
The Commission on Older Women

Interim Report

September 2013

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This is the interim report of the Commission on Older Women. The Commission is chaired by Labour's Deputy Leader Harriet Harman MP QC and contains senior Labour figures including Yvette Cooper, Shadow Minister for Equalities, alongside a wide range of senior women from business, unions, voluntary organisations and public life.

The interim report represents the views of the Commissioners, informed by roundtable discussions and submissions. It will be discussed at Labour Women's Conference and recommendations will feed into the Labour policy process.

Foreword from Rt Hon Harriet Harman MP QC

There is a new generation of older women - in their 50s and 60s - and they are very different from their mothers' generation.

The health of women who are now over 50 is markedly better than previous generations, they have much higher educational qualifications and they have done much more in the world of work. They no longer accept the old ideas that women should be subservient to men and they have an expectation that women should be treated as equals.

But while so much about women's lives has changed - public policy remains rooted in the past.

Public policy needs to wake up to the new generation of older women who are neither in their youthful child-rearing years, nor frail and elderly, needing support. They have a vital role in the family and in the world of work.

This new generation of older women have children who are now grown up - but who still depend on them especially when it comes to helping with care of the grandchildren. Their grown up daughters and daughters-in-law now work but high quality childcare is still not affordable and accessible for many. So older women are helping with the grandchildren.

They are also helping care for older relatives. The years of frailty for the elderly are much longer and however good care services are, there is still a lot of care and support of the elderly which is done by this generation of older women.

As well as having taken the primary responsibility for caring for their children when they were young, this generation of older women - drawing on their educational achievements and their expectations of equality - also has a big investment in the world of work. Their income from their work is important to them and to their family. But, more than that, they are committed to their work and believe they do a good job.

Yet when it comes to this older generation of women, public policy acknowledges and supports neither their role at home nor at work.

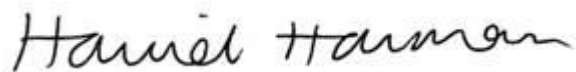
Unemployment amongst women aged 50-64 has increased by 41 per cent in the last two and a half years, compared with one per cent overall. The pay gap between women and men over 50 is twice as large as for women overall. Harassment of younger women at work is challenged - and quite right too. But harassment of women because they are older - with jibes about the menopause - is not. An older woman who works part-time - perhaps because she is supporting her husband through a period of illness - is least valued in the workforce.

When children are young, it is often the grandmother to whom the mother first turns for help. Yet though there is maternity and paternity leave and the mother can share some of her maternity leave with the father, she cannot share it with her mother or mother-in-

law, either of whom might be called on to help and both of whom are likely to be working. Grandparents provide care to over forty per cent of families, but have no rights to take leave to look after grandchildren, and no rights to request flexible work.

And this is a generation of women which is invisible in public life. Despite the problem of undoubted age discrimination, there is an evident and long-standing role for older men in public life. We see that in television. The older male presenter represents wisdom, authority and experience. Yet the woman TV presenter has to struggle to look younger than she is and is then pushed off our screens when she turns 50. This is discrimination, a waste of talent and experience and an insult to viewers - many of whom are themselves older women - who do not need to be protected from the sight of older women.

Labour's Commission on Older Women is listening to the voices of this new generation. Many feel that far from being "past it" they are, with their accumulation of experience, in their prime. We are looking at the public policy implications and demanding change.

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Rt Hon Harriet Harman MP QC

**Shadow Deputy Prime Minister & Shadow Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport
and Chair of the Commission on Older Women**

Foreword from Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP

Across every generation women are feeling the strain. Women are being hit three times as hard as men by the Government's economic policies, despite earning less and owning less than men, and female unemployment has reached its highest level in 25 years.

Low paid new mums are losing out on almost £3,000 in extra support during maternity, families are struggling to budget as costs rise and wages remain the same, and women at the other end of their working lives are told they will have to work longer before getting their pension.

But there is a middle generation of women whose voices have often been missing from the debate.

When Labour set up the Commission no one was talking about the 'stretched middle'. But over the past twelve months the Commission has heard from women across the country who are feeling stretched in all directions.

Women in their 50s and 60s are picking up the pieces left in the wake of three years of no economic growth and rising cost of living. They are working hard to hold families together, increasingly relied upon by their sons and daughters for childcare whilst also caring for elderly parents or sick relatives. They make up six in every ten carers and provide over £7billion in unpaid support to our economy.

They are the generation who fought for better rights in the workplace, made the economic arguments for childcare and fought for equal pay, but for whom the workplace has never caught-up. As the Commission found, unemployment amongst women in their 50s has risen by more than any other group since 2010. And for older women working full-time, the pay gap is twice as great as for their daughters.

This middle generation of women have forged successful careers and held their families together, and they were the first to assert their equal right to be seen and heard across all areas of public life, but their voices are absent from our TV screens, radio and magazines.

These are the women that Labour wanted to hear from, to understand the challenges that older women face and the way in which they might be better supported in their daily lives. Because the generation of women who've broken glass ceilings and paved the way for their daughters and granddaughters deserve a better deal.

I am very grateful to Harriet for chairing the Commission, to Fiona and to their fellow Commissioners for their work taking evidence from women and men across the country.

The response to the Commission over the past twelve months has been extremely strong and I look forward to its future work and recommendations.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading 'Yvette Cooper'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Yvette' and the last name 'Cooper' clearly distinguishable.

Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP

Shadow Minister for Women and Equalities

Executive Summary

Since January the Commission on Older Women has been taking evidence – as written submissions from experts and practitioners and at round table and listening events which the Commission has held across the country. The quality of the response has been tremendous and I, as Secretary to the Commission, would like to record my thanks to all those who have submitted evidence or come along to events and let us know what you think.

This is an interim report and the consultation process of the Commission will continue. However, a number of ideas are already emerging around our key themes and we wanted to share these now, with our interim recommendations. I hope that this report will be a stimulus to further discussion and debate.

It has been through this process of getting out and about and listening to a group of people whose voices are so rarely heard that we learnt how much older women are contributing to our society, how much they have to say and how they are no longer prepared to stand by silently while their contribution is overlooked or disparaged. We focused our recommendations on three main areas where reform is urgently needed, work, care and public life, but there are other policies which impact substantially on older women where their perspective has been overlooked, and in our continuing work we will address those.

The women we spoke to are not sad victims, many are enjoying their lives and are glad that they can still contribute to their family and their work. But for too long they have been taken for granted and not heard. The recommendations below are a start to changing that.

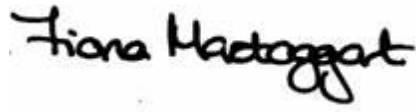
The interim recommendations of the Commission on Older Women are:

1. The Commission believes that employers' organisations should develop a national 'Top 100 age-friendly employers' scheme.
2. The Commission would like to see employment programmes funded by the Government demonstrating that they support older women. This could include active targeting and tailored support for older women.
3. The pay gap between men and women is wider for older women. So we want to see gender pay audits brought in, as set out in the 2010 Equality Act (Section 78).
4. Older women can face double discrimination – on the grounds of gender and age. The Equality Act already has provisions to tackle this but they have not yet been brought into effect. The Government should do this now.
5. The Commission would like to see much better careers service support for older workers.

6. The Commission believes that employers should provide full access to training opportunities to older women.
7. Employers should show flexibility to allow for changes to working patterns as women take on caring responsibilities or move towards retirement. Changes to working hours and job redesign should be offered.
8. The Commission believes that carers often do not know their rights and do not get proper support. We would like to see public bodies actively identifying carers to offer help.
9. Public policy needs to recognise the vital contribution to the economy that older women make as carers. So flexible employment and well designed jobs are important to enable them to balance work and care and deal with issues of financial hardship or the health and well-being of carers.
10. Short-term flexibility or 'adjustment leave' would help older women workers deal with immediate caring crises and allow time to adjust to a new caring role.
11. Thought should be given to the role of grandmothers who combine work and care for their grandchildren. The Commission would like to start a public debate on whether family leave could be shared with grandparents or whether this would set back the already low take-up by fathers.
12. Other countries deploy imaginative schemes to help relieve the pressures of caring. The Commission would like to see employers consulted about schemes such as the German 'Familienpflegezeit' family caring time system which allows employees to reduce hours temporarily while smoothing pay over a longer period.
13. Systems of mutual caring, such as time-banking, can support those caring for people who do not live near them. The Commission would like to start a debate about how these might work in the UK.
14. A national standard for information services for carers should be introduced. This would greatly improve the access to information and support for older women carers.
15. The Commission believes that the broadcasting industry should establish a clear and consistent way of monitoring the number of older women they employ, including presenters and freelancers, across all broadcasting media, publish accurate data each year and develop targets.
16. The equality duty under the Equality Act applies to the BBC, and the Commission would like to see the BBC report annually on how it is being implemented in respect of older women.

17. Conferences supported with public funding should aim to have 50 per cent women speakers.

I hope that these will be received as a stimulus to further debate.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Fiona Mactaggart'.

Fiona Mactaggart MP

Chair, Parliamentary Labour Party Women's Group and Secretary of the Commission on Older Women

Chapter 1 Older Women in the Workplace

1. A new generation of working older women

Women in their fifties and sixties are the generation who fought for better rights in the workplace, made the economic arguments for childcare for working mums and who campaigned for equal pay. They were the first generation to “do it all”, balancing family responsibilities with successful working lives.

The position of older women in the workplace was the first theme explored by the Commission on Older Women. The Commission was concerned that inequalities still exist between older men and women in their working lives and wanted to explore these. Older women face new challenges in the workplace and these cannot be ignored.

These are women who have broken glass ceilings and forged successful careers as well as raised families. They are the first generation of women who have expected to work and care but the workplace has not caught up with the change.

Women in their fifties face the widest pay gap of any age group and have been amongst the hardest hit by the tough economic climate. Unemployment amongst women aged 50-64 has increased by a staggering 41 per cent in the last two and a half years, compared with one per cent overall.

Women who took time out of work to raise their families or care for others have found they are unable to catch-up when they re-enter the workplace. They are more likely to be in lower skilled and lower paid work than their male counterparts and have less financial security. And often, the inflexibility of workplaces is combined with an atmosphere of ageism and sexism and many older women end up choosing to give up work altogether.

Older women have considerable skills and experience and this chapter will discuss both the challenges older women currently face in their working lives but also how employers, businesses and the economy at large can better develop and use those talents.

In addition to paid employment, older women also make an enormous contribution through voluntary work. This is not an area that the Commission has examined over the following section but may be an area that we move on to look at in later work.

“When individuals apply for a job, it will go to the one with the best CV – man or woman. However, this does not take account of the obstacles that women may encounter in order to compete equally.” *Personal submission*

The Commission believes that employers’ organisations should develop a national ‘Top 100 age-friendly employers’ scheme.

2. Findings from the evidence submitted to the Commission on Older Women

a. Employment levels amongst older women

Older women have driven increases in employment amongst the older generation and increased financial security for their families. A key target for Europe-wide economic development at the beginning of the twenty-first century was to increase labour market participation of older workers,¹ yet the Commission notes that the employment gap between men and women in their fifties and sixties is still significant. For example, the employment rate for men in their fifties and early sixties currently stands at 73 per cent, whilst for women of the same age group it stands at a much lower 62 per cent.²

Women in their fifties have been hit hard by rising levels of unemployment. Since the quarter prior to the 2010 general election, unemployment amongst women aged 50-64 has increased by 44,000 (from 108,000 in February-April 2010, to 152,000 in April-June 2013). This is a 41 per cent increase in just two and a half years. In comparison, unemployment in the same period amongst all people aged 16 and over has increased by 27,000, from 2.487 million to 2.514 million - an increase of one per cent.³

At the same time, employment levels amongst women in their fifties and sixties have been on the rise. The Institute for Fiscal Studies explains that this apparently conflicting trend is due to changes in the State Pension Age – accounting for 85 per cent of the growth in the employment rate. Due to the rising state pension age, older women are being financially squeezed and are staying in, or searching for work for longer.

