

**Manchester City Council
Report for Information**

Report to: Economy Scrutiny Committee – 14 October 2021

Subject: Opportunities and issues for older workers in the Labour Market

Report of: Director of Inclusive Economy and Consultant in Public Health
(Ageing Well Lead)

Summary

The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with data on the employment and skills status of workers (aged 50 to 64) in Manchester, how they have been impacted by Covid and the actions being taken to connect them to opportunities in the City as part of the Economic Recovery Strategy. The report will include work with City Art Gallery and an exhibition which highlights the experience of older women.

Recommendations

To note and comment on the contents of this report.

Wards Affected: All

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city

The Work and Health and Restart programmes, referenced in the report and which supports many older people have a number of social value commitments including delivery against zero carbon targets.

Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the OMS
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	Older people are an asset to the economy as they bring many attributes, knowledge and skills to the workforce.
A highly skilled city: world class and home-grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	The provision detailed in this report seeks to equip older jobseekers with skills to improve and increase their employability.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	Many of the employment programmes outlined in the report are committed to supported over 50's as a priority group and providing equal access to support provision for this group.

A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	The opportunities described in the report will support the reduction in those economically inactive thereby benefitting the economy.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	The report sets out how the needs of older people are understood and responded to through the wider digital inclusion action plan.

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy please contact one of the contact officers above.

Digital Exclusion Index – report to Economy Scrutiny 9 September 2021

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Older workers who are out of work are twice as likely to be long-term unemployed as younger workers who are out of work. While there has been a great deal of focus on the risks of long-term youth unemployment in recent months, long-term unemployment is also a significant challenge for those aged 50-67.
- 1.2 This report considers the current position of older workers in the city, those between the ages of 50 and 67 and the challenges they face. It looks at the employment and skills status of older workers and the impact that Covid-19 has had on this group. It sets out the importance of older workers to the Manchester and Greater Manchester (GM) economies set against Manchester, GM and national strategic contexts. The report details the range of activity being delivered across the city by the Work & Skills team, the Age Friendly Manchester team, learning providers and the Over 50's Employment Support Group with highlights of progress achieved to date and proposals for future delivery.
- 1.3 This is set within the context of the Skills, Labour and Market Economic recovery plan and contributes to the support for the newly unemployed, adult skills and employment support and equalities priority workstreams.
- 1.4 Manchester is forecasted to have a healthy economic recovery and support measures need to be kept in place and built on to ensure that our 50-67 year olds benefit from this growth.

2.0 Older Workers in Manchester

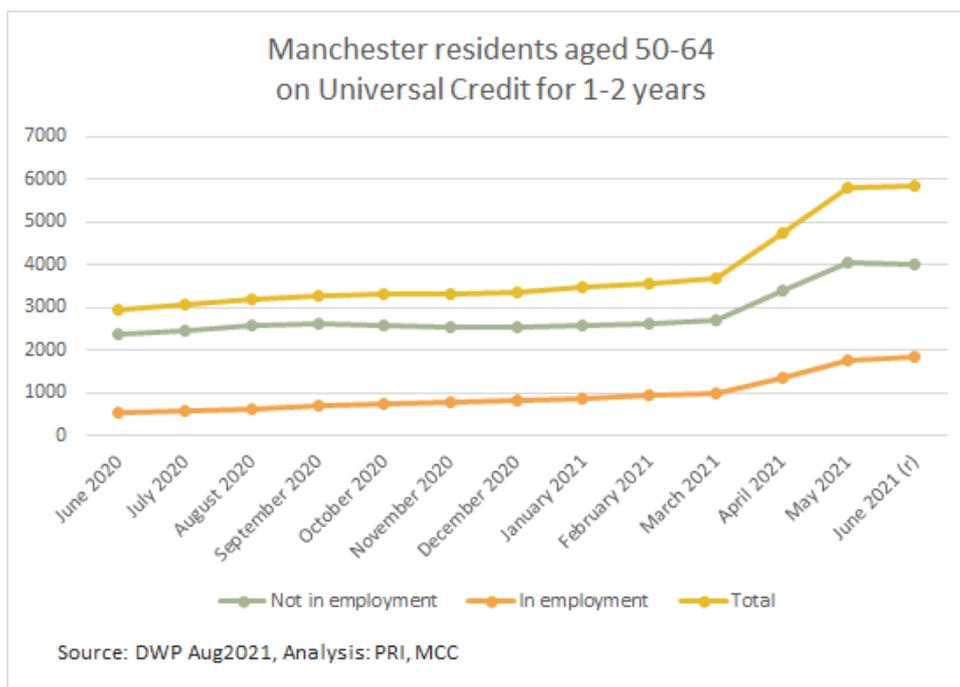
- 2.1 About 22% of Manchester's population is aged 50 or over with a life expectancy for men of 75.6 years (UK average 79.1) and a life expectancy for women of 79.1 years (UK average 82.8). However healthy life expectancy (years lived without one or more life limiting medical conditions) for men and women in Manchester is 56 years, ranging from 49.2 years for men in Miles Platting & Newton Heath to 65.8 for men in Didsbury East. The UK average is 63 years for men and 64 years for women. This varies across the city with males in Didsbury East at 65.8 years while males in Miles Platting & Newton Heath at 49.6 years.
- 2.2 Large health and wellbeing inequalities exist in later life with a person's socioeconomic position being a key factor (*"The Golden Generation? Wellbeing and Inequalities in Later Life. MICRA, 2017*). Being in good, well paid, healthy work and the ability to remain economically active into later life is a strong determinant in older people's health and wellbeing outcomes.

