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# The Commission on Older Women

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## Final Report

*Our Time: a strategy  
for older women in  
work, in their caring  
responsibilities and  
in public life*

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April 2015

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*The Commission on Older Women is chaired by Labour's Deputy Leader Harriet Harman QC and contains senior Labour figures alongside a wide range of senior women from business, unions, voluntary organisations and public life.*

## **Foreword from Rt Hon Harriet Harman 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.

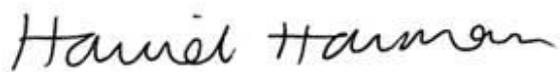
Yet when it comes to this older generation of women, public policy acknowledges and supports neither their role at home nor at work.

The pay gap between women and men aged 50 to 59 is almost 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 Parental Leave, this cannot be shared with her parents or parents-in-law, whom might be called on to help and both of whom are likely to be working. In 40% of families Grandparents help care for grandchildren, but have no rights to take leave for this important role.

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 has listened 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. Public policy should back them up - not take them for granted.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Harriet Harman". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Rt Hon Harriet Harman QC**

**Deputy Leader of the Labour Party and Chair of the Commission on Older Women**

## Acknowledgements

I wish to record my thanks to my fellow Commissioners who have lent their wisdom and enthusiasm as we have debated and journeyed around the country to hear the voices of older women; presenters Miriam O'Reilly, our Deputy Chair, and Arlene Phillips, journalists Jackie Ashley and Yasmin Alibhai-Brown, Kay Carberry, Gloria Mills and Agnes Tolmie from the trade unions, Sonia Mangan from Age UK, Welsh AM Julie Morgan, media executive Dawn Airey and academic and Sure-Start innovator Naomi Eisenstadt, fellow MPs The Rt Hon Yvette Cooper and Gloria De Piero; plus Angela Watson who has facilitated the work of the Commission and authored this report.

I also wish to thank all the organisations and groups who have sent written evidence and attended evidence sessions and round tables to offer their views and analysis. You have informed our understanding and shaped our thinking.

But most of all I want to thank all the older women, from all parts of the country and all walks of life, who have contacted us and given their time to come to our listening events and let us know about the issues which affect their lives and what matters to them. Without you we would not have this report.



**Rt Hon Fiona Mactaggart**  
Secretary of the Commission on Older Women

## Executive Summary

The Commission on Older Women has identified two critical issues for older women:

### 1 Older women become less valued and more vulnerable at work

Staying in work is now an essential reality for most older women who need to offset both the unprecedented squeeze on living standards in recent years and the need to work for longer due to increases in the state retirement age. But work is insecure and women over 50 working full-time earn only two thirds of the salary of men of the same age<sup>1</sup>. Older women need good quality, fairly paid and secure work with an adequate pension on retirement.

- ❖ *New polling by YouGov for the Commission for Older Women has found that while nearly half (46%) of older women think they have got better at their jobs as they have got older, less than a quarter (24%) feel that they have become more valued.*<sup>2</sup>

### 2 Older women struggle to balance work and care

The Commission learnt that older women want to be involved in caring for family members – for partners, parents and other older relatives and for grandchildren with parents at work - but need to be able to balance this with their own working lives.

- ❖ *The polling by YouGov for the Commission for Older Women found that half (48%) of older women with caring responsibilities say that they have faced a challenge in the workplace in balancing their work and caring responsibilities and half (49%) of the same group feel that, if there were redundancies in their workplace, they would be more likely to be made redundant than younger colleagues.*<sup>3</sup>

Older women carers need support to balance work and care. Too often they end up compromising their careers by cutting their hours or giving up work altogether. They lose out financially and those that drop out of work struggle to get back to work when they are ready. They need time off to care especially at times of sudden adjustment in caring responsibilities, flexible employment options to let them work and care and good back to work support if they have to give up.

Underpinning all this, older women must be visible in public life, underlining their engagement and relevance to modern life. Critically they need positive images and role models, especially in the media where public opinion and attitudes are formed.

In our Interim Report<sup>4</sup> the Commission made a range of recommendations around older women in work, in their caring responsibilities and in public life. This final report sets out

<sup>1</sup> Office for National Statistics (2014) Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings

<sup>2</sup> YouGov/Older Women's Commission polling 2015

<sup>3</sup> ibid

<sup>4</sup> Commission on Older Women (2013) Interim Report

action in a number of key areas we have identified to be of critical importance to older women.