The Work Programme has the potential to help older women stay in the labour market. However, an Age UK briefing shared with the Commission on the Government's Work Programme clearly shows that people aged over 55 have substantially worse job outcomes through the Work Programme than younger age groups. The successful outcome rate for 55 to 64 year olds is 28 per cent lower than the 18 to 54 average, and outcome rates are lower for women than men.⁴

The Commission would like to see employment programmes funded by the Government demonstrating that they support older women. This could include active targeting and tailored support for older women.

¹ European Union (2000) Lisbon Strategy

² Office for National Statistics August 2013

³ *ibid*

⁴ Age UK (2013) The Work Programme and older job seekers

b. Tackling the Pay Gap

Much progress has been made on gender pay inequality, but forty years on from the passing of the Equal Pay Act, there are still many areas where the gender pay gap is significant. For older women, the issue is particularly acute.

Evidence compiled by the TUC and shared with the Commission has shown that women in their fifties face the widest gender pay gap of any age group, earning less than both younger women and their male counterparts. Women over the age of 50 and working full-time, on average, earn 18 per cent less than their male counterparts – a gap twice as large as the pay gap for women overall.⁵

The difference for those in part-time work is even starker. Women in their fifties who work part-time have an average wage that is a third less than the average for all part-time workers.⁶

These are women who have faced down many glass ceilings, and will often have taken time out to raise families and found on return that they are overlooked for promotion. Women over 50 are concentrated into a smaller range of jobs in lower grades than their both their male counterparts and younger working women. According to evidence presented by Age UK, only 36 per cent of women working past State Pension Age are in higher skilled roles compared to 67 per cent of men.⁷

Despite this the Government has abandoned measures, put in place by Labour, to introduce mandatory pay audits for larger companies if they fail to demonstrate that sufficient voluntary progress on pay discrimination has been made.

The pay gap between men and women is wider for older women. So we want to see gender pay audits brought in, as set out in the 2010 Equality Act (Section 78).

c. Age Discrimination

The Commission felt that efforts to combat ageism in the workplace do not consider gender and therefore fail to take into account the double-discrimination of ageism and sexism that many older women face – a phenomenon described by some contributors to the work of the Commission as ‘older earlier.’

The discussion at the evidence session organised by the Scottish Women’s Convention highlighted that claims for dismissal on the grounds of age or sex discrimination must usually be lodged separately, not alongside each other. Pursuing a claim involving combined age and gender discrimination is extremely complicated. And taking a discrimination case to Employment Tribunal has been further hampered by the

⁵ TUC (2013) Older Women and the Labour Market

⁶ *ibid*

⁷ Age UK (2013) Evidence to the Commission on Older Women

introduction this year of a £1,200 fee. The difficulty in pursuing a combined age and gender discrimination case, and in particular the impact of the removal of the questionnaire procedure, was also highlighted during the round table with legal professionals on age/gender discrimination.

For older women of BME background, it is not just dual but a triple discrimination that they face - of sexism, ageism and racism, which further magnifies barriers to employment and in the workplace. A recent inquiry by the All Party Parliamentary Group on BME female unemployment found that the unemployment rates of Black, Pakistani and Bangladeshi heritage women have remained consistently higher than those of white women since the early 1980s.

Older women can face double discrimination – on the grounds of gender and age. The Equality Act already has provisions to tackle this but they have not yet been brought into effect. The Government should do this now.

The Commission also heard evidence of age discrimination in the recruitment process. Research in 2009-10 by Metcalfe and Meadows found that 42 per cent of employers still sought information on age during the recruitment process and 28 per cent made that information available to recruiters. Several submissions to the Commission also highlighted that, even where dates of birth are not asked for on recruitment forms, dates of qualifications usually are, allowing employers to ascertain the age of the applicant.

From business to politics, older women have forged the way in many professions previously closed off to women. However many women the Commission heard from felt that there are too few opportunities for advancement in the workplace for older women. These are women who want to continue to climb the career ladder, but find that discrimination and other factors - such as confidence issues - mean that few opportunities are available for promotion.

Most submissions on this topic consequently reported very few older, senior women managers in their workplace. Despite this, many highlighted that they felt managers were better and more sympathetic to the needs of workers if they were a little bit older and had worked their way up through the company. Submissions were quite sceptical about the trend towards management training schemes, which they felt were targeting young graduates, leaving few managers who truly understood the needs and concerns of older women workers.

d. Lifelong learning

The ongoing development of skills was the subject of many submissions to the Commission. Two key issues arose - the skills required to compete successfully in modern recruitment processes and the skills required to remain relevant in rapidly modernising workplaces.

Many women who submitted evidence to the Commission felt they lacked the skills required to compete successfully in modern interview situations, particularly given the increasing focus on competency-based assessment.

Many felt that younger people have had much more recent training and guidance, via the careers and education service, in how to successfully compete in this environment. The Commission believes that the careers service should consider how it can provide enhanced support to older workers, to better prepare them for recruitment processes.

The Commission would like to see much better careers service support for older workers.

One workshop participant highlighted an example from her own workplace. Following workplace restructuring, a woman in her 50s - who had been a successful team manager for over 10 years - had to reapply for her position, undertaking a competency-based interview assessment. She was given no support or advice in advance about how to present her skills in the tough and competitive labour market, despite competency-based interview processes being a relatively unknown environment for many older women workers, and failed to pass the interview, hugely undermining her confidence.

Similarly, participants in the same session felt that older women workers were often not given the training and support they needed to cope with the increasing mechanisation and computerisation of the workplace, despite working alongside younger colleagues, to whom ‘using a computer is second nature’.

The Commission believes that employers should provide full access to training opportunities to older women.

Many submissions to the Commission raised the target-driven culture of modern workplaces as a particular problem for older women workers, particularly where jobs are physically demanding or are computer-based. Submissions highlighted the fear of raising concerns about meeting workplace targets with line managers because of the worry of being subject to a work capability assessment and being found to be unfit to continue in the job.

“I am a team leader and I was asked, along with other team leaders, to give a short presentation on my section. I walked in with hand-written notes, but everyone else had used Power Point. I was told off by the management, but at the time I didn’t know how to use Power Point. I hadn’t received training on computers.” **Participant, Manchester Evidence Gathering Session**

However with proper awareness, there are simple ways in which employers can support greater skills development. The Commission heard from a 62 year old woman newly employed by a company who was required to use a computer as part of the job. To ensure she had the time she needed to adapt to the new technology, her probationary period was extended from 13 to 26 weeks and she passed successfully and gained permanent employment.

Another participant gave an example of a situation where a target was adjusted for an older worker who was struggling to meet her indicator. This target was adjusted for a six week period, allowing the worker time to 'improve her skills in the required area.' This was described as 'a culture of temporary adjustments for older workers'.

e. Flexible Working

The need for flexible working options was a common theme in evidence submitted to the Commission.

The most common reason for older women seeking flexible work is the need to balance work and caring. Throughout the evidence received by the Commission, older women said how their caring responsibilities impacted on their working lives.

"There is a set of expectations that I will do the caring, regardless of my ability to do this in terms of... my work needs. It would seem that my contribution to the world of work had to become subsumed within my gender roles as daughter, spouse, mother." **Labour Party Member, Individual Submission**

In their evidence to the Commission, Age UK said that a quarter of 45-54 year olds, mostly women, find that caring has taken a toll on their work and recommend that all jobs become 'flexible by default'. Around 300,000 older workers are forced to stop work to provide care each year and they estimate that this costs the Exchequer £1 billion in lost revenue through tax and National Insurance contributions, in addition to the benefits paid out as a result. And Age UK reported that older women in particular are more than twice as likely as men to retire early to provide unpaid care for an adult, and six times more likely to do so to care for children.

This important issue of the difficulties of balancing caring responsibilities with work will be examined in full in the next chapter.

Many submissions highlighted that, whilst working parents are largely offered flexibility in the workplace, flexibility is much more discretionary for older women workers. Some felt that employers would rather pressure older individuals to reduce their working hours than move towards more flexible working. At evidence gathering sessions, older women with caring responsibilities said they felt that they were competing for the same working hours as women with children, who were often given priority. Pressure was felt from both colleagues and employers. There was general agreement that caring responsibilities of older women workers are not taken as seriously as those of parents.

"Elder care does not have the same status as maternity leave or caring for children." **Participant, Working Families Focus Group**

Others felt that it was unfair that there was no extra central financial support for grandparents who had reduced their working hours - and therefore their income - to

help care for grandchildren. Some individuals cited examples of employers asking for ‘proof’ that they were carers, and that it had been very difficult to provide evidence of caring for grandchildren, given that there is no central support for doing this.

The Commission also received in evidence examples of flexible working best practice. One submission cited a manager who had been very cooperative in moving an employee’s shifts to the evenings and weekends to help her balance her caring responsibilities. The manager recognised that this was the best way to maximise the employee’s contribution. Another example was where an employee was allowed to adjust the starting time of her evening shift to allow her to walk to work with other colleagues, instead of being forced to walk alone in the dark.

Centrica submitted evidence demonstrating their use of flexible options to support older women. They employ 1,400 women over the age of 50 and over twenty per cent work part time or have agreed flexible working arrangements.

Employers should show flexibility to allow for changes to working patterns as women take on caring responsibilities or move towards retirement. Changes to working hours and job redesign should be offered.

f. Managing occupational health

The Commission heard from several sources about the particular health problems faced by women in the workplace as they get older.

The Age and Employment Network (TEAN) reported that women aged 45-54 years of age consistently report higher levels of work-related stress, anxiety and depression than any other group. TEAN also report that women are more likely than men to have musculo-skeletal problems, including repetitive strain injury, upper limb disorders and back pain.

“I had to have an operation on my shoulder, but when I returned to work, I was threatened with being moved to a job with even more heavy lifting than I have now.”

Participant, Manchester Evidence Gathering Session

Other submissions raised concerns that, whilst reasonable adjustments were made for disabled people in the workplace, there was no requirement for employers to make reasonable adjustments for their employees to mitigate against the effects of ageing.

“We’ve asked for proper pressure mats for those of us who have to stand at work all day. I have varicose veins and the doctor has warned me that I am at risk of DVT.” **Participant, Manchester Evidence Gathering Session**

“I have rheumatoid arthritis, but am worried about undergoing the health check at work. What if it costs me my job?” **Participant, Manchester Evidence Gathering Session**

The menopause was raised several times as a key health concern at work for older women in the workplace. Research has highlighted the difficulty of women facing menopausal symptoms at work. A study for the British Occupational Health Research Foundation found that nearly half of women find it difficult to cope with work during the menopause. Almost half of respondents felt their job performance had been negatively impacted by menopausal symptoms, but there was very little awareness amongst employers of the menopause as a potential occupational health issue. Many women said that they found discussing the menopause with their employer to be embarrassing, especially if your boss was a man.⁸

One good practice employer highlighted to the Commission did offer ‘health and safety breaks’, to use the bathroom or to get fresh air to women who are going through the menopause.

The Commission learned that it is difficult to pursue a discrimination case at Employment Tribunal on the grounds of menopause. In order to pursue a discrimination case, a ‘comparator’ case usually has to be identified, allowing the Tribunal to be able to compare the claimant and her circumstances to someone else. In sex discrimination cases, the comparator has to be a man.

Initial pregnancy discrimination cases failed because they were not classed as ‘female only’ conditions and there was no comparator case available. Pregnancy discrimination was subsequently recognised as a ‘female only’ condition, not as sex discrimination, and a discrimination in its own right.

g. Retirement and financial pressures

Evidence submitted to the Commission indicated that the pressure on young people to get jobs means that older people are increasingly being seen as benevolent beneficiaries in the workplace. But older women make an important positive economic contribution, particularly to the living standards of families.

Some submissions received by the Commission indicate that older women feel that there is pressure to retire - despite there being no legal retirement age anymore - and despite the women’s State Pension Age recently increasing. Discussion of the Newcastle Labour Women’s Forum highlighted the difficulty in persuading employers to let women work past retirement age. This pressure was often felt to be all the more acute if the individual concerned has had health problems. Some individuals felt that employers were using work capability assessments to move people out of the workplace and into retirement, or to pressure workers to reduce their hours if they requested a workplace adjustment.

