathered using a registration form, a copy of which is included at Annex 1 for your information.

**Financial implications:** Additional support provided for older people to access start up support is available via the Inclusion Challenge Fund under the Creating Sustainable Businesses BEL. No additional financial implication has been identified as a result of accepting this recommendation.

### **Recommendation 3**

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Assembly routinely monitors and evaluates its business and employment support programmes in relation to age, as well as other equality strands so that it is possible to assess the impact of a programme on, for example, older women or older disabled people. To inform flexible and prompt reactions in times of economic change, information must be readily available to enable the assessment of the impact on older people.

**Response:** Accept

A number of ESF Convergence Priority 2 projects currently operate in Wales to support people into work. Many of these projects have a specific target for older workers, however it many not be their primary target. All Priority 2 projects are aimed at interventions that reduce economic inactivity whatever the participant's age.

All ESF projects are monitored and evaluated, and performance information against specific targets is provided to WEFO directly from

the project sponsors. Also there is a requirement that all projects demonstrate achievement of defined equality of opportunity criteria.

In relation to monitoring and evaluation, the Assembly Government's Older People's Monitor will provide the necessary evidence to demonstrate how activities undertaken meet the strategic aims of the Older People's Strategy. The Older People in Wales report also provides information relating to employment rates and participation in education/training for older people.

Our assessment of the demographic information gathered as part of the FS4B Start up service ensures we are providing an inclusive service. The information collected is monitored against the demography of the locality they live in so that we can react and put in place actions to ensure that our support is meeting the needs of under represented groups. When our analysis identifies issues those are resolved through the adoption of structured focus groups.

**Financial implications:** The monitoring of demographics is included in the current delivery and resources within the FS4B start up service via the Creating Sustainable Businesses BEL.

#### **Recommendation 4**

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government works in partnership with key stakeholders, including older people themselves, to assess the particular challenges faced by people from particular backgrounds or circumstances, such as those from a Black or Ethnic Minority background or community, or disabled older people. And that an action plan is developed to overcome these challenges.

**Response:** Accept

The Strategy for Older People in Wales provides a structured basis for the Welsh Assembly Government and other public bodies in Wales to develop policies and plans to address the implications of an ageing population. It concentrates on four strategic and cross-cutting themes:

- Valuing Older People - Maintaining and Developing Engagement;
- Changing Society – The Economic Status of Older People;
- Well-Being and Independence; and
- Making it happen – Implementation

Within the framework of the Strategy we have done much to improve the say older people have about public services and to improve access to and the quality of services. Action to date includes:

- A Deputy Minister with specific responsibility for Older People;
- The Commissioner for Older People Wales. Ruth Marks took up her post on 21 April 2008; and
- A National Partnership Forum for Older People in Wales, that is made up of a majority of older people, that meets regularly to provide a focus for debate about ageing and a source of expert advice to the Assembly.

Through Age Cymru we have established specific groups to look at the issues faced by BME and LGBT Older People. Both groups have strong representation of older people in Wales. The LGBT group produced a report on the specific issues that face LGBT older people, which was presented to the Welsh Assembly Government last year.

Every local authority has effective structures to support implementation of the Strategy - Co-ordinators in each area, Strategy Development Plans; local Forums for Older People, Older People Partnership Groups and Older Peoples Champions at LA Cabinet level. Each local authority produces an implementation plan each year that details how they will be taking the Strategy for Older People forward in that year. They report on this twice yearly to the lead policy division.

The Welsh Local Government Association has developed three good practice guides on the implementation of the Strategy; an elected members guide, a champions guide and a compendium of notable practice from local level, titled "From Strategy to Outcomes".

The Strategy Phase 2 takes us up to 2013 in terms of commitments to the ageing agenda, however, as with Phase 1 of the Strategy, a robust external evaluation of the Strategy will need to be undertaken. In this context it is proposed that in 2010-11 a scoping study is undertaken to establish the parameters for a full review of the Strategy in 2011-12. This it is intended will lead to consideration of the case for a new commitment from the Welsh Assembly Government, to the needs and aspirations for the ageing population, to take us through the next decade.

