



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Minister for
Employment
Guy Opperman MP

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Lord Bridges of Headley

28 November 2022

Dear Lord Bridges,

Many thanks for your letter of 11 November 2022 – it was much appreciated and I wanted to take the chance to extend my thanks for your considerate chairing of the evidence session.

As promised, I am writing to you and the committee on the following three points that were raised in our discussion:

1. Does the Department for Work and Pensions have any data or projections about the size of the older workforce?

- According to the 2020 ONS National Population Projections:
 - In 2010, just over 1 in 4 (11.4m) of the working age population (16-64) were aged 50 years and over; this is projected to increase to almost 1 in 3 (14.5m) by 2025 when the working age is 16-65.
 - The number of individuals aged 50 years and over as a proportion of those 16 years and over is projected to increase from 42% in 2010 to nearly 50% (29.0 million) by 2035.
 - In 2020 there were 299 pensioners for every 1000 working age people. This is projected to be 298 in 2030, then increase substantially to 350 by 2040.
 - The State Pension age (SPa) is set at 67 years of age for the 2030/40 data. This will influence the figures and affect the proportion of individuals eligible.
- The same ONS data shows that between 2020 and 2025 there will be approximately 1.1 million more people aged 50 to SPa (an increase of over 8.1%), and 85,000 more people aged 25-49 (an increase of 0.4%)
 - The increase will include 65-year-olds post 2021 – this accounts for approximately 790,000 of the increase.

2. What kind of provision does the Government have for those who are missing out on work due to long-term physical illness?

There are a range of Government initiatives that support disabled people and people with long-term physical illness to start, stay and succeed in work:

- Increasing Work Coach support in Jobcentres for people with health conditions receiving Universal Credit or Employment Support Allowance;
- Disability Employment Advisers in Jobcentres offering advice and expertise on how to help disabled people and people with health conditions into work;
- The Work and Health Programme and Intensive Personalised Employment Support, providing tailored and personalised support for participants;
- Access to Work grants towards extra costs of working beyond standard reasonable adjustments;
- Disability Confident encouraging employers to think differently about disability and health, and to take positive action to address the issues employees face in the workplace;
- The Information and Advice Service providing better integrated and tailored guidance on supporting and managing health and disability in the workplace;
- Support in partnership between DWP and the health system, including Employment Advice in NHS Improving Access to Psychological Therapy services. Combining psychological treatment and employment support for people with mental health conditions, of which nearly 40% also have a musculoskeletal health condition.

3 How is the Government matching existing roles with people entering the labour market through immigration?

- The Shortage Occupation List (SOL) is a list of the roles the UK traditionally struggles to fill domestically. Being on the SOL brings various benefits, including that the migrant can come into the UK with a lower salary and that the visa process is cheaper. The Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) review the sectors and occupations that should be on the SOL, using evidence from businesses. The MAC is expected to produce their final report and recommendations in Spring 2023.
- The work visa system in the UK is primarily employer-led as the majority of work visa routes require applicants to have a job offer from a licensed sponsor, which should serve to better match individuals to vacancies. We do have some routes that do not require applicants to already have a job offer, but these are aimed at highly skilled individuals who would not expect to have any difficulties finding work. Because of this, the main levers to better match vacancies with migrants are with business and the need to make jobs more attractive.

4. The Mid-Life MOT helps people plan for employment in later life and a financially secure retirement.

A Mid-life MOT website was launched in 2019, encouraging those in their 40s, 50s and 60s to take stock of their finances, skills and health, and enables them to better prepare for their retirement and build financial resilience.

Following the success of tests delivered through ten Local Enterprise Partnerships in 2021, the Government has announced a £5m expansion of the Mid-life MOT initiative ([Mid-life MOT expansion to help tens of thousands assess work, wellbeing, and finances - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/mid-life-mot-expansion-to-help-tens-of-thousands-assess-work-wellbeing-and-finances)). As part of the expansion, Mid-life MOTs will be delivered through our UK network of Job Centre Plus offices, utilising the

expertise and networks of our 50 PLUS Champions to help older jobseekers address barriers to work associated with common challenges related to health, skills, and finance. Delivery in JobCentres will start in the New Year and run across Great Britain.

The Department launched a market engagement exercise on 29 November to identify providers for a holistic, face-to-face Mid-life MOT programme delivered through employers and direct to employees in three pilot areas (the North East of England; Cornwall & Devon; and East Anglia). Providers will be identified via a commercial tender process

This forms part of a wider £22 million package for a new, enhanced offer for claimants aged 50 and over to ensure they receive the support they need to return to or remain in work.

Eligible older job seekers on Universal Credit will receive more intensive, tailored support during the first nine months of their claim, on top of the support that work coaches offer all claimants on skills provision and job search support. Rollout of the offer has started in a number of our Jobcentre Plus sites and we will continue to expand the offer across Great Britain over the coming months.

The offer is enhanced further by our 50PLUS Champions who work collaboratively with Work Coaches across all 37 Jobcentre Plus districts, and with employers and stakeholders to raise awareness of the importance of supporting older job seekers - sharing best practice. The champions also work closely with our Employer & Partnership community to maximise any opportunities to tailor provision and recruitment to support customers aged 50 and over back into the labour market.

5. I would also like to take this opportunity, if allowed, to offer the following corrections to the evidence I provided in the session:

In a discussion about comparative inactivity rates between countries, I misspoke and used the vacancy figures for the respective economies instead of economic inactivity. The economic inactivity rate in the UK is 5.3% lower than the OECD average and 3.9% lower than the EU average.

Thank you again for the invitation to speak to the committee – I would be grateful if you could pass the above information on to the members and the Clerk.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Guy Opperman', with a long horizontal flourish underneath.

Guy Opperman MP

Minister for Employment