Many of the submissions received by the Commission suggested that some older women would like to retire as they felt that they were ‘blocking’ jobs for younger people.

⁸ Amanda Griffiths, Sara MacLennan & Yin Yee Vida Wong (2010) Women’s Experience of Working through the Menopause: A Report for the British Occupational Health Research Foundation

However, they felt that with changes to the State Pension Age, they had little choice but to keep working. Some were also helping their children financially, meaning that already-stretched wages are having to go even further.

“As a person who has quite a physical job, I was looking forward to retiring at 60. But now I can’t, which is making it very difficult to plan. I feel like I’m going to have to keep going and going. I would like to move aside for all of the young people who are looking for jobs, but they have taken the option of retiring away from older women workers. I’m not asking for much – I would be happy to retire on £120 a week – but nobody is giving me that choice.” **Participant, Manchester Evidence Gathering Session**

Nonetheless, TUC research also highlighted that two in five women workers over 50 want fewer hours in their current job.⁹

Gradual wind-down schemes were frequently suggested as a solution to this problem and were described as very good practice. Examples of wind-down schemes that already exist and that were highlighted to the Commission ranged over periods from three months to one year. In physically and mentally demanding professions, such as teaching and nursing, individuals who submitted evidence to the Commission suggested that employees may be taking retirement earlier than they had wanted to on financial grounds, despite the resulting sudden and large loss of knowledge and experience. Wind-down schemes would give older women workers the opportunity to keep earning whilst working reduced hours that are more suitable to their needs.

“Not everyone will be able to cope with the physical and mental demands of a job... and many will want to spend time with their grandchildren or will have some caring responsibilities. A step-down policy would make the finances work for people who want to scale-down their workload, as well as enabling job sharing.” **Evidence from the Newcastle Labour Women’s Forum**

In Austria, a part-time scheme has successfully been introduced which allows older workers to reduce their weekly working hours, without jeopardising their pension entitlement, unemployment or health insurance.

Employers should show flexibility to allow for changes to working patterns as women take on caring responsibilities or move towards retirement. Changes to working hours and job redesign should be offered.

h. Self-Employment – ‘Olderpreneurs’

Self-employment is sometimes viewed as a good option for women over fifty as the perceived flexibilities can often fit in with the caring responsibilities that so many older women balance with work, or the gradual ‘wind down’ towards retirement some desire.

⁹ TUC (2013) Two in five women over 50 want fewer hours at work <http://www.tuc.org.uk/economy/tuc-22006-f0.cfm>

Self-employment can also mean older women can factor in any age-related health problems to work at their own pace, whilst continuing to save for retirement.

Recent research has shown that the majority of new businesses in the UK are created by people in their 40s and 50s, yet the largest underrepresented group in the UK in terms of business start-up and ownership is women. Companies in the UK started by older people tend to have a 70 per cent chance of surviving the crucial first five years, compared with 28 per cent started by younger people.¹⁰ However, much of the research into the phenomenon of ‘olderpreneurs’ does not consider gender, and there is little research that focuses on the intersection of gender and age when it comes to business start-ups. The Commission believes, therefore, that women over the age of 50 may represent a largely untapped pool of entrepreneurial talent who need encouragement and support.

Women in their fifties and sixties face a particular set of challenges when it comes to starting their own business. Career breaks to raise families, for example, mean older women are less likely to have the savings or capital investment needed to get their business plans off the ground. Research shows that older women in BME communities may face specific difficulties in access to business support, finance and childcare.¹¹ Submissions also highlighted that older entrepreneurs are largely ignored by policy makers, who concentrate on their supposedly more dynamic and younger counterparts.

“Women entrepreneurs over 50 are a growth area in the Labour Market – for example, according to Barclays Bank Report (2001), women over 50 are one of the fastest growing groups for business start-up.” **Evidence submitted by Hilary Farnworth, Older Women in Learning and Enterprise**

¹⁰ Colgan, F., Farnworth, H., Kalsi, K., Reynard, A. and Tomlinson, F. (2008) The intersection of gender and age: becoming a women olderpreneur?

¹¹ *ibid*

Chapter 2 Older Women and their Caring Responsibilities

1. Older women are the nation's carers

The second strand of the Commission's work was to consider older women and their caring responsibilities. It was clear that caring is a significant responsibility for older women – more so than for younger generations where fathers are becoming more involved in bringing up their families. We do want a more equal distribution of responsibilities, but there is an urgent need to support older women who are caring now.

Older women told the Commission that they want to care for those they love and that they choose to take up caring responsibilities. Relationships matter and they feel these should be supported. We want to live in a society which celebrates and values the remarkable contribution of our unpaid carers - so many of whom are older women.

And we are running out of family carers – Carers UK told the Commission that “by 2017 we will reach the tipping point for care when the numbers of older people needing care will outstrip the numbers of working age family members available to meet demand”. And, as Grandparents Plus said, we could face a childcare gap if we do not support grandparents who help with the care of their grandchildren.

At roundtable discussions and listening events across the country – especially in Lakeland, East Anglia, the Midlands, in London and in the South East, where discussions focused on caring issues - older women told the Commission that balancing their lives is a struggle. They want – and need - to stay in the workplace, pursue careers, provide for themselves, support their children and save against their retirement. Older women said that they find themselves juggling too much and have to make hard choices – leaving them too often feeling guilty about what they have, and have not, done.

There is an urgent need for public policy to provide practical support for our carers so that they can continue caring while holding down a job and providing for their futures. This is a challenge for our health and care services as they look after both the cared for and the carers, for our employers as they seek ways to retain the talent of our carers, and for our service providers and voluntary organisations as they develop the information and support structures needed to make caring work.

The Commission acknowledges that there are major issues involved here which are probably outside our remit, particularly around social care provision and financing. But much is achievable on a more practical scale, and further improvements are possible if we encourage best practice, build on current provision and work with voluntary organisations and social enterprise to develop innovative approaches.

2. Identifying our carers

The Commission was concerned to get a clear picture of who our carers are and what caring responsibilities they take on. If we cannot identify our carers – and if they do not identify themselves – it will not be possible to provide effective support.

In their evidence to the Commission, the Fabian Women's Network highlighted the problem that carers often do not actually identify themselves as such and as a result will not look for support, such as carers' assessments. It is important that this is addressed. The Commission heard many older women saying they were not caring but 'just helping out'. As a woman in Lakeland said, 'people slide into caring responsibilities without realising they are doing it'. Only when carers see themselves as carers will they be able to access the provision made for them, either in terms of benefits, employment options or information and support.

A survey of the literature shows clearly that older women are the largest group of unpaid carers in the UK today. Women make up six in every ten carers and a quarter of women over 45 are caring.¹² By the time a woman reaches the age of 59, there is a fifty-fifty chance that she will have had at least one period of substantial caring responsibilities.¹³ The care she provides could be for her partner, older relatives or grandchildren and older women often find themselves 'sandwich carers', looking after both older and younger generations at the same time, including older relatives living some way away.¹⁴

As increasing numbers of mothers return to work, grandmothers become a vital part of family care arrangements. They are the most common childcare providers after formal childcare,¹⁵ providing anything from ad hoc baby-sitting and filling in during school holidays to primary childcare and kinship care. Today in the UK, grandparents provide childcare to over forty per cent of families¹⁶ with an estimated value of £7.3 billion.¹⁷

Today's older women carers are however part of a new generation. They are healthier, are active contributors to their communities and many are working. They have driven the increases in older people's employment rates and paid work has widened opportunities and provided greater financial security and improved well-being.¹⁸ Caring is just one part of a busy life where older women must juggle multiple responsibilities.

The Commission believes that carers often do not know their rights and do not get proper support. We would like to see public bodies actively identifying carers to offer help.

¹² Carers UK (2013) Evidence to the Commission on Older Women

¹³ Ben-Galim, D & Silim, A, (2013) The Sandwich Generation: Older Women Balancing Work and Care, IPPR

¹⁴ *ibid*

¹⁵ Rutter J and Evans B (2011) Informal childcare: choice or chance?, Daycare Trust

¹⁶ Statham J (2011) Grandparents providing childcare, Childhood Wellbeing Research Centre

¹⁷ Grandparents Plus (2013) Evidence to the Commission on Older Women

¹⁸ Ben-Galim, D & Silim, A, (2013) The Sandwich Generation: Older Women Balancing Work and Care, IPPR

3. Findings from the evidence submitted to the Commission on Older Women

a. Older women feel stretched by multiple caring responsibilities

“Above all, I believe we need a huge shift in attitudes. We need to accept the fact that families matter and stop pretending we don’t have problems with combining family life with work.” *Dilys Morgan, Grandparents Now*

Older women are a stretched middle generation - struggling like never before to support their families, plugging the gaps in care and financial support for family at both ends of the age spectrum. The Commission heard the same story at round tables, listening events and across the written evidence submitted – older women face day to day difficulties as they juggle multiple responsibilities, including caring across the generations, and feel that they are overlooked and undervalued.

According to evidence presented by Gransnet, over a quarter of older women feel stretched by caring responsibilities, 18 per cent feel worn out, 14 per cent have had to cut their work commitments to cope with their caring responsibilities and 80 per cent do not feel secure or confident about the future. One of their forum contributors notes, “So often I feel the strain of being what I call the ‘jam in the sandwich’ (I have an elderly mother to care for too) as I juggle part-time work, a husband, mother and grandchildren”.

Evidence from Grandparents Now concurs. They feel older women are stretched primarily because their own children have such difficulty in affording everyday life - parents need two incomes to get by and, finding childcare prohibitively expensive, turn to grandmothers to help out with looking after the grandchildren. Those caring for elderly parents too are the most stretched. Many working age grandmothers are reducing their hours or giving up work altogether.

Caring for the sick presents particular challenges and again older women predominate. According to evidence from Macmillan, women aged 45-64 are most likely to be carers of cancer sufferers. A recent survey found over half of women cancer carers aged 45-64 were working – almost half full time – and one in five had children under sixteen. Nearly half were caring for someone living alone in a separate household and almost a quarter for more than one person with cancer. Over one in ten were caring for someone in the advanced stages of cancer and they were twice as likely to be caring for someone at the end of life. More than half had a health condition themselves.

Public policy needs to recognise the vital contribution to the economy that older women make as carers. So flexible employment and well designed jobs are important to enable them to balance work and care and deal with issues of financial hardship or the health and well-being of carers.

b. The impact of caring responsibilities on employment

“Increased longevity and improved health and fitness should offer an opportunity to think differently about work-life balance over the life course. The reality, unfortunately, is that work-life balance issues are increasingly a problem for the grandparent generation.” **Evidence from Gransnet**

Caring responsibilities clearly impact on older women’s ability to hold down a job and many end up reducing their hours or giving up work altogether to care. Age UK report that a quarter of 45-54 year olds, mostly women, find that caring has taken a toll on their work.¹⁹ The TUC found that more than two in five women workers over 50 want fewer hours in their current job, showing a widespread demand for more flexible work. Where demand is unmet, many end up moving into low-paid, part-time work, or give up altogether.²⁰

Analysis of unemployment data on the reasons given for leaving work illustrates the fall-out of older women carers from the workplace. Seventeen per cent of unemployed women left their last job to care for someone and 37 per cent turn down the possibility of paid employment due to caring responsibilities - compared to six per cent of unemployed men. Worryingly, older women with low incomes struggle more to keep up work and care, being more likely to say they have given up or reduced work because of caring responsibilities.²¹

Early retirement is also a response of many older women to caring pressures. Age UK data shows seven per cent of women retire early to provide unpaid care for an adult and six per cent do so to care for children, compared to three and one per cent for men.²²

The measure most widely called for is allowing carers access to flexible working practices. The need for flexibility may be ad hoc, temporary or longer term. Age UK recommend that all jobs become ‘flexible by default’, further extending the right to request flexible working to enable more older women to balance their work and care responsibilities. In spite of the rise in flexible working, there are still too few opportunities for women over 50 and many older workers, especially those with caring responsibilities, are still struggling to access the type of flexibility that meets their needs.²³

Leave arrangements are also a concern. When badly structured they may fail to meet the needs of older women’s caring responsibilities. For example, carers leave may be limited to dependent children and not provide for time off to care for dependent elderly parents.²⁴

¹⁹ Age UK (2013) Evidence to the Commission on Older Women

²⁰ TUC (2013) Two in five women over 50 want fewer hours at work <http://www.tuc.org.uk/economy/tuc-22006-f0.cfm>

²¹ Ben-Galim, D & Silim, A, (2013) The Sandwich Generation: Older Women Balancing Work and Care, IPPR

²² Age UK (2013) Evidence to the Commission on Older Women

²³ *ibid*

²⁴ Fabian Women’s Network (2013) Evidence to the Commission on Older Women

Families which have migrated from other countries and who have elderly relatives who cannot come to the UK face particular difficulties. And even when all family members are in the UK, changing traditions of family roles can create pressures within the family and community. Coventry Women's Voices told the Commission about issues faced by carers in the BME community, who provide more care than the average in the UK. Particular difficulties are experienced by people with relatives in need of care who are overseas. These carers need to be able to take a block of absence to allow time to travel and care and too often end up giving up work and have no job to return to.