**Financial implications:** By 2008, £13 million had been invested in the Strategy with 80% of that funding going to local authorities and the voluntary sector to support local initiatives. The funding for 2009/10 was set at £1.7 million allocated to Local Authorities as a lump sum of £35k to meet coordinator costs with the balance being allocated by the SSA formula. In 2010/11 the budget has been reduced to £1m which will be divided equally amongst all 22 local authorities. The

funding for the Strategy comes from allocated funds within BEL 0661 within the HSSDG OPLTCP allocation.

## **Recommendation 5**

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government must ensure that individual Departments take full responsibility for the older people and employment related outcomes relevant to their portfolio in the Strategy for Older People and the Single Equality Scheme. This must include transparent monitoring, evaluation and reporting against those outcomes.

### **Response:** Accept in Principle

Skills the Work for Wales outlines the Assembly Government's approach to tackling worklessness and the skills agenda. The approach is not client group specific and as such our programmes are all-age.

The Welsh Assembly Government consulted widely with stakeholders in Wales with an interest in the issues of older people while developing the Single Equality Scheme (SES). As part of this engagement process, meetings were held with Age Concern, Help the Aged and Carers Wales. The Assembly Government has also promoted the SES at networking events, including the Older People sheltered Housing Group in Cardiff. A written response to the consultation was received from Age Concern Cymru.

The Employability Branch in DCELLS has the policy lead around employability issues in Wales. As previously mentioned the main Assembly Government supported provision to assist jobseekers into work is all-age.

In relation to the need for transparent monitoring and evaluation, the Older People's Monitor includes analysis of the employment rate and perceptions around access to employment and issues of social exclusion through lack of employment. The Lifelong Learning Wales Record is also a source of statistical data that can provide age specific details of Welsh residents accessing training and learning opportunities.

A DCELLS Equality Steering Group was set up in July 2009 to embed equality into DCELLS Core Business by:

- progressing the equality and diversity agenda in DCELLS;
- embedding the mainstreaming of Equality across DCELLS;

- ensuring DCELLS fulfils its commitments and drives forward promoting and mainstreaming equality;
- establishing indicators for evaluating the DCELLS Equality Strategy;
- regularly monitoring our work and evaluating our policies and programmes to ensure it addresses the needs of all citizens of Wales; and
- oversee the bi-annual review and content of DCELLS Single Equality Action Plan (SEAP) to ensure it is aligned to our business objectives and is achievable.

DCELLS follows the strategic direction and commitments set out in the SES for promoting and embedding equality. Every six months DCELLS report on progress made against the milestones and outcomes in their Single Equality Action Plan (SEAP). These updates and the annual review on delivery of the SEAPs are published on the DCELLS website. DCELLS Equality Team collates the evidence for DCELLS.

DCELLS is represented at the Single Equality Scheme Delivery Group which comprises of senior officials and representatives from the NHS, Local Government and Third Sector. This Group was set up to monitor implementation and progress of the Single Equality Scheme and Departmental SEAPs.

Officials will work with the Department of Work and Pensions to understand more fully the proposals set out in their latest White Paper (Building Britain's Recovery: Achieving Full Employment – December 2009) to provide specialist support for the over 50s. We will also explore the possibility of obtaining better age specific monitoring information.

**Financial implications:** Monitoring of activities and outputs will be met through current resources.

## **Recommendation 6**

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Government urges the UK Government to remove the mandatory retirement age.

This is a matter for the UK Government. We will bring the Committee's recommendation to the attention of the Minister concerned.

**Response:** Note the recommendation

**Financial implications:** Nil

## **Recommendation 7**

The Committee recommends that:

The Welsh Assembly Government collects information on the age of candidates applying for positions of employment in the organisation, as well as those actually appointed.

**Response:** Accept

The Welsh Assembly Government is working to ensure that systems in place to collect information on the age of candidates applying for positions as well as those appointed.

**Financial implications:** Nil. The on-line recruitment management system already has the capability to address this requirement.

More generally, you will be pleased to learn that a number of the recommendations, especially 2 and 3 dealt with above, cover work that is already in progress within my Enterprise department, especially monitoring of uptake on services and impact in relation to age of individuals accessing support. We are also committed to working in partnership with key stakeholders to assess particular challenges faced by older people especially in relation to self employment. Further, we are committed to supporting SMEs on employment best practice to ensure equality of opportunity for all.