**The Commission on Older Women recommends:**

- ❖ **Immediate action to increase pay transparency in order to eliminate the age/gender gap in pay, together with implementation of the double discrimination provisions of the Equality Act.**
- ❖ **That government and employers consult on ways to help grandparents balance helping with the care of their grandchildren and staying in their jobs, including options to allow them to share in parents' unpaid parental leave.**
- ❖ **There is also a case for looking at how employers can support carers in the workplace, with particular focus on how carers cope with times of adjustment in caring responsibilities.**
- ❖ **Jobcentre Plus offers a more tailored service for older women wanting to return to work. Employers should also be encouraged to consider 'returnships' and other back to work support.**
- ❖ **Action to improve the position and image of older women in the media by requiring public sector broadcasters to provide greater transparency on gender balance, including data on age and role.**

## Chapter 1

### Inequalities in the workplace

The Interim Report of the Commission on Older Women identified a new generation of older working women who have forged successful careers while still bearing the greatest responsibility for caring for their families. Today, the cost of living bears heavily on them as they struggle to pay the bills and fear for their financial security in retirement. But older women are overlooked in terms of recruitment, pay, promotion and training and are at risk of being managed out of jobs or being first in line for redundancy.

To make work work for older women they need jobs which can adapt to their changing needs, which take into account their skills and experience, their caring responsibilities, their own health and well-being and their aspirations and ambitions. Without this many older women that would like to keep working will be lost from the workplace altogether. The Government's paper 'Fuller Working Lives – A Framework for Action' recognises the economic imperative to increase employment amongst older workers. But the analysis is gender blind and so fails to take into account the specific experience of women as they get older.

#### **1. Finding good work - employment, unemployment and pay**

Women over 50 struggle to find the work they want. Part-time work is wanted by many older women struggling to balance work with other responsibilities. UNISON found four in ten of their women members over 50 work part-time, a third of them because of caring responsibilities,<sup>5</sup> and many full-timers would like to work less.<sup>6</sup> But negotiating changes remains difficult, especially for carers of grandchildren and dependent adults.<sup>7</sup> And part time work remains predominantly low paid, and often insecure.

Many older women are still failing to find work at all. Employment levels for this group are now improving, but women whose mothers left the workforce after having children now want and need to stay at work to support their families.

Pay remains a problem for older women. The TUC found in 2014 that the average salary for all women over 50 was just over £15,000 and the majority of older women working part-time take home less than £10,000 a year.<sup>8</sup> Full-time salaries are obviously higher, and women over 50 working full-time earn an average of £24,000, but this is only two-thirds of the pay of men of the same age working full-time.<sup>9</sup> Tax threshold changes, trumpeted by the coalition government as helping low paid workers, have had no impact on the incomes of many of these women, and precarious forms of work such as zero

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<sup>5</sup> UNISON (2014) Women Deserve Better

<sup>6</sup> TUC (2014) Age Immaterial and UNISON (2014) Women Deserve Better

<sup>7</sup> UNISON (2014) Women Deserve Better

<sup>8</sup> TUC (2014) Age Immaterial

<sup>9</sup> ONS (2014) Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings

hours contracts are prevalent in sectors such as care that are dominated by older women.

Immediate action is required to increase pay transparency in order to eliminate the age/gender gap in pay, together with implementation of the double discrimination provisions of the Equality Act.

## 2. Career development & progression

If older women are remaining in the workforce longer, they must be able to continue to develop their careers. Our Interim Report highlighted the difference in men's and women's career experiences and outcomes - only 36 per cent of women working past state pension age are in higher skilled jobs compared to 67 per cent of men.<sup>10</sup> At the highest level, on company boards, female directors, whose average age is 56, still make up only 21 per cent of FTSE 100 Boards.<sup>11</sup> And much still needs to be done to assure women have a sustainable position in top management maintained by the development of a stable pipeline of younger talent.<sup>12</sup> UNISON have found that, amongst its older women members, while more than a third would like to move to a higher grade job, virtually none felt they had good promotion opportunities at their age and almost a quarter had never had a promotion or moved into a higher grade job. Asian and Asian British women were at a particular disadvantage.<sup>13</sup>

### TUC Unionlearn mid-life career reviews

TUC Unionlearn workplace education and the National Institute for Adult and Continuing Education (Niace) piloted a mid-life career review process. The project, which involved 18 partner organisations and more than 2,500 individual older workers, was very successful and the TUC and Niace are now working with The Age and Employment Network and other partners to campaign for an entitlement for a mid-career review for all UK workers.