“Women in the focus groups reported increased pressures to provide unpaid care for family members. A support worker working with carers highlighted the fact that cultural expectations could make these pressures worse for BAME women than for white women.” **Coventry Women's Voices, Layers of Inequality 2013**

Adjustment leave - a short-term period of leave or flexibility - could provide a valuable window to allow an employee to adjust to a new caring role. This would supplement the right to time off work for family emergencies introduced by the last Labour government. Especially valuable in a crisis situation, adjustment leave would avoid delays arising from a statutory request for flexibility and not require an immediate permanent change to the employment contract. During the period of adjustment leave, care arrangements could be put in place, allowing the carer to better identify the most suitable pattern of work going forward.²⁵ Kinship carers would particularly benefit in the immediate aftermath of taking responsibility for children. An estimated 60,000 kinship carers have dropped out of the labour market to bring up children.²⁶

Short-term flexibility, or ‘adjustment leave’, would help older women workers deal with immediate caring crises and allow time to adjust to a new caring role.

c. Caring time transfers

Caring responsibilities have a cumulative impact on a woman's life. From motherhood on, women have been expected to care and we have seen that this expectation continues through women's working lives and into retirement. Lower employment rates can be observed for women who are grandmothers compared to those who are not. While grandmothers greatly enjoy being involved in their grandchildren's lives, the Commission heard that grandmothers can also feel taken for granted when looking after grandchildren²⁷ and end up resenting this.

Grandparents Plus told the Commission that grandmothers aged 50-65 are the most likely to be providing care for their grandchildren and this is often provided to enable

²⁵ Working Families (2013) Evidence to the Commission on Older Women

²⁶ Grandparents Plus (2013) Evidence to the Commission on Older Women

²⁷ Gransnet (2013) Evidence to the Commission on Older Women

parents to work.²⁸ But working-age grandparents, especially those on lower incomes, need to stay in work to maintain income through to the later State Pension Age.

These time transfers between mothers and grandmothers are important to keep younger women in work but can push older women out of employment altogether. Family caring relationships are important but are complex, involving mothers, fathers, children and grandparents. We want to live in a society that values caring and does not take carers for granted. The Commission recognises the complexity of these issues and hopes that a debate can be started about how a civilised society can best meet the conflicting needs and aspirations of all family members.

Thought should be given to the role of grandmothers who combine work and care for their grandchildren. The Commission would like to start a public debate on whether family leave could be shared with grandparents or whether this would set back the already low take-up by fathers.

d. Financial pressures, health and well-being

“The anxieties experienced by this stretched generation are compounded by the economic situation. They want to be helpful to their families – who are struggling – but they are worried that this could compromise their own financial security.”

Evidence from Gransnet

If older women drop out of work to care they face the risk of severe financial hardship. Evidence to the Commission reported that carers use their own assets and savings to meet the costs of care.²⁹ Older women carers are particularly vulnerable as they face a combined impact of loss of earnings and pension.

On average, carers are £11,000 worse off financially as a result of giving up work to care and carers who have given up work spend on average five years out of the workforce. A recent survey by Carers UK found that 25 per cent of respondents had been in debt as a result of caring and over a third said they struggle to pay household bills. Women are most likely to be worried about the cost of caring.³⁰

Today’s older women have lower pensions as a result of a lifetime of lower wages and a greater reliance on spouses’ pensions. As women live longer than men, their financial needs in older life will need to last for longer.³¹

Carers aged 60-64 were reported to experience the most financial difficulty, often juggling work with caring responsibilities for more than one person.³² The Commission

²⁸ Grandparents Plus (2013) Evidence to the Commission on Older Women

²⁹ The Alzheimer’s Society (2013) Evidence to the Commission on Older Women

³⁰ Carers UK (2013) Evidence to the Commission on Older Women

³¹ Age UK (2013) Evidence to the Commission on Older Women

³² Carers UK (2013) Evidence to the Commission on Older Women

heard from the Stevenage Constituency Labour Party Women's Forum, who had found a majority of members experienced a heavy financial burden as a result of supporting other family members, including both their children and grandchildren, citing the impact of the lack of affordable childcare and changes to child benefit rules.

In addition to financial pressures, older women are more likely to experience social isolation as carers as they may have more limited access to community services.³³ Older women at round table events in Wales spoke of how they become isolated as a result of taking up caring responsibilities for grandchildren as they have little in common with young mums and lose contact with their friends. Poorer quality of life is especially associated with caring for a partner and for those with intensive caring needs. The strain and distress caused by these responsibilities often has an impact on a carer's health. Submissions emphasised the importance of adequate medical support and access to psychological therapies to combat isolation and depression.³⁴

Other countries deploy imaginative schemes to help relieve the pressures of caring. The Commission would like to see employers consulted about schemes such as the German 'Familienpflegezeit' family caring time system which allows employees to reduce hours temporarily while smoothing pay over a longer period.

Examples of action in other countries related to older women and their caring responsibilities

Germany

Parental leave can be transferred to grandparents if the mother is a teenager or still in full-time education, is seriously ill or disabled or dies. Grandparents who are primary carers are entitled to parental leave. Working grandparents are also entitled to take up to ten days paid leave to look after a grandchild in an emergency, or to take unpaid leave of up to six months.

Familienpflegezeit ('family caring time') allows eligible employees to reduce their working week to a minimum of 15 hours for up to two years if they need to care for a dependent, but are allowed to 'smooth' their income. They are paid at a higher rate of pay during the period of reduced hours but a lower rate when they return to full hours to compensate. The scheme offers job security and flexibility for employer and employee.

Hungary

Parental allowances and parental leave can be transferred to a grandparent if the parents agree and if the child is looked after in the grandparent's home.

³³ Ben-Galim, D & Silim, A, (2013) The Sandwich Generation: Older Women Balancing Work and Care, IPPR

³⁴ The Alzheimer's Society (2013) Evidence to the Commission on Older Women

Canada – British Columbia

British Columbia works with Tyze Personal Networks, a social venture that uses technology to create networks for care, to deliver a network model for social care. The system uses technology to link the cared for person, caring professionals and family carers.

Japan

Japan has a time bank system - Hureai Kippu - for elder care. Created in 1995, the programme allows members to accrue time credits that can be cashed in later via a centralised clearing system. Based on reciprocity, a surprising outcome has been the preference for services provided by other members over professional carers. In the UK, the Young Foundation is running a pilot time banking system for carers on the Isle of Wight called Care4Care.

e. Caring at a distance

“The shape of families is changing with more people moving to find work and having to travel to provide care for loved ones. Women are increasingly having children later meaning child care and providing care for older relatives are coinciding.”

Evidence from Carers UK

Many carers provide support for someone living at a distance away – in another town, another part of the country or perhaps overseas. The majority are providing emotional support but distance carers can also provide, practical assistance such as managing care arrangements, shopping, housework, paperwork and financial support. Other support provided at a distance includes managing medication, supporting leisure activities and assisting with personal care.³⁵

Good information sharing between formal carers and family carers at a distance is crucial and the Commission received evidence of the value of encouraging neighbours to get more involved with supporting people with dementia to provide reassurance to distance carers.³⁶ Sharing caring responsibilities through mutual swapping arrangements can also make distance caring easier.³⁷

Systems of mutual caring, such as time-banking, can support those caring for people who do not live near them. The Commission would like to start a debate about how these might work in the UK.

³⁵ Carers UK (2013) Evidence to the Commission on Older Women

³⁶ The Alzheimer’s Society (2013) Evidence to the Commission on Older Women

³⁷ Fabian Women’s Network (2013) Evidence to the Commission on Older Women

f. Information about services and support

“Many found it very difficult to access technology without support. Also some people prefer face to face service and should not be forced to access services on line. There should be a choice. Closures of libraries, where help used to be accessed, have had a negative impact. It should be noted that in some rural areas Broadband services are poor and in some areas there is no cover.” **Evidence from the National Alliance of Women’s Organisations**

In order to fulfil their caring responsibilities, carers need easy access to good quality information. However, there is evidence of poor quality information across a range of areas affecting older women including care, health, benefits and pensions. Over reliance on on-line information sources may exclude those with inadequate digital access and those preferring face to face or written sources of information.³⁸

The Fabian Women’s Network discussed the dispersed nature of information sources and recommended a Sure Start style information service for older people needing care and their carers. This would have the advantage of providing a single national standard and quality for information on caring.³⁹

Proposals for GPs to keep a register of carers of those with dementia were welcomed. This would provide for regular assessments of carers’ needs and help with building peer networks - such as meeting places and on-line forums - which can provide really effective support for carers.⁴⁰ Health professionals can also help by ensuring carers have an opportunity to talk about a new caring role. The Alzheimer’s Society told the Commission that many carers are not actually told how to cope with someone with dementia – two thirds of those affected according to Audit Commission data - and they consider that this is an important failing.

Carers need proper professional support including good out of hours services.⁴¹ The diversity of experience is well illustrated by a survey in Sheffield, conducted by Sheffield 50+, which found ‘a near equal split’ between respondents reporting good and poor support when having to care for family, relatives or friends.⁴²

Grandparents Plus highlighted the problem that services for carers of children are often targeted towards parents, meaning that grandparents may not access the support networks already available. Existing services such as Sure Start Centres should be more accessible to grandparents to support the important role they play in looking after young children.⁴³

³⁸ National Alliance of Women’s Organisations (2013) Evidence to the Commission on Older Women

³⁹ Fabian Women’s Network (2013) Evidence to the Commission on Older Women

⁴⁰ The Alzheimer’s Society (2013) Evidence to the Commission on Older Women

⁴¹ *ibid*

⁴² Sheffield 50+ (2013) the Sheffield 50+ Membership Survey 2012/13

⁴³ Grandparents Plus (2013) Evidence to the Commission on Older Women

The issue of difficulties in dealing with a cared-for person's affairs arose in several discussions. This includes access to medical information and advice as well as financial information and contact with utility companies and other service providers. Procedures for allowing a named person access to information would be a valuable addition for carers and for those recently bereaved.⁴⁴

A national standard for information services for carers should be introduced. This would greatly improve the access to information and support for older women carers.

⁴⁴ Fabian Women's Network (2013) Evidence to the Commission on Older Women and Round Table on Caring

Chapter 3 Older Women in Public Life

1. Older women should be visible in public life

“We believe better gender representation is not just about fair employment opportunities, but also about ensuring a proper representation of female voices as storytellers and social and cultural commentators.” ***Evidence from Directors UK***

The third area looked at by the Commission was older women in the media and public life, paying particular focus on older women in broadcasting.

We have seen in previous chapters that there is a particular form of discrimination against older women which does not apply to older men, who are regarded as venerable, experienced and sage. This is epitomised by the representations of older women on TV and their invisibility across public life more generally – in business, as guests, experts, journalists and in elected positions.

The Commission recognises that there is clearly still a long way to go before equality is achieved for women in the media and public life. However, the invisibility of older women in public life, and the way in which they are represented when they do appear, is distinct and matters.