**Ieuan Wyn Jones**

**Deputy First Minister and Minister for the Economy and Transport**





Wizard Check	YES <input type="checkbox"/>	NO <input type="checkbox"/>
--------------	------------------------------	-----------------------------

CRM Contact No.	
-----------------	--

<b>Client Name</b> (Title/First Name/Surname)					
<b>Home Address</b>					
<b>County</b>					<b>Post Code</b>
<b>Telephone</b>		<b>NI Number:</b>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

### Data Protection and Confidentiality Statement

- I confirm that it is my intention to start up my business in Wales and I am not receiving Start-up support through any other initiative.
- I understand that the Welsh Assembly Government accepts no responsibility for any losses or debts incurred by the business, directly or indirectly, as a result of any advice and guidance provided under the Flexible Support for Business Start-Up Service
- I confirm that there is no vested/pecuniary interest in my business idea from any member of the Business Advisory team.
- I confirm that no other financial arrangements have, or will be made, with regards to reimbursement or refund for support provided under this service between another party and myself.
- The directors/owners of the business support this proposal and I confirm that I have the authority to request this support on behalf of the business.
- I certify that the proposed project would not be undertaken without start-up support.
- I agree to provide information to complete an evaluation report on the service received.
- I acknowledge that my details will be held on a computerised database to assist the Welsh Assembly Government and its partners with record keeping, client follow-up, statistical and research purposes. I acknowledge that the Welsh Assembly Government adheres to the Data Protection Principles embodied in the Data Protection Act 1998.
- I declare that all the information given is correct and to the best of my knowledge.

The Flexible Support for Business Start-up Service is funded by the Welsh Assembly Government and the European Union Competitiveness and Convergence programmes. The Welsh Assembly Government will share relevant data with the Welsh European Funding Office, the European Commission and their auditors in the delivery of this service.

This service offers a range of workshops and advisory support subject to appropriate funding being in place. The level of support available may be subject to change without prior notice.

**Client Signature** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date** \_\_\_\_\_

The Welsh Assembly Government aims to offer equality of opportunity in accessing start-up support. No client should receive less favourable treatment on the grounds of: Race; ethnicity, gender; sexual orientation; age; marital status; disability; or religion and belief. The following data will be used to monitor our service delivery:-



**Date of Birth:** \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

**Gender** (Please tick)

- Male
- Female

**Do you consider yourself as having;**

- |                                   |                          |     |                          |    |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|-----|--------------------------|----|
| A Disability?                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| A Work Limiting Health Condition? | <input type="checkbox"/> |     | <input type="checkbox"/> |    |

**Lone Parent**

- |                          |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
|                          | Yes                      | No                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Preferred Language**

- Welsh
- English
- Other .....

**Welsh Language Ability**

- |                         |                          |                          |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
|                         | Yes                      | No                       |
| Understand spoken Welsh | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Speak Welsh             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Read Welsh              | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Write Welsh             | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Current Employment Status** (Please tick)

- Employed
- Self Employed
- Unemployed
- Non Employed

**Qualification**

- |                                     |                          |                          |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
|                                     | Yes                      | No                       |
| Post Graduate (within last 5 years) | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Undergraduate (in final year)       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Migrant Worker**

- |                          |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
|                          | Yes                      | No                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

**Ethnicity** (Please tick)

**White**

- British
- English
- Irish
- Scottish
- Welsh

Any other White background please specify

.....

**Black**

- Black British
- Black English
- Black Irish
- Black Scottish
- Black Welsh
- Caribbean
- African

Any other Black background please specify

.....

**Asian**

- Asian British
- Asian English
- Asian Irish
- Asian Scottish
- Asian Welsh
- Indian
- Pakistani
- Bangladeshi
- Chinese

Any other Asian background please specify

.....

**Dual Heritage**

- White and Black Caribbean
- White and Black African
- White and Asian

Any other dual heritage background please specify

.....

**Gypsy / Traveller / Romany**

If you would prefer to describe your ethnic origin in another way; please do so

.....