3.0 Employment and Skills

- 3.1 Residents over the age of 50 in Manchester are more likely to be economically inactive; less likely to be highly skilled; and more likely to suffer from poor health. A disproportionately higher number of people over 50 are on out of

work benefits. Fewer over 50s have skills at level 4+, while 30% of over 50s have no formal qualifications at all. Evidence suggests that for someone over 50 who is out of work and with poor health, as they get older, they will become more socially isolated, increasingly unhealthy and more dependent on services than if they had worked.

- 3.2 As of February 2021, the number of 50-64 year olds claiming out of work benefits was 19,101 with 83% (15,794) claiming due to ill-health.
- 3.3 The graph below highlights the number of residents claiming Universal Credit (UC) for 1-2 years (5,842). This number includes people who transferred across from Employment Support Allowance (ESA) and who may have been claiming ESA for decades but only UC for 1-2 years, as well as new claimants between July 2018 and 2020. It shows how volume has changed over the course of a year for long term.
- 3.4 In Manchester all UC recipients aged 50-65 rose from 4,907 in February 2019 to 7,486 in February 2020 and then doubled to 14,268 by February 2021. The largest annual rise is for those who have been claiming for 6 months up to 1 year, rising from 1,384 in February 2019 to 4,468 in February 2021. More startling, however, is the latest July 2021 provisional data showing that this has changed for those claiming for 1 to 2 years duration at 5,842 people compared to 722 in February 2019.
- 3.5 As of July 2021 there were 4,286 UC recipients in employment over the age of 50 years, with the highest number of claimants from Gorton/Abbey Hey, Longsight, Harpurhey, Miles Platting/Newton Heath and Moss Side wards. UC recipients not in employment amounted to 10,757 across Manchester with the highest number of claimants from the same wards and Clayton/Openshaw.



4.0 Impact of COVID-19 on employment

- 4.1 Covid-19 and the associated lockdown measures had an enormous impact on the labour market with millions of people experiencing employment and/or income shock. Generally, those who were already disadvantaged in the labour market and overrepresented in low-paid work were most vulnerable.
- 4.2 While the impact of the pandemic has been greatest on younger people, older workers aged 50 and over have been affected to a greater extent than those in the middle age groups. Nationally, over a quarter of furloughed employees are people aged 50 years and over (1.3 million), with 3 in 10 of older workers on furlough thinking there is a 50% chance or higher that they will lose their job when the scheme ends. Analysis by Business in the Community of the sectors where most jobs have been furloughed suggests that the largest group affected is the youngest employees, followed by older workers. This reflects the concentration of these age groups in sectors closed during lock-down: non-food retail, restaurants and hotels, passenger transport, personal services and arts and leisure services.
- 4.3 “The cost of unemployment for older workers is particularly high. They take the longest to return to work – with fewer than two-in-three returning within six months – and experience the biggest earnings fall when they finally to return to work.” [The Resolution Foundation]
- 4.4 Getting more of the City’s residents who are over 50 economically active and keeping those who are working in work as they age, will have a very positive impact on their health and wellbeing, help reduce health and social care costs, as well as generate a significant contribution to the local economy.

5.0 Challenges and Issues

- 5.1 Prior to the COVID-19 crisis, people aged 50-64 already had the lowest re-employment rates following redundancy. If over 50s who lose their jobs or are made redundant in this crisis aren’t helped back into work, they are likely to struggle.
- 5.2 Evidence shows that despite an increase in the employment rate among the over 50s in recent years, on the eve of the crisis, this group were still less likely to be in work than others. Additionally, research shows that rather than becoming unemployed, many older workers are becoming inactive, or out of work and not seeking employment.
- 5.3 There is a real risk of further job losses among older workers over the coming months, as the furlough scheme is unwound. However, sectors within the Foundational Economy such as hospitality, care, logistics and transport have recovered and are experiencing skills and labour market shortages. This presents a challenge and opportunity to connect more older people to these vacancies.