As a society, we should be opposed to discrimination against any individuals. But the lack of older women in public life is not just about individuals. More generally there appears to be a pervasive sense in society that women are not valued when they age - and that is wrong.

What is particularly noticeable when looking into representation of older women in public life is their invisibility.

We have to think of the message of unequal representation this sends to our society.⁴⁵ And particularly what it says to the many older women in the UK when older women ‘disappear’ from public life when they hit 50.

As was raised by Josephine Dolan and Estella Tincknell in their evidence to the Commission, this is not only a failing by the British media to recognise older women as a significant group in audience demographics, but more importantly as a group which makes a significant social contribution.

⁴⁵ Directors UK (2013) Evidence to the Commission on Older Women

2. Findings from the evidence submitted to the Commission on Older Women

a. Older women are depicted in stereotyped ways in public life

“We have to eradicate the myths about older women.” *Anonymous 50+ contributor*

When older women are seen in public life, they are often stereotyped. The Commission recognises that positive examples of older women presenters do exist as do positive representations of older women in film, however these are the exceptions.⁴⁶

What was clear from the evidence the Commission received is that there was a broad agreement that when women are visible in public life, they are frequently valued on the way they look rather than as experts on a subject. The image of women as decorative rather than illustrative is ‘brought into sharp focus when the absence of older women is acknowledged’.⁴⁷ The absence of older women implies that they no longer look good, whilst men are described as ‘rugged’ or ‘distinguished’.⁴⁸ For women, the physical signs of ageing are frequently negatively stereotyped often becoming the butt of humour - the comic battleaxe or portrayed as victims.⁴⁹ And in advertising, older women are only used consistently when selling products which are ‘age’ oriented – stair lifts, baths or wills.⁵⁰

The Commission found that this portrayal of older women extends across public life - to politicians, presenters and celebrities who find themselves subject to judgement in the media not on the jobs they are doing but how they look.⁵¹ There appears to be an increasing pressure for those who are still visible post 35 to look as young as possible.

In evidence to the Commission, the pressure group Object noted that in the British national press the consistent systematic sexism can negatively impact on women’s enjoyment and participation in public life.⁵² As Professor Mary Beard has said in response to the online abuse she has faced following public appearances, ‘first, the misogyny here is truly gobsmacking... it would be quite enough to put many women off appearing in public, contributing to political debate, especially as all of this comes up on Google’.⁵³

The Commission believes that we need to continue to challenge these stereotyped images of ageing women, as was recognised ten years ago by the United Nations in their report ‘The Second World Assembly on Ageing in 2003’.

⁴⁶ Dolan J & Tincknell E, University of the West of England (2013) Representing Older Women in the Media: the Key Issues. A Report to the Commission on Older Women

⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸ Object (2013) Evidence to the Commission on Older Women

⁴⁹ Liam Foster, Lorna Warren & Alan Walker (2013) Evidence to the Commission on Older Women

⁵⁰ Dolan J & Tincknell E, University of the West of England (2013) Representing Older Women in the Media: the Key Issues. A Report to the Commission on Older Women

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² Object (2012) Evidence to the Leveson Inquiry

⁵³ http://timesonline.typad.com/dons_life/2013/01/internet-fury.html

b. The public are concerned about the invisibility of older women

“Most programmes you see have a 50-60 year old man with a 20 year old co-anchor. 40-something’s are welcome if they still look 30, by design or good luck. I feel we are being eradicated and yet we have most to offer.” **Anonymous 50+ woman**

In talking to women across the country it is evident that the public have noticed the lack of older women in public life, particularly on TV, and they care.

The BBC found in their report ‘Serving All Ages’ that the limited representation of middle and older aged women on TV is a key concern across all age groups but particularly for middle aged and older women. Women over 50 feel that they are underrepresented in television and that audiences would “welcome more middle – and older-aged women on television providing positive role models and greater gender equality”.⁵⁴

In a YouGov poll in 2011, the majority of people (59 per cent) thought that the BBC was biased against employing older female television presenters.⁵⁵ This compared with 10 per cent who thought there was any bias against older male presenters.⁵⁶ The BBC’s own research suggests that older people are more concerned about the amount of coverage of their age group rather than its portrayal.⁵⁷

There is no excuse for this non-inclusive approach. The “common sense” claim sometimes stated is that television and other media reflects what the majority of people want to see. However, there is no evidence for this and recent research suggests that this is not the case. Age UK found that 71 per cent of viewers said they would be happy to see more older women on TV, while 80 per cent were aware that TV favours younger women over older women.⁵⁸ The public are therefore both aware of the invisibility of older women and agree that this should change. In addition to this, we have an ageing population and increasingly complex media institutions and structures.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ White, C; Morrell, G; Luke, C & Young, P (2012) Serving all ages: the views of the audience and experts. BBC, Nat Cen & Creative Diversity Network http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/diversity/pdf/serving_all_ages_acc.pdf

⁵⁵ Thompson H (2011) Is the BBC Biased <http://yougov.co.uk/news/2011/01/19/is-the-BBC-biased-ageism/>

⁵⁶ Ibid

⁵⁷ White, C; Morrell, G; Luke, C & Young, P (2012) Serving all ages: the views of the audience and experts. BBC, Nat Cen & Creative Diversity Network http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/diversity/pdf/serving_all_ages_acc.pdf

⁵⁸ Harrop A & Jopling A (2009) One Voice – Shaping our ageing society. Age UK report

[http://www.ageuk.org.uk/documents/en-gb/for-professionals/research/one%20voice%20\(2009\)_pro.pdf?dtrk=true](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/documents/en-gb/for-professionals/research/one%20voice%20(2009)_pro.pdf?dtrk=true)

⁵⁹ Dolan J & Tincknell E, University of the West of England (2013) Representing Older Women in the Media: the Key Issues. A Report to the Commission on Older Women

Transparency is an important first step

Whilst research exists on the number of women and older women on-screen, it was evident to the Commission that there was a lack of transparency data from broadcasters themselves.

In response to this gap in information, Harriet Harman MP, Deputy Leader of the Labour Party, wrote to the main UK broadcasters on behalf of the Commission to ask them for clarity on the numbers of older women they employed within their organisations both on and off-screen. To their credit all broadcasters responded with information and acknowledged in their responses that there is more work to be done. In May, Harriet Harman published the following findings.

Key findings:

- ❖ The majority of over 50s in the UK are women (53 per cent) but the overwhelming majority of TV presenters who are over 50 are men (82 per cent).
- ❖ While TV presenters are broadly reflective of age in the general population (30 per cent of TV presenters are over 50 compared with 34 per cent of the UK population) they are wholly unrepresentative in terms of gender.
- ❖ Only seven per cent of the total TV workforce (on and off-screen) are women over the age of 50.
- ❖ While TV presenters under 50 are broadly representative of the gender balance in the population (48 per cent of TV presenters are under the age of 50 are women compared to 49.7 per cent of women under 50 in the general population) women are wholly under represented amongst TV presenters over the age of 50.

The figures provided by broadcasters show clearly that once female presenters hit 50, their days on screen are numbered. The Commission concluded that employers rightly value the wisdom, expertise and authority of older male presenters but do not seem to be able to value their women presenters in the same way.

c. Case studies show the problem is widespread

i. Older women in the Creative Industries

Taken as a whole, the creative industries are a key part of the UK economy, employing about 1.5 million people and contributing approximately £36 billion to the economy.⁶⁰

The Creative Skillset Census in 2009 showed that 5,000 women left the industry between 2006 and 2009 compared to 750 men.⁶¹ This has improved and this year's census shows the number of women working in creative industries is now increasing. The statistics in 2009 shocked organisations and since then there has been a real focus on encouraging women back into the industry,⁶² demonstrating the importance of monitoring and transparency of employment data.

Although the 2012 census did not collect data on age, previous Skillset studies have found that 9 out of 10 women working in media and creative industries are under 50 years of age.⁶³ In fact many of those giving evidence emphasised that in reality most women working in the creative industries leave well before they hit 50 – often by 35 years of age.

However, there are older people working within the industry – in fact those over 50 years of age comprise a fifth of the creative industry workforce. The age profile for men is much higher for men than women with 66 per cent of men in the workforce aged 35 or over, compared with 49 per cent of women.⁶⁴

ii. Older women on TV

“Like most women I know I’m fed up with the lack of realistic female characters, let alone women over the age of 40.” **Evidence from a member of Equity**

“I don’t watch much television for the same reason I don’t look in broken mirrors, because I don’t see myself reflected there.” **Evidence from a member of Equity**

As within other areas of media and public life, on TV women are still a distinct minority. It has been shown that men continue to outnumber women by 4:1 on a huge range of news and current affairs programmes across channels.

However, the picture is even starker when looking for women on our screens over the age of 50 – they disappear. The Creative Diversity Network conducted research for the

⁶⁰ Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2013) <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/making-it-easier-for-the-media-and-creative-industries-to-grow-while-protecting-the-interests-of-citizens>

⁶¹ Employment census (2009) The results of the seventh census of the creative media industries (2009) http://www.creativeskillset.org/uploads/pdf/asset_14487.pdf?5

⁶² Creative Skillset: Employment census of the creative media industries 2012 (April 2013) http://courses.creativeskillset.org/assets/0000/2819/Census_report_6.pdf

⁶³ Women in the Creative media Industries, Creative Skillset (September 2010) http://www.creativeskillset.org/uploads/pdf/asset_15343.pdf?3

⁶⁴ Creative media workforce survey (2010) http://www.creativeskillset.org/uploads/pdf/asset_16988.pdf?1

BBC which found that 54 per cent of women on TV were in the 16-39 age bracket compared with just over a third of men. 60 per cent of the men appearing on TV were therefore over 40.⁶⁵

In 2010, Channel 4 found that only 4 in every 10 women on-screen were aged over 40 whilst for men it was 6 in every 10.⁶⁶

And when older women do appear – as presenters and in story-lines – research has shown that it tends to be in daytime TV and not in key prime-time slots.

Evidence to the Commission showed that this dearth of older women is not just confined to presenters and those directly employed by broadcasters, but also includes women invited onto TV and radio to speak as experts. The Expert Women campaign, started in 2009, has been campaigning to increase the number of women experts used by the British media. Findings have consistently shown that male experts on UK news and current affairs are used between five and six times as often as female experts. Liz Howell, Director of Broadcasting at City University who conducted this research believes that the role models of older or middle-aged women simply do not exist in the UK. In her evidence to the Commission she has found that ‘...the person least likely to appear as an expert on UK television is a woman with a regional accent who is over 50’.⁶⁷

Why are there so few older women in the TV industry?

Evidence shows that within the TV industry, 45 per cent of women leave their jobs by the age of 35. The majority of men (75 per cent) working in TV are 35 years of age or over compared to 52 per cent of women.⁶⁸

There are many different reasons cited for this fall in women as they get older including inflexible working, unequal pay, difficulty managing childcare costs and arrangements, and difficulty managing job navigation at older ages.⁶⁹ These are many of the same issues which have been found to affect older women at work, discussed in earlier chapters. Evidence to the Commission also noted that in particular the film and TV industry is one that relies on a largely freelance workforce which tends to compound the problem for women as they get older.⁷⁰

However, the lack of older women decision makers off-screen in the TV industry may also contribute to their limited and stereotyped representation on-screen. Directors UK said in their evidence to the Commission that they feel the lack of women directors and writers in television has a direct impact on output – both in terms of the shortage of

⁶⁵ White, C; Morrell, G; Luke, C & Young, P (2012) Serving all ages: the views of the audience and experts. BBC, Nat Cen & Creative Diversity Network http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/diversity/pdf/serving_all_ages_acc.pdf

⁶⁶ ‘The big gender gap on the small screen: men outnumber women on TV two-to-one’. Research commissioned by Channel 4 (2010) <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2010/mar/07/television-men-outnumber-women>

⁶⁷ Liz Howell (2013) Evidence to the Commission for Older Women

⁶⁸ Creative Skillset (2010) Women in the Creative media Industries, http://www.creativeskillset.org/uploads/pdf/asset_15343.pdf?3

⁶⁹ Ibid

⁷⁰ Women in Film and TV (2013) Evidence to the Commission on Older Women

parts for older women on screen and their negative portrayal.⁷¹ Research by the Guardian and Elizabeth Freestone published in 2012, shows this is similar for the theatre. Whilst female playwrights of new plays write 49 per cent of their roles for women, men by comparison only write 37 per cent of roles for women.⁷²

What are the experiences of women working in TV?