*“A substantial body of evidence exists that shows people over the age of 50 exiting the labour market find it more difficult to re-renter. The mid-life career review can help prepare workers to be more resilient to labour market challenges they face in the future. This type of intervention can be an important preventative measure in helping mid-life and older workers remain in the labour market by supporting them to update their skills and progress in their current workplace or to make a career change.”*

**TUC Unionlearn Evidence to the Commission on Older Women 2014**

<sup>10</sup> Age UK (2013) Evidence to the Commission on Older Women

<sup>11</sup> Cranfield International Centre for Women Leaders (2014) The Female FTSE Board Report 2014

<sup>12</sup> S Creasy MP (2015) The Purchase is Political

<sup>13</sup> UNISON (2014) Women Deserve Better

Training is an obvious aid to promotion prospects and our Interim Report recommended improved access to training opportunities for older women. New evidence from the TUC<sup>14</sup> and UNISON<sup>15</sup> confirms the continuing struggle older women face in accessing training in the workplace, particularly those working part-time, and inequalities in the experiences of higher and lower grade workers. The recent TUC Unionlearn Mid-Life Career Review Project identifies a range of strategies to encourage and enhance professional development through working lives and could be developed as an effective model for later life career support.<sup>16</sup>

### 3. Redundancy and being ‘managed out’ of jobs

Vulnerability at work is a real issue for older women. In a recent survey, YouGov found that, while nearly half of older women think they have got better at their jobs as they have got older, less than a quarter feel that they have become more valued and two in five feel that getting older puts them at more risk of redundancy.<sup>17</sup> At a round table discussion in Slough for women professionals who have lost or changed jobs at a later stage of their careers, one participant suggested that she had been made redundant at 49 to avoid her qualifying for a workplace pension scheme. Public sector cuts, changing skill requirements and problems getting on with difficult managers were also cited.<sup>18</sup>

There is a growing concern that older women are being pushed, or ‘managed out’ of work, and that changes in skill requirements without adequate training opportunities can leave them vulnerable to disciplinary action.<sup>19</sup> In the accountancy profession, the majority of those notifying the Institute of Chartered Accountants that they are unemployed are women over 45.<sup>20</sup> And the failure of employers to provide for the health and well-being of older women workers, especially in relation to the menopause, can create similar vulnerabilities from health-related performance issues or absence.<sup>21</sup>

The Equality Act has provisions to allow for tribunal cases on combined grounds, for example of gender and age, which have not been implemented. As we recommended in the Interim Report, these should be implemented now to allow older women access to tribunals to provide redress in the case of dual discrimination.

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<sup>14</sup> TUC (2014) Age Immaterial

<sup>15</sup> UNISON (2014) Women Deserve Better

<sup>16</sup> TUC (2014) Midlife career reviews – Helping older workers plan for their future: Evaluation report

<sup>17</sup> YouGov/Older Women’s Commission polling 2015

<sup>18</sup> Slough Round Table 2014

<sup>19</sup> TUC (2014) Age Immaterial

<sup>20</sup> Institute of Chartered Accountants for England & Wales(2014) Evidence to the Commission on Older Women

<sup>21</sup> TUC (2014) Age Immaterial

### **Usdaw Round Table in Croydon with Harriet Harman February 2014**

A group of twenty older women members of Usdaw who had all experienced workplace discrimination came together for a Round Table discussion in Croydon with Harriet Harman MP QC to pass on their experiences to the Commission on Older Women. They talked about how older women in the workplace are discriminated against, overlooked and mistreated. The following quotes give a flavour of the discussion.

“They can’t get rid of you, but they make it very difficult. I feel very, very vulnerable.”

“I feel my boss wants to get rid of me because I’m on the old contract. They don’t have empathy, they don’t have respect. They destroyed my Christmas because the volume of work was so immense. They want me out because of my age.”

“A new one comes in and looks at your age – they assume I’m going to be slower. But a lot of my managers have said I’m actually faster than the young lads!”

“They tend to pick on the older members of staff. The big managers are older men, who bully the younger managers in the shop, who then bully the older women on the shop floor. They think they are being good, having flexible working. But flexible working is not flexible. It means any hours, any time and next week you’ll be doing something different.”

“We’re invisible, but with the world on our shoulders.”

***Usdaw: Croydon Round Table, Evidence to the Commission on Older Women 2014***

## **4. Routes back to work**

Back to work support for older women is failing. The Work Programme has found sustained employment for just 14 per cent of the women aged over 50 referred to it - lower than the level for men in the same age group and for all younger groups.<sup>22</sup> The Commission on Older Women previously highlighted the failure of the Work Programme for older workers and recommended that government funded employment initiatives should demonstrate they support older women and the careers service should have more focused support.<sup>23</sup> We also believe Jobcentre Plus could offer a more tailored service for older women wanting to return to work and employers exploring ‘returnships’ and other back to work support.