- 5.4 Further research illustrates a lack of confidence from older job seekers in their own ability and in their perceived employability. Unsuitable training, changes to the ways that jobseekers are expected to find and apply for jobs, and underdeveloped digital skills add to this group's difficulties. In addition, many have caring responsibilities or health concerns and there is a lack of opportunities for flexible working to accommodate these needs. To add to this, more work needs to be done with employers to tackle the perceived or actual ageism of their recruitment practices.
- 5.5 There is a broad consensus that this group requires intensive tailored employment support, with digital skills and retraining, along with age-aware advice and support within programmes.

Financial concerns

- 5.6 Uncertainty around current employment and future employment prospects may have resulted in some older workers feeling they have to work longer than planned to achieve financial security in retirement. Polling by Ageing Better has shown real concern about their finances among older workers, with two out of five older workers believing their finances would worsen as a result of the pandemic.
- 5.7 Many are concerned that they will have to start 'eating into their savings' as a result of being out of work, while others are frustrated that they are having to draw down on pensions despite not being able to retire. This is particularly true for women, who feel the changes to the pension age has moved the goalposts and present a significant financial challenge. [Centre for Ageing Better: Tackling worklessness among the over 50's after Covid 2021]
- 5.8 With the State Pension Age rising to 66, a more tailored approach is needed to support longer working lives.

Digital Divide

- 5.9 Nationally, 4.2 million people over the age of 55 have never been online. Over 55s make up 94% of everyone who has never been online (4.5 million people). These people – who are already likely to be poorer, less well educated and in worse health than their peers – are at risk of being left on the wrong side of the digital divide, as more services and information move online.[CfAB- The Digital Age, 2018]
- 5.10 Those with limited exposure to computers and the internet during their working lives are often far less confident with them, though sometimes this was down to lack of interest than opportunity. While it is not always the case that workers need digital skills as part of their jobs, for those claiming job-seeking benefits such Universal Credit, it has become unavoidable. Added to this is the increase in online job applications which demand a certain level of digital literacy.

- 5.11 In Manchester our digital inclusion work has targeted over 65s, providing free telephone support for those with internet access but not the skills or confidence to use it. In addition, tens of thousands of Manchester's residents are digitally excluded through lack of home Internet access. Over the last 18 months we have donated over 700 free devices with internet access to residents and provided support through a digital champion. Of this number 208 (34%) are over 60 years old.
- 5.12 A report on Manchester's Digital Exclusion Index was presented to this committee in September. The report referenced Good Things Foundation, the UK's leading digital inclusion charity, report which identified older people as one of the groups disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. The index will serve as a tool for partners across the city to identify need and specific challenges and barriers, enabling them to adapt and tailor services to better support priority groups, such as the over 50's.

6.0 Age Friendly Manchester (AFM)

- 6.1 Manchester's Ageing Strategy - Manchester: A Great Place to Grow Older 2017 – 2021 focuses on the key priorities for the city and its partners, offering a framework to deliver real improvements to the lives of older people, putting them centre stage. There are three key priorities:
1. Develop age-friendly neighbourhoods - places where people can age well in neighbourhoods of their choice with access to the right services, housing, info etc.
 2. Develop age-friendly services - where commissioning includes age-friendliness in its specification and services are delivered in an age-friendly way
 3. Promote age equality - by addressing negative images and changing the narrative to one that celebrates the valuable role and contribution of older people.
- 6.2 A key strand of work, focusing on over 50's employment and support has been developed between Work & Skills Team and Age Friendly Manchester. This reflects the importance the Age Friendly Manchester Older People's Board has placed on age friendly employment. Action underway is detailed throughout this report.

7.0 Opportunities

- 7.1 The AFM and Work & Skills teams jointly facilitate the Over 50s Employment & Skills Support group which launched in 2018. The group brings together organisations working to support Manchester people into employment, to develop and co-ordinate the approach to employment support for older workers - those pushed out of employment through redundancy, ill health or early retirement and to explore how we can work better together to tackle inequalities across the city.