"You can tell them about the messages you've been getting from women inside the BBC who tell you they are being ignored and side-lined, offered broken promises, made to feel unwanted and invisible, not used, and who eventually "go quietly", accepting that woman over 50 must never show their faces - or necks - in public". **Anonymous woman over 50 who worked in television**

In recent years, a number of women presenters and producers over the age of fifty have been speaking out about the discrimination they have experienced from within the broadcasting industry. Most notably, Commission member Miriam O'Reilly successfully sued the BBC for age discrimination after she was dropped from Countryfile in 2009. These older women in broadcasting describe a combination of ageism and sexism that does not apply to older men.

In 2008, Equity UK and a number of other partners commissioned a report to explore the question of age, gender and performer employment in Europe. Deborah Dean, who led the research, reported that there was a particular feeling by women in the performing arts across Europe (including TV, film, radio, advertising and theatre), that both their gender and getting older was disadvantageous to them in all aspects of their careers.⁷³ Men on the other hand did not believe that their gender was a disadvantage and were split on whether ageing was an advantage or disadvantage.⁷⁴ The research showed that in fact 26 per cent of men in performing arts saw ageing as an advantage in relation to pay, compared to just three per cent of women.⁷⁵

"I just got the sense over a year or so that I was no longer considered valuable to the team. They started saying things like, " 'This (assignment) is going to be a tough one, sure you're up for it?' " I was fit and hadn't suddenly lost my ability. I wasn't getting the same level and quality of work. Then the phone stopped ringing and that was that".

Anonymous woman over 50 who worked in television

"Leaving feels like a big relief now, but it's also crushing to be pushed out after so many years". **Anonymous woman over 50 who worked in television**

⁷¹ Directors UK (2013) Evidence to the Commission for Older Women

⁷² Freestone, E (Dec 2012) The Guardian

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2012/dec/10/women-in-theatre-research-fullresults?INTCMP=SRCH>

⁷³ Equity(2013) Evidence to the Commission on Older Women <http://www.equity.org.uk/documents/response-to-labour-older-womens-commission/>

⁷⁴ Ibid

⁷⁵ Ibid

"Older women begin to believe that, yes, their bosses are right. That they should run away and hide, that they do not have the right to continue working as journalists or reporters because they have become old and ugly. They are falsely likened to "nanny" or "school-mistress" or "strident old battleaxe" - and told no-one wants to be "talked at by an older woman". **Anonymous woman over 50 who worked in television**

"You know it's over when the editor starts looking at the pretty young thing next to you, listening to her opinion and ignoring yours". **Anonymous woman over 50 who worked in television**

"I kept thinking, if I can last for just one more year (in the job) my daughter will have finished university and the financial pressure won't be as bad, but it wasn't to be".

Anonymous woman over 50 who worked in television

What action should we take in the broadcasting industry?

"The obvious question for all broadcasters now is where have all the older women gone and why did they go? If broadcasters have nothing to hide in their treatment of older women then they should agree to conduct exit interviews with those women, with analysis of their reasons for leaving. They also have to stop pressuring them into signing compromise agreements which disguise the truth of why so many older women have disappeared from our screens." **Miriam O'Reilly, Deputy Chair of the Older Women's Commission and former presenter for Countryfile**

Broadcasters rightly value the wisdom, expertise and authority of older male broadcasters but should be valuing their women broadcasters in the same way. The problem is not that there are not older women around; the problem is once they get older they are shuffled off and disappear. The box on page 31 sets out our findings on women in broadcasting.

Broadcasters have to recognise that in the 21st century it is no longer acceptable to discriminate. The Commission believes the broadcasting industry should be making sure the talent, which is both men and women, finds its way into the broadcasting industry and within the industry is treated fairly.

Following publication of the statistics, a roundtable discussion was held with senior TV executives to challenge them to take action. They agreed that the lack of older women on our screens is an important issue and that the statistics are a wake-up call to the industry.

Broadcasters have agreed with the Commission that action must be taken and have expressed their determination to make progress. One of the next steps is to ensure data is standardised. To ensure broadcasters do actually make progress and that this is not just warm words, Harriet Harman MP will ensure these statistics are published annually.

iii. Older women on the radio

The Commission also received evidence showing that women are routinely underrepresented in radio. Sound Women research showed that out of five solo voices on radio, only one will be female. When looking at the more prestigious breakfast and drive time shows they found that this falls to only one woman in eight solo voices.⁷⁶

In addition to women's underrepresentation in radio, research shows that women working in radio are on the whole better qualified than men working in radio (73 per cent have degrees, compared to 60 per cent of men) but they are paid less – earning on average £2,200 less each year. Women are also less likely to make it to the top. Women make up just 34 per cent of senior managers and only 17 per cent at board level.⁷⁷

However, when looking at the representation of older women on radio the difference does not seem to be as stark as has been shown for TV. 60 per cent of men in radio are aged over 35, compared to 50 per cent of women⁷⁸.

Example from Evidence – Older Women: Radio versus TV

Case study by Liz Howell, City University

“It would seem self evident that if women experts are in the minority, then older women would be particularly disadvantaged – to check this hypothesis for the Commission, in the week starting March 18th 2013 students monitored BBC Breakfast and BBC Radio 4's Today programme showing the following results:

BBC Breakfast (4 days data) used 39 male experts and 12 female experts. 24 men were over 50 and 5 women. This means that fewer than 50 per cent of the female experts were over 50, and nearly 70 per cent of the male experts were over 50. So a significantly higher proportion of male experts were older.

BBC Radio 4 Today programme (5 days data) used 58 male experts and 16 female experts. 29 men were over 50, and 8 women. This means that 50 per cent of the female experts were over 50, and just over 50 per cent of the male experts were over 50. So there was no significant difference between the ages of the male and female experts.

This snapshot research appears to back the common sense hypothesis that television discriminates in favour of younger women because appearance is an issue.

Our research would show that there is discrimination against women on the basis of youthful appearance on television, and discrimination against women generally on radio.”

⁷⁶ Sound Women on air (2013) <http://www.soundwomen.fionahodge.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Sound-Women-on-Air-Report-July-2013.pdf>

⁷⁷ Tuning Out: women in the UK radio industry. Skillset report for Sound Women (2011) http://www.creativeskillset.org/uploads/pdf/asset_16924.pdf?1

⁷⁸ Ibid

iv. Older women in newspapers

Kira Cochrane from the Guardian found that in the UK, in a typical month, 78 per cent of newspaper articles are written by men. Further research by Women in Journalism showed that men account for 84 per cent of those mentioned or quoted in lead pieces, 72 per cent of Question Time contributors and 84 per cent of reporters and guests on Radio 4's Today programme.

Lisa Campbell found in her research that 60 per cent of women over 45 years of age and working in journalism believed they had already been turned down for at least one job or assignment because they were perceived as 'too old'.

However, the actual figures of who is employed by newspapers are not available. As Chair of the Commission Harriet Harman MP, wrote to newspaper editors to ask them to provide her with the number of older women they employ. We await a full set of responses with interest.

We see the world through news and comment in our newspapers so a balanced team which includes older women is needed to report the world as they see it. Equality is not just important in principle - it is important for the quality of newspaper reporting and comment.

Other countries are taking action to increase the representation of older women in public life

"This struggle has been going on far too long. British culture doesn't seem to embrace the older women in the same way as other European countries." *Equity evidence to the Commission on Older Women*

The Commission was also made aware of examples of how other countries have tried to encourage and raise awareness about the number of older women in the media and public life.

Austria - The Austrian Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection (BMASK) conducted a study on the topic of "Images of Older Persons in the Media". It showed that older prominent male figures are more frequently portrayed by the media than older women.

Czech Republic - Respect My Granny Programme – the programme is intended to show young people that older people have a lot of offer in terms of age, experience and wisdom.

Poland - The Department for Women, Family and Counteracting Discrimination in the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy led a campaign "Seeking 45+ women: reliability, commitment and experience".

France - The French Ministry published a report entitled 'Women in the Media' which evidenced inequality between men and women in the media. The report recommended the establishment of a commission to report annually on gender stereotyping.⁷⁹

Germany - The German Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth has developed a comprehensive strategy to raise awareness on a broad variety of images that exist on old age and the lives of older persons.

Norway - NOK 2million is set aside for films that give priority to women.⁸⁰

Sweden - There is specific training of journalists in gender awareness and at the SVT (a Swedish public service channel supported by the State). Gender ratios are included in programme contracts to promote gender balance.⁸¹ The Swedish Arts Council has an undertaking to ensure gender equality in the allocation of funding and grants.

The US and Canada - TV and film industries are strongly regulated with strong union representation which has impacted positively on the representation of older women in the media.⁸²

d. Older women in politics

The Commission believes that it is important for our democracy to be representative of all parts of Britain and men and women of all ages and from all walks of life.

The recent report, 'Counting Women in' showed how almost forty years since the Sex Discrimination Act, and eighty years since women gained the vote equally with men, women are still missing from politically powerful positions in the UK.⁸³

Women who stand for election have been shown to have peak activity moments – between 25-30 and then again 45-60. Between these periods there is a noticeable dip in women's representation.⁸⁴ The story for older women, in comparison to younger women, at first glance appears to be more positive than in the media. However, evidence to the Commission from Nan Sloane shows that when you look more closely older women do not do so well when it comes to visibility, treatment and power.

⁷⁹ Equity(2013) Evidence to the Commission for Older Women <http://www.equity.org.uk/documents/response-to-labour-older-womens-commission/>

⁸⁰ Ibid

⁸¹ Creative Skillset (2013) Evidence to the Commission on Older Women

⁸² Directors UK (2013) Evidence to the Commission on Older Women

⁸³ Centre for Women and Democracy Sex and Power 2013: Who Runs Britain. Counting Women in. Equality = Good politics <http://www.countingwomenin.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Sex-and-Power-2013-FINALv2.-pdf.pdf>

⁸⁴ Nan Sloane (2013) Evidence to the Commission on Older Women

i Westminster

Women in the House of Commons

In Westminster, women still only comprise 22 per cent of MPs (33 per cent Labour; 16 per cent Conservative and 12 per cent Liberal Democrat). We therefore still have a long way to go until we have a balanced team of men and women in Parliament. However, politics is one area where on the face of it, older women do better in terms of presence - the average age of a female MP is 50.⁸⁵

This was illustrated during roundtables with older women across the country; the perception was that women MPs tend to be younger⁸⁶, yet in the women's Parliamentary Labour Party there are actually fifty MPs over the age of 50 - comprising 60 per cent of Labour women MPs.

When you look at when MPs are first elected to the House of Commons, the general pattern is that women actually have a slightly higher average age than their male counterparts⁸⁷.

MPs average age at first election at successive General Elections 1979-2010

Conservative, Labour and LibDem* only

	Conservative		Labour		Lib/LibDem	
General Election	F	M	F	M	F	M
1979	50.9	39.5	54.1	43.4	na	na
1983	42.4	38.9	37.3	41.0	na	35.3
1987	45.6	39.9	43.2	41.2	53.3	51.2
1992	45.3	39.4	43.1	44.4	44.2	39.9
1997	39.7	40.0	43.5	44.0	50.3	42.4
2001	59.6	38.3	44.1	42.1	53.3	44.3
2005	43.3	40.7	44.4	42.4	40.3	39.5
2010	44.4	42.2	41.4	41.8	50.6	45.2
All	44.3	40.1	43.2	42.9	46.4	41.9

* includes predecessor parties

Source: House of Commons Library MP database

Women in the House of Lords

The gender breakdown of the House of Lords shows that the average age for both male and female peers is 71.5 years⁸⁸.

