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Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru	National Assembly for Wales
Pwyllgor yr Economi, Seilwaith a Sgiliau	Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee
Blaenoriaethau ar gyfer Pwyllgor yr Economi, Seilwaith a Sgiliau	Priorities for the Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee
EIS 35 Comisiynydd Pobl Hŷn Cymru	EIS 35 Older People's Commissioner for Wales

1st September 2016

Re: Priorities for Economy, Infrastructure and Skills Committee

Dear Chair,

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this consultation¹. The Committee's remit is broad and diverse and all issues affect older people across Wales, however I would highlight these particular issues for your consideration:

Public transport provision for older people in Wales

The funding reductions in frontline public services over recent years has had a huge impact on older people's ability to get out and about and do the things that matter to them^{2 3}. The number of public bus services has reduced across Wales, which has had a detrimental and devastating impact on older people's lives, both in urban and rural areas.

Furthermore, older people's ability to use other modes of transport e.g. trains has also been affected with limited bus services to and from stations.

¹ <http://www.senedd.assembly.wales/mgConsultationDisplay.aspx?ID=217>

² <http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/sites/default/files/research-files/buses-in-crisis-2015.pdf>

³ <http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/news/news/14-02->

[25/The_Importance_and_Impact_of_Community_Services_within_Wales.aspx](http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/en/news/news/14-02-25/The_Importance_and_Impact_of_Community_Services_within_Wales.aspx)

The accumulative impact of these changes has meant that older people are unable to visit friends or family, access key services and amenities, and go to the GP surgery/hospital. Older people's ability to contribute to local economies and communities has been reduced due to the reductions in public transport provision. Public transport has a huge role to play in maintaining older people's health, independence and wellbeing, and ensuring that older people are active within their communities is good for the individual (reducing the need for statutory packages of health and social care), good for the community (improved opportunities for social interaction between people of all ages) and good for the economy (older people being able to spend in local businesses and work or volunteer). Public transport is crucial in taking forward my outcomes-focused, asset-based approach for older people and also contributes towards the goals of the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act.

Whilst the introduction of concessionary bus travel in 2002 has made a real difference in older people's lives across Wales, a bus pass is only useful when there is a bus service. What is the current situation regarding public transport in Wales for older people and others? Is there sufficient support for community transport schemes to 'fill the gaps' for example? What are the barriers and what can be done to ensure that older people can continue to be assets to society? How can Wales help ensure that public transport in Wales is age and dementia friendly, as is promoted in the Ageing Well in Wales programme⁴? And finally, what is the current situation regarding the Welsh Government Strategy for Older People Phase Three commitment to ensure that older people can access affordable and appropriate transport which assists them to play a full part in family, social and community life⁵?

Skills training provision for older people in Wales

Building on the National Assembly's 2015 Inquiry into Employment Opportunities for People aged 50+⁶, a key barrier for many older people looking to remain in or re-enter the workplace is limited or outdated skills. Following the Inquiry, the Welsh Government has commissioned research to look at the extent of perceived or actual age discrimination in skills,

⁴ <http://www.ageingwellinwales.com/en/home>

⁵ <http://gov.wales/docs/dhss/publications/130521olderpeoplestrategyen.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.assembly.wales/laid%20documents/cr-ld10305/cr-ld10305-e.pdf>

training and employment matters. This research is welcomed, and although the Welsh Government has stated that the skills needs of older people are addressed in wider schemes/programmes, this follow-on Inquiry could examine whether the Welsh Government needs a skills strategy specifically for people aged 50+, as outlined in its Strategy for Older People Phase Three.

For some older people, remaining in the workplace is a way of staying active and being socially included, whilst for others working in later life is essential in order to supplement incomes and deal with rising living costs. An estimated 205,000 older people (50-64 age group) are not in education, employment or training (NEETs) in Wales and ensuring that older people have the right skillsets is good for the individual, employers and the economy⁷.

What are the particular skillsets that older people require to remain in or re-enter the workplace? Are older people aware of the skills training opportunities, and can they access them? Are higher and further education institutions in Wales encouraging older people to take part and access their learning and skills schemes/programmes? What is being done to ensure that an increasing number of older people are taking up apprenticeship opportunities? Are employers in Wales encouraged to employ an age-diverse/multi-generational workforce, and what can be done to increase the number of age and dementia friendly workplaces in Wales? Finally, would the devolution of the DWP skills programmes to Wales mean better and increased provision for older people looking to remain in or get back into employment?

I hope that these issues provide the Committee with useful information. I look forward to working with you and others on these issues over the coming months and years. Should you require any further information then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best wishes,



⁷http://www.olderpeoplewales.com/Libraries/Consultation_Responses_151006/September_2015_NAfw_Employment_opportunities_for_people_over_50.sflb.ashx

Sarah Rochira
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