<sup>22</sup> Department of Work and Pensions, Work Programme Statistics, March 2015

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/work-programme-statistical-summary-data-to-31-december-2014>

<sup>23</sup> Commission on Older Women (2013) Interim Report

In the face of failing government programmes, together with a recruitment industry which continues to prioritise younger candidates, older women have turned to each other to find routes back into work. The round table discussion in Slough<sup>24</sup> evidenced the effectiveness of mutual support networks for older women seeking new job opportunities. We heard of the value of knowing your friends and understanding your skills, including those developed outside formal employment. When skills had not been properly recognised by employers, some had turned successfully to entrepreneurialism, confirming the comments in our Interim Report about ‘olderpreneurs’ and self-employment as a route back into work for older women.

## 5. Retirement and pensions

Older women are concerned about their incomes in retirement, worried that their savings and pensions will prove inadequate. Our Interim Report evidenced a trend for women to seek to stay longer in the workforce and made recommendations to help this. New data confirms the trend, showing that older women want to smooth the move into retirement by reducing their hours to allow them to stay in work longer. In a survey of working older women, moving towards retirement was the reason given by nearly half of those who wanted to reduce their hours and over one in five for working part-time.<sup>25</sup>

The problem is that there is a persistent gap between the pensions of British men and women<sup>26</sup>, with European Union research putting this at 43 per cent, the third highest level in the EU.<sup>27</sup> Only half of British women have adequate retirement incomes and almost one in five women in their 50s save nothing for their old age. Women who do save typically put away £100 a month for retirement, 40 per cent less than men. In particular, women prioritise supporting their children, including as adults, over retirement savings and over one in ten still expect to rely on their partner’s retirement income, leaving them vulnerable on divorce or separation.<sup>28</sup> But simple solutions can help, such as better information. The Commission heard from older women who are co-habiting, a largely overlooked group who can be particularly vulnerable, who felt that better information and practical support would make a valuable improvement.

Inequalities in contribution patterns are also important. We know that older women are significantly represented amongst part-time workers, including new patterns of part-time working such as mini-jobs and portfolio working – where people hold more than one part-time job. If pay for individual jobs falls below trigger levels for payment of National Insurance and auto-enrolment, these workers can lose out in rights to both state and workplace pensions, even if their combined income exceeds the thresholds. The pattern of women’s working lives needs to be considered when setting the threshold for contributions to workplace pensions, and looking at National Insurance credits and self-payment options.

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<sup>24</sup> Slough Round Table 2014

<sup>25</sup> UNISON (2013) Women Deserve Better

<sup>26</sup> European Union (2013) The Gender Gap in Pensions in the EU

<sup>27</sup> *ibid*

<sup>28</sup> Scottish Widows (2014) Women and Retirement Report

## Chapter 2

### The challenge of caring responsibilities

Much work on caring has focused on improvements in formal care provision, especially for the elderly and infirm and this is and will remain important. In addition, many of the older women we heard from want to be actively involved in caring for their families – across the generations for children, grandchildren, the sick and the elderly and infirm. Despite the difficulties faced in balancing family caring with work and other responsibilities, many are keen to find ways, and drive the change needed, to make their lives work better.

But older women need better support as they fulfil their caring roles. And they want society to recognise and value this work. Foremost for older women is support to balance work and care. Flexibility around hours and job structures is a clear need. But it is also vital that work responds to the way caring responsibilities change. Work may be difficult during initial periods of adjustment to a new caring role or a change in caring needs. But often these stabilise after what can be a relatively short period of time and a return to more normal working patterns is possible. Many employers already accommodate the complex caring responsibilities of their older women employees in order to avoid losing trained and skilled workers, but more needs to be done to ensure that our outdated system of leave reflects the needs of businesses and families.

Older women carers also want support from the healthcare services providing for those they care for. The caring needs of the elderly will increase as longevity increases. The important contribution of family carers needs to be properly used and supported.

#### **1. Caring and working**

In a recent survey, YouGov found that half of older women with caring responsibilities have faced a challenge balancing their caring responsibilities with their work, and half of the same group feel that, if there were redundancies in their workplace, they would be more likely to be made redundant than younger colleagues.<sup>29</sup> The Commission on Older Women learnt how many older women end up giving up work to care - for a partner facing a sudden illness, for elderly relatives or for grandchildren so that their children can work - and are worse off as a result. Unable to save for the future or accumulate further pension rights while out of work, these women struggle to get back into work when caring ends and are justifiably concerned about poverty in their own old age.