⁸⁵ House of Commons Library; 2010 figures

⁸⁶ Evidence gathering roundtable in Newcastle

⁸⁷ House of Commons Library Research

⁸⁸ House of Commons Library research

Governments are able to appoint people to the House of Lords in order for them to take up ministerial positions - a trend which has increased in recent years. Since 1979, 31 people have been given peerages, going on to become Ministers within three months of the writ being issued.⁸⁹ However, only two of these have been given to women, so analysis on age is not possible.

ii Women in Devolved Assemblies

In the devolved assemblies women's representation is higher than in Westminster. At the 2003 elections, the Welsh Assembly was the first democratically elected institution to achieve gender-equal representation with 30 men and women Assembly Members.⁹⁰ Currently, women make up 42 per cent of Welsh Assembly Members and 36 per cent of SMPs.⁹¹

Older women are also well represented. The average age at election of Welsh Assembly Members is 45 and in the Scottish Parliament, the average age of women MSPs is 55.⁹²

However, within these statistics the trend for female representation depends strongly on the fortunes of the different political parties, with Labour offering a more balanced set of candidates than other parties.

iii Women in Local Government

Approximately 31 per cent of councillors in the UK were women in 2010. And although there are no specific figures for the age of women councillors, for all local councillors the average age is now 60, with 82 per cent of all councillors aged over 50.⁹³

However, women only comprise 13.5 per cent of council leaders in England.⁹⁴ The Centre for Women and Democracy found that women who do have leadership roles in local government they are more likely than men to be in their 50s and 60s.⁹⁵

A number of Labour older women councillors attended the Commission's roundtables and the common feeling was that, contrary to other workplaces, the Council and Labour Group provided a supportive environment for women returning to public life later in life, and that this should be celebrated.⁹⁶ This is perhaps due to the high average age of councillors.

⁸⁹ House of Commons Library research

⁹⁰ Charter for Women (2013) <http://juliemorgan.org/page63.html>

⁹¹ House of Commons Library research

⁹² *ibid*

⁹³ National census of local authority councillors, 2010

http://www.local.gov.uk/c/document_library/get_file?uuid=c8b75651-438a-4cdc-89ab-0016b14e27c5&groupId=10171

⁹⁴ Nan Sloane (2013) Evidence to the Commission on Older Women

⁹⁵ *Ibid*

⁹⁶ Evidence gathering roundtable in Newcastle

3. Conclusions regarding Older Women and Public Life

The conclusions of the Commission on Women regarding older women in public life are:

The Commission believes that the broadcasting industry should establish a clear and consistent way of monitoring the number of older women they employ, including presenters and freelancers, across all broadcasting media, publish accurate data each year and develop targets.

The equality duty under the Equality Act applies to the BBC, and the Commission would like to see the BBC report annually on how it is being implemented in respect of older women.

Conferences supported with public funding should aim to have 50 per cent women speakers.

ANNEXES

Annex 1

Examples of flexible working policies to support carers, provided by Unison

Examples of flexible working policies to support carers, from evidence from Unison to the Commission on Older Women.

The University of Essex: They offer flexible working to carers of near relatives and compressed hours to staff with family responsibilities. They are developing comprehensive carers' leave policy to provide for more extensive time off.

Royal Bank of Scotland: Their Carer's Leave policy entitles eligible employees to take a total of 18 weeks unpaid leave to care for seriously sick, elderly or disabled relatives or partners and applies to grandparents who are prime carer of a child.

University College London: Staff with caring responsibilities for relatives are entitled to up to five days' paid carer's leave. Extended leave may be granted for up to 20 days and unpaid leave up to a combined period of six months. Those requiring support for over six months may be eligible for flexible hours, home working or reduced hours.

Welsh Government: Their carers' policy applies to all staff providing substantial unpaid care for a relative, friend or neighbour due to sickness, age or disability. They are eligible for five days paid special leave and can apply for up to three months unpaid leave. Career breaks of up to five years may be available for those with significant caring responsibilities.

Burnley Borough Council: Flexible working and emergency leave policies apply to employees who are carers of grandchildren.

University of Cumbria Business School: They offer the same flexible working options for grandparents with parental responsibility as for parents.

Annex 2

Case Studies, provided by Age UK

Margaret

"I live with my husband John who has had Parkinson's for over 20 years. He needs quite a bit of help. On top of that I cared for my father while he lived at home. Now dad is 102 years old and lives in a care home which I regularly visit. Occasionally our daughter comes home too as she suffers from schizophrenia, so I sometimes look after her. I often feel quite isolated.

When my husband was in hospital, we weren't sure what to do about bringing him home. I thought the hospital, GP or local council would give me advice or information but no one did. I was just left to get on with things. The GP has always told me they don't know much about Parkinson's, and that I know more than they do, but that's not very helpful to me.

I was a primary school teacher and later helped in the local village college helping children with special needs. I retired 7 years ago, because of my dad's needs and my husband requiring more help. I didn't want to retire so early, I felt I had something to give, and it was extra money coming in. I've been told by the council that we're not entitled to any financial help. My husband was in the civil service in Brussels, and his pension takes us just over the threshold.

We live in a rural area, the nearest small town is about five miles away. We have a village shop and post office but that's about it. I don't drive, so we thought it was important that John carry on driving for as long as he's able. John gets Disability Living Allowance, so we used some of that money to pay for a mobility car. If John is too ill to drive and we want to go out, I push his wheelchair up to get the guided bus (like a tram), which is at least a mile away. In bad weather, it's very difficult. The bus is quick, if we're lucky we find a space on the bus for the wheelchair. Often when we do go out, it's to attend local Parkinson's meetings but the guided bus doesn't go anywhere near them. There used to be a bus service which stopped at the end of our road but it was cancelled. Needless to say, I can't go out much now, and it's never a possibility to do anything in the evenings.

When I'm ill, I worry what will happen to John. I have to keep myself as fit as possible. Recently I have been told I have to have some skin cancer removed from my scalp but I don't know how I'll manage to get to the hospital and get home. John couldn't take me and my children work. I have told the doctor and the hospital about my situation but no one is offering any help.

If I want a break, I could hire carers but that's expensive, and beyond the reach of most people. Also there are no specialist Parkinson's carers in our area, so I'm nervous to leave John with anyone who's not familiar with the illness. Life is very confined. I sometimes feel like I am trapped in, which makes me worry even more. I'd love to be more active but my circumstances mean I'm not able to. I feel I have lost my own personality, lost my own being. It's not anybody's fault, it's just the way it is."

Joan

“I was married to Geoff for 50 years. We were very comfortable in each other’s presence, we didn’t need to speak to know what each other were thinking. He was one side of the penny, I was the other. Geoff was a jolly man with a great sense of humour which he never lost. He was active and loved cycling, swimming and running. He was practical and could build anything. He didn’t drink and didn’t smoke.

When Geoff started showing signs of Alzheimer’s I was still working as a freelancer, so sometimes I would take him with me. Often my work was in a clinic so Geoff would go in and sit and chat with the staff. But during the last year of Geoff’s life I had to give up work, so we lost our income. When you are older you can’t claim any financial help for giving up work, which I don’t think makes sense. As the illness progressed, Geoff slowly lost his skills, bit by bit. Once he couldn’t stand I had to help him go to the loo, wash, dress and shave. I slept on the sofa and set the alarm, I was up every 2 hours at night as, with Alzheimer’s, that was the time he was most restless and active. I’m in pretty good shape but when he was unable to get out of bed I really struggled.

I never saw myself as a carer at the start but the GP was very concerned about me and tried to get us night time cover, but we didn’t qualify in the county where we live. When Geoff was assessed the council seemed to think that because he could hold a conversation he didn’t qualify for help. It was taken for granted that I would get his food and care for him. So the assessment only measured whether Geoff could feed himself if a plate of food was put in front of him, they jumped to the conclusion that I would do everything else.

Geoff was then diagnosed with prostate cancer. I never told him this as I didn’t want to distress him for no reason, and he may well not have retained the information anyway. Ironically with a cancer diagnosis we were able to call on the support of Marie Curie nurses to give me the occasional night time break. If he had only had Alzheimer’s we wouldn’t have been given any care, so cancer was lucky for us in this instance.

Going out was tricky. Because the prostate cancer had travelled to his bones, he became dependent upon a wheelchair. We couldn’t take his wheelchair on the tube or to our train station as it didn’t have disabled access. I had a free bus pass but couldn’t get the wheelchair on the bus and pushing him to the bus stop was heavy work. I did still drive so took him out sometimes, but getting him in and out of the car was an issue. Most parking spaces didn’t have room for a wheelchair by the side of the car, so I’d have to get him out and physically support him to his wheelchair.

I didn’t choose to be a carer, but I had to do it. So many people think that carers are the ladies who come in to help when you’re ill. As a loved one, you don’t see yourself as carer and many people don’t like the label, but without that label you can’t access any support. For me, the hardest things about caring were the moral and ethical decisions that I had to make on Geoff’s behalf, choices that I couldn’t be sure he would have made. I had to take on his life, his medication and running a household independently. There are no right choices, you have to make the decisions you’re comfortable with, and looking back I did the best I could.”

Annex 3

Data provided by broadcasters

Broadcaster's data – On-screen and Off-screen

Aggregate data: Key statistics

Regular on-screen presenters	
% men and women on-screen presenters	39% women; 61% men
% on-screen presenters over age of 50	30%
Of those presenters over 50	18% women; 82% men
Older women as a % of all presenters	5%
Of those presenters under 50	48% women; 52% men
Total workforce (On and off-screen)	
% men and women total workforce	48% women; 52% men
% of total workforce over the age of 50	19%
Of those over 50 in the workforce	37% women; 63% men
Older women as % of total workforce	7%

NB. Aggregate data has been compiled from the following sources:

Regular on-screen presenters – BBC (all on-air talent); ITN; Channel 5; Sky News

Total Workforce (on and off-screen) – BBC; ITN; Channel 4; Sky News

Please note: Channel 4 is a publisher-broadcaster with no in-house production base so provided no statistics relating to on-screen questions. No numbers were received for ITV only the percentage; therefore data could not be used when compiling the aggregate figures.

BBC

Regular on-screen presenters	
% men and women on-screen presenters	36% women; 64% men
% on-screen presenters over age of 50	30%
Of those presenters over 50	20% women, 80% men
Older women as a % of all presenters	6%
Total workforce (On and off-screen)	
% men and women total workforce	48% women; 52% men
% of total workforce over the age of 50	20%
Of those over 50 in the workforce	37% women, 63% men
Older women as % of total workforce	7%

ITV

Regular on-screen presenters	
% men and women on-screen presenters	48% women; 52% men
% on-screen presenters over age of 55	14%
Of those presenters over 55	55% women; 45% men
Older women as a % of all presenters	No data received
Total workforce (on and off-screen)	
% men and women total workforce	52% women; 48% men
% of total workforce over the age of 55	7%
Of those over 55 in the workforce	34% women; 66% men
Older women as a % of the total workforce	No data received

NB: No numbers were received from ITV, only percentages; data given for 55+ rather than 50+.

ITN

Regular on-screen presenters	
% men and women on-screen presenters	47% women; 53% men
% on-screen presenters over age of 50	33%
Of those presenters over 50	0% women; 100% men
Older women as a % of all presenters	0%
Total workforce (on and off-screen)	
% men and women total workforce	42% women; 58% men
% of total workforce over the age of 50	17%
Of those over 50 in the workforce	24% women, 76% men
Older women as % of total workforce	4%

Channel 4

Regular on-screen presenters	
Regular on-screen presenters	No data received
Total workforce (on and off-screen)	
% men and women total workforce	58% women; 42% men
% of total workforce over the age of 50	3%
Of those over 50 in the workforce	46% women; 52% men
Older women as % of total workforce	1%

NB: As a publisher-broadcaster with no in-house production base, Channel 4 does not produce, develop or appear in their programmes and therefore unable to provide on-screen statistics.

