

[National Assembly for Wales](#)

[Enterprise and Business Committee](#)

[Employment opportunities for people over 50](#)

Evidence from Howard (Wrexham) – EOP 08

Here is some background on my own situation:

I lost my job in January 2014 and have been trying to get back into the workplace ever since, having worked in sales and development in the plastic packaging industry for most of my career.

I am registered with numerous recruitment companies and get daily job alerts, so far I have applied for over 150 positions, including some outside my field of expertise, to date I have had less than 10 responses. I am prepared to do more practical things as I enjoy DIY, car maintenance etc. it would be a welcome change to the pressures I have had in the sales over the years. However, these seem to be a waste of time, as the impression I get is that these would not be interesting enough for me.

Some of the companies I have worked for have basically used my skills and experience to get their business established before dispensing with my services, despite evidence to support I was doing a good job. My last position lasted 16 months so I was not able to contest the dismissal, even though a solicitor stated I had a good case, before that I was self-employed to keep in the workplace. This meant that when I lost my job last year I had insufficient NI class 1 contributions and so did not qualify for job seekers allowance. Whilst I am not a great believer in benefits and tend to avoid them, this was major frustration to me especially when you see what some people qualify for.

I am nearly 63 and in good health, I also want and need to continue working, as the next few months will see my financial situation become increasingly more difficult.

Despite feeling alone in all of this I remain positive, as I am confident in my abilities.

In summary my views and comments concerning older unemployed people are as follows:

- > The job centre offers little or no assistance, all they seem to want to do is tick the relevant boxes to show you have made some effort and attended your appointment. It would be helpful if they could offer a mentor in specific cases to support and help in job search. There used to be access to computer terminals to do a job search for those without a PC but these have been taken out, meaning you need to book to use one of the few terminals they have.
- > Recruitment companies do not provide any real feedback on your application so that you can understand why you are not being put forward/or unsuccessful.
- > No matter what is said, I believe that ageism is still an issue, and with it an assumption of your fitness to work and to adapt.
- > I think that you need a good mix of age and experience in the workplace so that different generations learn from each other. This opinion is something I have gained over the years from when I first went into the workplace as a teenager working with older experienced colleagues. This helped me understand the disciplines required in the workplace in addition to gaining experience of the job.
- > I do not think that employing older people necessarily restricts opportunities for younger people, if you are good enough you are old enough, no matter what age. In my thirties I lost out on promotion to a younger person, which surprised most of my colleagues as they assumed I was better qualified. I subsequently found out that at the time it was the companies policy to promote younger people, this was changed some years later when they realised they did not have the right mix of experience.

I hope that my comments offer some insight to what an older person feels and is going through in the job market.

Regards.

Howard