The evidence points clearly to the impact of older women's caring responsibilities on their work. A joint Carers UK/YouGov survey finds that almost 3 million carers reduce their working hours to manage caring responsibilities and 2.3 million, equivalent to over a

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<sup>29</sup> YouGov/Older Women's Commission polling 2015

third of our carers, have given up work altogether to care.<sup>30</sup> Age/gender analysis of this data by the Commission on Older Women shows that fifty per cent more women than men over 55 give up work to care and more than twice as many older women than older men have reduced their working hours to manage caring.

Grandmothers looking after grandchildren experience the same pressures. More than half of all mothers rely on grandparents for childcare when they first go back to work after maternity leave, while two thirds of grandparents with grandchildren aged under-16 provide some childcare.<sup>31</sup> However public policy hasn't kept up with the reality of families' lives, with 1.9 million grandparents giving up a job, reducing their hours, or taking time off work to look after their grandchildren.<sup>32</sup> Seven in ten grandparents say the caring contribution they make is not currently recognised.<sup>33</sup>

We need to ensure that our leave system reflects the realities of modern family life, including the roles that older women are now playing. Carers need flexible work, adjustable working patterns, adequate leave provision and access to career breaks.

### Centrica Group Carers Policy

Centrica, the energy company which includes British Gas, has an excellent track record for supporting staff with caring needs and recognises the benefits of retaining skilled staff and in productivity, loyalty and commitment. Provisions include:

- ❖ Planned Carer's Leave: paid leave to cover specific or temporary caring needs of a partner, relative or close friend such as appointments or following discharge from hospital. Agreed in advance for a defined period, it is matched by employees from annual leave.
- ❖ Emergency leave: short term paid leave for up to a week where advance notice cannot be given.
- ❖ Unpaid Leave: may be applied for if a carer has exhausted all other options.
- ❖ Flexible working arrangements: including temporary adjustments to working arrangements and home working.
- ❖ Career breaks: carers with long term caring responsibilities can resign with an option to return to work. Contact is kept up during the break and employees may return to the same or a similar job.

*Extracted from the Centrica Group Carers Policy*

[https://www.centrica.com/files/reports/2006cr/files/Carers\\_Policy.pdf](https://www.centrica.com/files/reports/2006cr/files/Carers_Policy.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> Carers UK/YouGov Survey (2013) <http://www.carersuk.org/news-and-campaigns/press-releases/research-reveals-over-2-million-quit-work-to-care>

<sup>31</sup> Wellard (2011) *Doing it all? Grandparents, childcare and employment: An analysis of British Social Attitudes Survey Data from 1998 and 2009*, London: Grandparents Plus

<sup>32</sup> Family and Childcare Trust, Grandparents Plus and Save the Children (2014) *Time to Care: Generation generosity under pressure*

<sup>33</sup> *ibid*

Advances in the availability of flexible work should help significantly. And experience shows that there is a need to examine how we can ensure that care for elderly relatives and grandchildren is better supported.<sup>34</sup>

Some countries for example provide opportunities for parents to share their leave entitlements with grandparents where they are unable to take them up themselves. In our Interim Report we advocated a debate about the merits of allowing grandparents to share family leave. Focus group work by Grandparents Plus has shown that this is a popular idea with grandparents, supported by four in five of those who spend time caring for grandchildren.<sup>35</sup> However care needs to be taken to ensure that such measures do not undermine efforts to support and encourage an improved balance in the responsibility for childcare between mothers and fathers.

Government should therefore consult on the idea of allowing grandparents to share in parents' current period of unpaid leave. There is also a case for looking at how employers can support carers in the workplace to cope with times of adjustment in caring responsibilities. Other countries support carers with rights to paid and unpaid leave, such as a right to 'adjustment' leave to allow time off to care for family members in a crisis. This would allow carers a period of leave to adjust to a new caring role or a change in responsibilities and make arrangements for a sustainable regime before returning to work. In most cases carers would expect to return to work as before, but there may also be a case for supporting new working patterns, perhaps with reduced hours or home working, and for exploring income smoothing, where employees draw advances of salary while on leave which are repaid through salary sacrifice on return to work.

The Commission is very supportive of the range of methods which we heard of to help older women balance work and care. The improvements these strategies offer to older women's economic security, combined with the potential to retain the skills and experience of older women workers within the economy, present a clear advantage.

"I am 59 and worked in local government until I was made redundant four years ago and haven't been able to find suitable employment since then. I am one of many older women who lost their jobs because of government cuts and my situation has been made worse by the increase of six years in the age at which I can receive my state pension. My mother is 86 has dementia, Alzheimers and breast cancer and I have spent the last year helping to care for her and trying to obtain a place in residential care for her so she can be safe. This also has been a very long and difficult process because of cuts to adult care by local authorities. My sister is 55 and is divorced and has to support herself but is finding it very difficult to obtain permanent employment and because the retirement age has been increased she needs a job for a lot longer. All our family has worked all their lives and paid into the system. It really feels like older women are invisible and have no voice."