Channel 5

Regular on-screen presenters	
% men and women on-screen presenters	55% women; 45% men
% on-screen presenters over age of 50	10%
Of those presenters over 50	0% women; 100% men
Older women as a % of all presenters	0%
Workforce	
Workforce	No data received

Sky News

Regular on-screen presenters	
% men and women on-screen presenters	61% women; 39% men
% on-screen presenters over age of 50	33%
Of those presenters over 50	9% women; 91% men
Older women as a % of all presenters	3%
Workforce	
Workforce	No data received

Questions asked to broadcasters

1. How many [NAME OF ORGANISATION] staff would you define as regular on-screen presenters for the [NAME OF ORGANISATION] UK programming? How many of these are women?
2. How many of [NAME OF ORGANISATION] regular on-screen presenters are over the age of 50? How many of these are women?
3. How many regular primetime presenters (including news and current affairs) does [NAME OF ORGANISATION] employ? How many of these are women?
4. How many regular primetime presenters are over the age of 50? How many of these are women?
5. How many regular UK [NAME OF ORGANISATION] news reporters does [NAME OF ORGANISATION] employ? How many of these are women?

6. How many regular UK [NAME OF ORGANISATION] news reporters over the age of 50 does [NAME OF ORGANISATION] employ? How many of these are women?

7. How many people does [NAME OF ORGANISATION] ITV employ in UK TV programming (on or off-screen)? How many of these are women?

8. How many people over the age of 50 does [NAME OF ORGANISATION] employ in UK TV programming (on or off-screen)? How many of these are women?

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Members of the Commission

Rt Hon Harriet Harman MP QC	Chair and Shadow Deputy Prime Minister & Shadow Secretary of State for Culture Media and Sport
Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP	Shadow Minister for Women and Equalities
Fiona Mactaggart MP	Secretary and Chair, Parliamentary Labour Party Women's Group and Secretary of the Commission on Older Women

Older Women in the Workplace working group:

Dawn Airey	Senior Vice-President, Europe, Middle East and Africa, Yahoo.
Kay Carberry	TUC Deputy General Secretary
Gloria Mills	Unison Equalities Officer
Agnes Tolmie	Chair of Scottish Women's Convention

Older Women and their caring responsibilities working group:

Naomi Eisenstadt	Senior Research Fellow, Oxford University
Sonia Mangan	Chief Executive, Age UK South Lakeland
Julie Morgan	Assembly Member, Welsh Assembly
Baroness Glenys Thornton	Opposition Spokesperson for Equalities Office

Women in Public Life working group:

Miriam O'Reilly	Deputy Chair, former presenter who won landmark case on age discrimination
Yasmin Alibhai-Brown	Journalist and author
Jackie Ashley	Journalist and Guardian columnist
Arlene Phillips	Choreographer, Judge, Presenter

Secretariat:

Angela Watson	Office of Fiona Mactaggart MP
Sophie Wingfield	Office of Harriet Harman MP QC
Marie Birchall	Office of Yvette Cooper MP

The Commission would like to record its thanks to the Secretariat for their help in researching and writing this report.

Appendix 2

Evidence sent to the Commission on Older Women

Older Women in the Workplace

Centrica	Submission sent by Angela Williams, HR Director British Gas
Older Women in Learning And Enterprise	Submissions sent by Hilary Farnworth, Director, Centre for Micro Enterprise, London Metropolitan University
Resolution Foundation	Submission sent by Giselle Cory, Senior Research and Policy Analyst
Saga	Submission sent by Ros Altman, Director General
TAEN	Submission of published papers by Hilary Wiseman, Chair
TUC	Submission of published papers by Scarlet Harris, Women's Equality Officer
Unison	Submission sent by Gloria Mills, National Secretary Equalities
University of Warwick	Submission sent by Professor Jenny Bimrose, Deputy Director, Institute for Employment Research
USDAW	Submission from evidence gathering session in Manchester
Working Families	Submission sent by Elizabeth Gardiner, Policy and Political Campaigns Officer

Older Women and their Caring Responsibilities

Age UK	Submission sent by Barbara Limon, Programme Manager - Private Sector
Age UK South Lakeland	Submission from listening event sent by Sonia Mangan, Chief Officer
Alzheimer's Society	Submission sent by Laura Cook, Policy Officer
Carers UK	Submission sent by Chloe Wright, Senior Policy and Public Affairs Officer
Coventry Women's Voices	Submission sent by Kindy Sandhu, co-author 'Layers of Inequality: A Human Rights and Equality Impact Assessment of the Public Spending Cuts on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Women in Coventry'
Grandparents Now	Submission sent by Dilys Morgan, co-founder
Grandparents Plus	Submission sent by Sarah Wellard, Policy and Parliamentary Officer
Gransnet	Submission sent by Geraldine Bedell, Editor
Macmillan	Submission sent by Lucy Schonegevel, Senior Public Affairs Officer
Sheffield 50+	Submission from Helen Jackson, Management Team

Older Women in Public Life

BBC	Submission sent by Tim Davie, Acting Director General
BBC	Submission sent by Zara Lee, Public Affairs, BBC Global News in response to email sent to Sound Women
City University	Submission sent by Lis Howell, Director of Broadcasting
Creative Skillset	Submission sent by Maria Balermipa, Public Affairs Manager
Directors UK	Submission sent by Amanda Parker, Head of Communications and Public Affairs
Equity	Submission sent by Louise McMullan, Head of the General Secretary's Department
ITN	Submission sent by John Hardy, Chief Executive Officer
ITV	Submission sent by Adam Crozier, Chief Executive Officer
Object	Submission sent by Silvia Murray Wakefield, Acting Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Centre for Women & Democracy	Submission presented at Round Table by Nan Sloane, Director
Channel 4	Submission sent by David Abraham, Chief Executive Officer
Channel 5	Submission sent by Martin Stott, Head of Corporate & Regulatory Affairs
Sky News	Submission sent by John Ryley, Head of Sky News, BSkyB
Women Ageing & Media	Submission from Dr. Josephine Dolan and Associate Professor Estella Tincknell, University of the West of England
Women in Film & TV	Submission sent by Kate Kinnimont, Chief Executive

Cross-Theme Submissions

Coventry Women's Voices	Round Table event submission sent by Christine Broughan, Co-Director, Age Research Centre, Coventry University
Fabian Women's Network	Women's forum listening event submission sent by Sarah Hutchinson, FWN Researcher
International Longevity Centre	Submission of published paper
National Alliance of Women's Organisations	Submission sent by Elizabeth Sclater, Convenor
Scottish Women's Convention	Submission sent by Evelyn Fraser, Convener
University of Sheffield	Submission sent by Professor Alan Walker, Department of Social Policy and Social Gerontology and Director, New Dynamics of Ageing Programme
Events in Wales	Submission from Round Tables sent by Julie Morgan AM

Submissions from Labour Party Listening Events

Faversham Labour Party	Listening event submission sent by Frances Rehal
Hampstead and Kilburn Constituency Labour Party	Listening event submission sent by Abi Wood, CLP Secretary
Lewes Constituency Labour Party	Listening event submission sent by Gaby Weiner
Newcastle Labour Women	Women's Forum event submission sent by Sheila Spencer, Women's Officer
Stevenage Constituency Labour Party	Listening event submission sent by Laurie Chester, Chair, Women's Forum
Thurrock Labour Party	Listening event submission sent by Polly Billington, PPC

Personal Submissions

A large number of personal evidence statements were received. As these were mostly of a confidential nature, individual contributors have not been listed. However, we would like to record our thanks all those who sent in personal evidence. This has been incorporated into our report on an anonymised basis.

Appendix 3

Events and evidence gathering sessions

28 February, Durham	Round Table discussion with Harriet Harman MP QC and Pat Glass MP.
7 March, London	International Longevity Centre launch ‘Has the sisterhood forgotten older women?’ addressed by Fiona Mactaggart MP.
14 March, London	TUC Women’s Conference, including Unison fringe, addressed by Fiona Mactaggart MP.
20 March, London	Women’s Network event addressed by Fiona Mactaggart MP and Kay Carberry.
27 March, London	Hampstead and Kilburn Women’s Forum addressed by Fiona Mactaggart MP.
22 March, Llandudno	Welsh Labour Conference, Round Table with Julie Morgan AM, Harriet Harman MP QC and Miriam O’Reilly.
27 March, Cornwall	Round Table with Harriet Harman MP QC.
6 April, Glasgow	Scottish Women’s Convention Older Women and Employment Conference, organised by Agnes Tolmie.
6 April, Thurrock	Evidence gathering listening event addressed by Fiona Mactaggart MP.
9 April, Camden	Evidence gathering listening event, addressed by Fiona Mactaggart MP.
11 April, London	NUJ event at New Broadcasting House, addressed by Miriam O’Reilly.
11-13 April, East Anglia & East Midlands	Fiona Mactaggart MP addressed listening events in Great Yarmouth, Norwich and Stevenage.
2 May, London	Round Table on age/gender discrimination in employment, addressed by Fiona Mactaggart MP and Gloria Mills.
16 May, London	Round Table hosted by Harriet Harman MP QC with executives from the broadcasters, House of Commons.
16 May, London	Round Table on caring responsibilities, hosted by Fiona Mactaggart MP, House of Commons.

20 May, London	Fabian Women's Network evidence gathering listening event addressed by Fiona Mactaggart MP.
25 May, Milton Keynes	Evidence gathering listening event, addressed by Fiona Mactaggart MP.
4 July, Coventry	Coventry Women's Voices Round Table, addressed by Fiona Mactaggart MP.
16 July	Round Table on public life hosted by Harriet Harman MP, House of Commons.
15 August, London	Canada House event, Miriam O'Reilly in conversation with Kim Cattrall.
21 August, Ulverston	Evidence gathering listening event addressed by Fiona Mactaggart MP and Sonia Mangan.
4 September, London	Launch of IPPR paper 'Sandwich Generation – Older Women balancing Work and Care' addressed by Harriet Harman MP QC and Fiona Mactaggart MP.
12 September, London	Women's Institute Social Care Conference, panel discussion with Fiona Mactaggart MP.
14 September, Manchester	Labour Women's Network Northern Political Day, addressed by Miriam O'Reilly.

Appendix 4

Call for evidence: Questions for consideration when giving evidence

The Commission would welcome any comments you might regard as relevant to a discussion of the position of older women in British society today. However, for guidance, the following questions have been identified as being of particular interest.

Older Women in the Workplace

- ❖ Where are older women in the workplace? Within which sectors and occupations?
- ❖ Why are an increasing number of older women becoming unemployed? Do older women workers choose to leave the workplace, and if so, why? Do older women face unique types of discrimination in the labour market?
- ❖ What support do older women workers want and need to help them remain in the workplace? Do older women want to change their working patterns as the work towards retirement?
- ❖ What examples of best practice exist in the workplace, to help older women workers balance their working and caring responsibilities? How could these be further encouraged and rolled out?
- ❖ What best practice exists in the workplace to supports older women workers to progress throughout their careers? How much training or skills development have older women had in the workplace?
- ❖ What frameworks exist to tackle ageism and sexism in the workplace? Could they be strengthened?
- ❖ What more can and should be done to close the pension-gap for older women?

Older Women and their Caring Responsibilities

- ❖ Do increasing numbers of older women consider themselves stretched by dual caring roles?
- ❖ What could be done to better support older women in their caring responsibilities and to make them feel less stretched?
- ❖ What specific services might help older women with their caring responsibilities, including services to assist those involved with distance caring?
- ❖ What examples of best practice exist in the workplace to help older women workers balance their working and caring responsibilities? How could these be further encouraged and rolled out?
- ❖ What changes in the ability of older women to undertake multiple caring roles can be anticipated in the future? What measures might be needed to compensate for these changes?

Older Women in Public Life

- ❖ Why do women disappear from TV when they hit 50? What discrimination exists and how is this different from when men hit 50?
- ❖ Why do so many women leave the creative industries by the time they are over 35? What support do they need to help them remain in the industry?
- ❖ How could the frameworks to tackle ageism and sexism in the industry be strengthened?
- ❖ Commentators have speculated that expert older women appear much more represented in other countries such as the US or Canada. Is this the case and if so why?
- ❖ What campaigns are successfully raising the profile of older women in public life?
- ❖ How can we raise the profile of this issue amongst the public and within the industry?
- ❖ Are there areas in public life where there are a significant number of older women?
- ❖ Do older women shy away from standing for elections/ appearing in public? If so why? What can we do to