

**WISE AGE SUBMISSION TO LONDON ASSEMBLY ECONOMY
COMMITTEE SESSION ON FINANCIAL SECURITY AND
EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR OLDER LONDONERS: 15
MARCH 2023**

Following our oral evidence to the committee we would like to summarise some key points we believe are important to improving the position of older workers in London. This is based on our direct experience of working for twenty years in London assisting older workers gain employment and helping employers to become age friendly.

1. There needs to be an **older workers strategy for London** led by the GLA involving partnerships with London Boroughs, DWP, employer organisations, trade unions and specialist bodies like Wise Age who are embedded in local communities and understand the dynamics of older workers. It's insufficient to deal with the complex problems facing older workers within the margins of existing general GLA employment initiatives and programmes, and there is a need for policy measures to address the drivers of the current problems. We have presented such a strategy to the Greater London Authority – see [WHY DO WE NEED A STRATEGY FOR OLDER WORKERS IN LONDON NOW - WiseAge](#), but judge insufficient real progress is being made in London and older workers have not received the right attention in London's recovery employment work. There is value in an **older workers governance group** to co-ordinate this strategy.
2. We recognise that GLA direct powers may be limited but **using the soft power of the Mayor** in shaping an agenda for older workers across London is crucial.
3. There is need for a better **understanding of the needs and circumstances of London's older workers**, particularly the barriers to employment with London based evidence and data. There are big risks of lumping all "older workers" together as well as making assumptions about needs, or looking at older workers through the prism of existing provider employment support initiatives. At a London level we need to know more about skills levels and gaps, the impact of health issues, gender issues, ethnicity, financial issues as well as previous work experiences and whether they were negative, to provide the right support.
4. Older workers in London need access to **better quality localised employment support** addressing their needs. But it's important this is tailored, and our evidence is that older workers don't like being grouped with younger workers on generic employment programmes. Those furthest from the job market, those facing the most inequalities such as disabled, ethnic minority older workers, women and those with health conditions and the long-term unemployed need special attention. As only 1 in 10 older workers receive employment support then

reaching a wider audience of over 50s through a personalisation agenda and better marketing will be necessary.

5. The “elephant in the room” in much of the discussion about older workers is the effects of ageism by employers and this needs to be tackled much more firmly. We see this in recruitment, redundancies, and how older workers or those approaching “retirement” get treated. Otherwise, older workers face the risk in some cases of returning to the workplace but suffering from the same negative experience. **The Mayor and partners need to run a high profile combatting ageism campaign across London**
6. We need more age friendly employers in London – who value older workers, make their organisations fit for them, eliminate ageism in recruitment, ensure flexible working opportunities, use job design for older workers needs , provide better training for older workers and provide wellbeing support. **The Mayor in conjunction with employers and other partners need to run a championing older workers campaign.** This needs to publicise the active role of older workers, the need for more organisations to become age friendly and the benefits of older workers in multi-generational workforces, We see this as much more specific than the GLA’s existing Good Work Standard. A core ingredient will be organisations publishing their employment data on over 50s in their workplace.
7. As part of this campaign the **GLA should develop an Employers Toolkit for older workers** similar to what Manchester and Wales have produced . We see a key role for Anchor Institutions in taking the lead here as exemplars of age friendly workplaces.
8. Older workers seeking support need appropriate advice in seeking employment and options for them particularly around retirement . **The Mayor should create an on-line Older Workers Information Hub** providing advice on employment advice on ageism, rights on flexible working, support for health problems and caring responsibilities.
9. The aim of a London older workers strategy is to improve employment outcomes for over 50s, reduce the adverse financial risks facing older people and also promoting age friendly workplaces to root out ageism. Key is ensuring that different existing GLA initiatives have clear objectives and outcomes for older workers which can be co-ordinated. And crucial is a **set of impact and outcome measures of older workers** to assess performance. As part of the Older Workers Strategy this needs public reporting and discussions with employers, unions, and other stakeholders.

**TIM WHITAKER
TRUSTEE
WISE AGE**