*Written evidence to the Commission on Older Women 2015*

<sup>34</sup> UNISON (2014) Women Deserve Better

<sup>35</sup> Grandparents Plus (2014) Evidence to the Commission on Older Women

## 2. Joined-up caring

Carers want their caring role to be recognised and valued.<sup>36</sup> Introduction of caring leave arrangements would help. But there is also a need for the caring system to recognise and involve family carers – taking account of their knowledge and expertise and involving them in care delivery and planning.<sup>37</sup> The Interim Report of the Commission called for proper identification of carers, good provision of information about caring and reliable support for their own health and well-being needs.

As well as having to juggle work and care, many family carers live at a distance from their dependants. A recent survey found that people over 35 live on average 100 miles away from their parents, rising to 205 miles for those living in London.<sup>38</sup> Many children caring for elderly parents must therefore rely on infrequent visits plus telephone and internet to fulfil caring responsibilities. The real need here is for joined-up caring, linking the cared-for person and family carers with health and care professionals, voluntary organisations and community volunteers.

The Report of the Independent Commission on Whole Person Care 2014 advocates a patient centred model for caring - joined-up services from home to hospital with a single point of contact for those who need it, bringing together physical health, mental health and social care and providing better support for family carers.<sup>39</sup> Providing family carers with a link to the cared-for person's point of contact would both enhance carer identification and provide the support and information they need to arrange the care they want for their dependents.

## 3. Community and mutual support groups

Community and mutual support groups can provide the local context for joined-up caring. In the UK some local groups have been successfully established such as the Neighbourhood Networks in Leeds and Friends and Neighbours groups in the West Midlands. However, larger scale attempts at this model – as adopted in Japan and discussed in the Interim Report – have so far not taken off. The Circle Movement, which partnered with local authorities in London and Suffolk in service provision, and the Care4Care programme piloted in the Isle of Wight, have both proved unsustainable in the longer term. While some Circles operating a befriending and mutual engagement service continue, those involved in local authority service provision have ceased operating.

A fresh attempt at an age-friendly mutual support programme is now under way in Manchester, a World Health Organization Age-friendly City. The Age-friendly Manchester

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<sup>36</sup> Carers UK (2014) State of Caring

<sup>37</sup> *ibid*

<sup>38</sup> Bupa Consumer research "Scattered families make aged care decisions harder"

<http://www.bupa.com/media-centre/press-releases/uk/scattered-families-make-aged-care-decisions-harder/>

<sup>39</sup> Independent Commission on Whole Person Care (2014) One Person, One Team, One System: the Report of the Independent Commission on Whole Person Care for the Labour Party

Development Plan 2014–16<sup>40</sup> will deliver a strategy of age-friendly neighbourhoods and services with support for community projects and volunteering. It will be interesting to follow the implementation of this programme, developed in conjunction with World Health Organisation principles, to gain insight into the potential for a broader application of locally-based mutual support models.

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<sup>40</sup> The Age-friendly Manchester Development Plan 2014–16 –  
[http://www.manchester.gov.uk/downloads/download/5770/age-friendly\\_manchester\\_plan](http://www.manchester.gov.uk/downloads/download/5770/age-friendly_manchester_plan)

## **Chapter 3**

### **Representation in public life**

The Interim Report of the Commission on Older Women discussed the way in which older women are disappearing from public life and hence from influencing public debate. It examined the lack of older women in the media and creative industries and in politics and local government and called on the Government to implement the double discrimination provisions of the Equality Act to counter this.

In contrast to their minimal public image, the older women the Commission has met want to be seen and are proud of their age and of their experience and skills. They want to draw on these and be actively engaged, making both economic and practical contributions to their communities and to society. They want to take an active role in public life, where they can lead debate, get their opinions reflected in decision-making and drive the changes they want to see. And they want society to recognise a positive image of older women – as valued and wise but also energetic and happy to embrace change.

For this to happen, society first needs to embrace the potential of older women and see their relevance to society. Good role models of older women are needed, for other older women and for other groups in society, together with positive examples of capable and engaging older women - on our television screens, writing in our newspapers, on company boards and public bodies and in Parliament and government.

#### **1. Older women in the print media**

Our Interim Report looked at older women on television and found that women are still a distinct minority, outnumbered by four to one on a huge range of news and current affairs programmes across all channels and virtually disappear after the age of 50.

This year the Commission extended this analysis to the print media by asking newspaper editors how many older women they employ. The survey showed that the newspaper industry is not reflective of society in terms of gender or age. Only 32 per cent of staff journalists are women, compared to 68 per cent of men, and only 19 per cent of staff journalists are over 50, compared with 34 per cent of the UK population.

Combining the age and gender figures shows that older women are clearly under-represented in our newspapers. Almost three-quarters of senior and editorial staff and regular staff journalists over the age of 50 are men, with women over 50 making up the remaining quarter.

|  |                      |
|--|----------------------|
| <b>Staff Journalists</b>                               |                      |
| % men and women staff journalists                      | 32% women<br>68% men |
| % staff journalists over age of 50                     | 19%                  |
| Of those staff journalists over 50                     | 26% women<br>74% men |
| Older women as a % of all staff journalists            | 5%                   |
| Older men as a % of all staff journalists              | 14%                  |
| <b>Senior Editors (with managerial responsibility)</b> |                      |
| % men and women senior editors                         | 32% women<br>68% men |
| % of all senior editors over the age of 50             | 25%                  |
| Of those senior editors over the age of 50             | 27% women<br>73% men |
| Older women as a % of total senior editors             | 7%                   |
| Older men as a % of total senior editors               | 18%                  |

Aggregate data compiled from survey data provided by: The Sunday Times; Daily Express; The Telegraph; The Guardian; The Times, The Sun. Data from The Daily Mail was not included as only percentages were received.

These figures show clearly that newspapers are not representative of the society they are supposed to reflect. Women are outnumbered by men in our newspapers as both journalists and editors and this is amplified as they get older. But it is an encouraging first step that some newspaper editors have been open in providing these statistics and recognise that this is an important issue that needs to be addressed.

## 2. Developments for older women in broadcasting

The findings of the Commission on Older Women Interim Report regarding the under-representation of older women in broadcasting were well received and have provoked a debate about the presence and image of women in the broadcast media. A report for the Creative Diversity Network found that, despite public determination voiced by broadcasters, women over 55 still make up only 15 per cent of the women featured on a range of popular programmes, equivalent to only half of the number in the population.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Cumberbatch, Dr G; Maguire, A; Lyne, V & Gauntlett, S (2014) Diversity monitoring: the top TV programmes; a report prepared for the Creative Diversity Network <http://creativitydiversitynetwork.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/CDN-diversity-portrayal-pilot-2014.pdf>

“By not doing more broadcasters are making it possible for discrimination to thrive. Since television has the power to shape prejudice they really – particularly the BBC as state broadcaster – should take a long hard look at the implications for our society.”

**Miriam O’Reilly, Deputy Chair, Commission on Older Women, commenting on the Creative Diversity Network report**

An inquiry launched at the end of 2014 by the House of Lords Select Committee on Communications was tasked with examining the role of women in news and current affairs broadcasting, on-screen and in editorial roles. The position of older women was specifically included and, in its call for evidence, the Select Committee made specific reference to our Interim Report and our findings about age/gender discrimination.<sup>42</sup>

The Inquiry Report has confirmed the severe under-representation of women, and especially older women, in broadcasting. In an extended analysis of the position of older women, the report notes the disappearance of older women in broadcasting and their importance, in terms of proper representation of the UK population and as role models within the industry. Evidence was received of specific discrimination against older women including the use of confidentiality clauses. While the Select Committee was unable to fully test the allegations, they note that using such clauses to shield bad practice would be inappropriate and recommend that public sector broadcasters should be required to disclose to Ofcom figures on the number of settlement agreements issued annually. To promote better gender balance, they also recommend Ofcom use its powers under the Communications Act 2003 to require broadcasters to annually record their gender balance, to include data on age, pay, promotion, role and genre.<sup>43</sup> The Commission on Older Women supports greater transparency on gender balance for public sector broadcasters.

Since the publication of the Select Committee report, further evidence from the BBC has confirmed audience views on the lack of older women on our screens, both in terms of appearance and portrayal, and how this can impact on how audiences feel about themselves and wider society.<sup>44</sup>

“The number of older women in news and current affairs broadcasting is too low. Evidence we have received suggests there is an informal culture of discrimination against older women within the BBC and other broadcasting organisations. We conclude that this culture is contributing to the lack of women in news and current affairs broadcasting.”

**House of Lords Select Committee on Communications inquiry into women in news and current affairs broadcasting**

<sup>42</sup> House of Lords Select Committee on Communications inquiry into women in news and current affairs broadcasting call for evidence <http://www.parliament.uk/women-in-news>

<sup>43</sup> House of Lords Select Committee on Communications 2<sup>nd</sup> Report of Session 2014-15 Women in news and current affairs broadcasting

<sup>44</sup> <http://www.theguardian.com/media/2015/mar/28/more-real-women-tv-audience-news-gender-balance-bbc-chiefs>

## 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 |
| Gloria De Piero MP          | Shadow Minister for Women and Equalities  |
| Fiona Mactaggart MP         | Secretary and Chair of the Parliamentary Labour Party Women's Group                             |

#### 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, University of Oxford                    |
| Sonia Mangan             | Former Chief Executive, Age UK South Lakeland                   |
| Julie Morgan             | Assembly Member, Welsh Assembly                                 |
| Baroness Glenys Thornton | House of Lords Opposition Spokesperson for Women and Equalities |

#### 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   |
| Arlene Phillips      | Choreographer, judge, presenter  |

#### Secretariat

|                     |                                    |
|---------------------|------------------------------------|
| Angela Watson       | Office of Rt Hon Fiona Mactaggart  |
| Sophie Wingfield    | Office of Rt Hon Harriet Harman QC |
| Beth Gardiner-Smith | Office of Gloria De Piero          |

*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, Manager, 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, former Director General   |
| TAEN                                   | Submission of published papers by Hilary Wiseman, Chair  |
| TUC                                    | Submission sent 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, former Chief Executive   |
| 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  |
| Institute of Chartered Accountants for England and Wales | Submission sent by Harry McAdoo, Director of Communications  |
| Macmillan  | Submission sent by Lucy Schonegevel, Senior Public Affairs Officer   |
| National Union of Teachers                               | Submission sent by Emily Evans, Parliamentary and Campaigns Officer  |
| Sheffield 50+  | Submission sent by 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           |
| 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   |
| City University              | Submission sent by Lis Howell, Director of Broadcasting   |
| Creative Skillset            | Submission sent by Maria Balermpa, 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                               |
| 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<br>Constituency Labour Party | Listening event submission sent by Abi Wood, CLP Secretary                 |
| Lewes Constituency<br>Labour Party                 | Listening event submission sent by Gaby Weiner                             |
| Newcastle Labour Women                             | Women's Forum event submission sent by Sheila Spencer,<br>Women's Officer  |
| Stevenage Constituency<br>Labour Party             | Listening event submission sent by Laurie Chester, Chair,<br>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

#### 2013

|  |   |
|--|---|
| 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 event, 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, London          | Round Table on public life hosted by Harriet Harman MP QC, 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.  |
| 21 September, Brighton   | Launch of Commission on Older Women Interim Report at Labour Party Women's Conference.  |
| 23 October, London       | Launch of Scottish Widows Women and Pensions Report 2013, attended by Fiona Mactaggart MP.  |
| 4 November, London       | Birkbeck College panel discussion on older women addressed by Fiona Mactaggart MP.  |

## 2014

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| 5 February, London      | Harriet Harman MP QC met with Katja Hall, Confederation of British Industry   |
| 6 February, London      | Fiona Mactaggart MP met with Working Families to discuss older women and employment.  |
| 13 February, Croydon    | Usdaw Round Table with Harriet Harman MP QC.  |
| 27 February, London     | Launch of TUCs Age Immaterial addressed by Harriet Harman MP QC and Kay Carberry.   |
| 4 March, London         | Presentation on Whole Person Care report by Liz Kendall MP to Women's Group of Parliamentary Labour Party, chaired by Fiona Mactaggart MP.  |
| 6 March, London         | Speech given by Fiona Mactaggart MP on older women during Westminster Hall debate on women and the economy for International Women's Day.   |
| 7 March, London         | Launch of UNISON Women Deserve Better report, initiated by Gloria Mills to inform the work of the Commission.   |
| 26 March, London        | Launch of Grandparents Plus Relative Experience report on kinship carer support addressed by Fiona Mactaggart MP.   |
| 25 April, Slough        | Round Table event in Slough for professional older women who have lost or changed jobs at a later stage of their careers, chaired by Fiona Mactaggart MP.   |
| 6 May, London           | Launch of Your Employment Settlement Service attended by Fiona Mactaggart MP.   |
| 14 May, London          | Carers UK event "The challenge of caring now and in the future: learning from across the world".  |
| 20 May, Pendle          | "What Older Women Want" event with Harriet Harman MP QC.  |
| 3 September, London     | "Balancing work and family life for every generation" Labour Party Round Table discussion with Grandparents Plus, Working Families and Family and Childcare Trust, attended by Fiona Mactaggart MP. |
| 17 September, Sheffield | Sheffield 50+ event "Grandparenting in Sheffield Today" addressed by Fiona Mactaggart MP.   |