7.2 The group has recently refreshed its work plan in line with the AFM Recovery Plan 2021/22 to ensure sufficient focus is given to support older job seekers and workers. The key priorities and initial actions are detailed below:

50+ Employment & Skills Work Plan 2021	
Priorities	Actions
Develop an approach that commits MCC to become an age friendly employer	Establish a 50+ employee group Use the GM Guide to Age Friendly Employment to benchmark currently policy and practice
Review job retraining offers, including volunteering	Review specific service offers of employment support partners. Collaborate with MACC, MAES and Libraries to promote volunteering opportunities and to develop a volunteer programme for over 50's digital champions
Improve access to employment support services for over 50's	Co-produce an information leaflet of targeted and specific support services to be shared online and hard copy
Promote and deliver training and refresher courses	YES Manchester delivering specific digital skills sessions for over 50's in North Manchester. MAES promoting 'Skill Up' programme through age friendly networks. Growth Company delivering 'mid life MOT' webinars. Work Clubs supported to increase support to over 50's. Uncertain Futures project with MAG to deliver a series of employment & skills focused sessions for women from October 2021 to May 2022.
Maximise employment and training opportunities arising from the North Manchester General Hospital and Victoria North developments	Work & Skills team have developed a social value framework for developers which includes over 50's as a priority group. YES Manchester is positioned to play a key role in connecting residents to opportunities
Develop an all-age apprenticeship campaign and increase uptake	Social media campaign to be developed to run in line with National Apprenticeship Week in February, with a focus on promoting all age apprenticeships to older people.

Work with GMCA and DWP to better reflect over 50's in their employment support programmes	Working with the Growth Company to ensure the Work & Health Programme meet the specific needs of older participants. Exploring mentoring support for over 50's customers with DWP
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7.3 Pre-COVID-19 we had begun to test a few new approaches to specific interventions. As a result of lockdown, many services were paused or repurposed. As restrictions have lifted and the recovery work has picked up in pace, the refreshed employment and skills work plan will allow us the opportunity to re-visit some of the new approaches and build on the early lessons learned.

8.0 Programmes and work being delivered across Manchester Age Friendly Employment

8.1 Manchester City Council is committed to being an age friendly employer. Sustaining this progress, can be achieved across many facets of an organisation. This includes, for example, looking at making flexible working policies clear and assessing whether the overall working environment is age-positive: with sufficient health support, and career development opportunities for all ages.

8.2 Employee voice is crucial here; with age often creating assumptions regarding capability, and desired career progression. Having clear and consistent conversations with all employees, including older workers, about any potential concerns, desires or needed adjustments – will work to ensure that age alone isn't treated as the reason for making decisions. This work will be guided by the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter and central to its success will be the voice of older workers. To support this an over 50s Employee Group will be established shortly.

8.3 Employer engagement work will continue to promote the benefits of age friendly employment and over time the intention will be to share Manchester City Council's experience and help develop further good practice.

Manchester Employment Support Partnership

8.4 The partnership was set up in September 2020 with the purpose of mobilising a range of agencies and services put in place to provide immediate support for employees who are facing redundancy, whose furlough is coming to an end or have their hours reduced due to Covid 19.

8.5 The partnership includes The Growth Company, DWP, Citizens Advice Service, National Careers Service, Manchester College, MAES, MIDAS and Business Growth Hub. Support is available via the link www.manchester.gov.uk/helptogetwork. Of the 97 who have requested support via the helpline, 27 are over 50 years old with 7 of that number over 60 years.

Work Clubs

- 8.6 There is a network of around 30 work clubs across the city, delivered by voluntary and community sector groups, housing providers and skills partners. The less formal nature of work clubs appeals to many older residents and offers one-to-one and peer support.
- 8.7 A number of focus groups were undertaken at work clubs across the city pre-pandemic to gather the experiences of service users over 50, when looking for and finding employment. Feedback highlighted common themes with participants which remain the same today. These include:
1. lack of confidence
 2. lack of IT skills
 3. daunted by online applications
 4. needing jobs suitable for their age and physical abilities
 5. valuing one to one support
 6. and the need for employers to give them a chance.
- 8.8 This information is being used by the Over 50s Employment & Skills Support group to develop practical approaches to support and influence current support provision.
- 8.9 Earlier in the year the Work & Skills team awarded several grants to work clubs to deliver projects or initiatives to improve employment outcomes for residents. One of the priority groups specified for this funding stream is the over 50s. Projects started in May 2021 and will run until March 2022. Activity will vary by organisation, however, specific outcomes include progression routes on to more formal training, volunteering opportunities and employment outcomes. Further work will take place over the coming months to monitor and evaluate the 50+ employment and training outcomes of the work clubs.

Case Study: Get Ready for Work (GRFW)

S a 55 year old male was employed at a secondary school working as a cleaner before and after school and a lunchtime support, unfortunately due to COVID and closure of schools his working hours were cut by 50%.

S contacted GRFW, his brother was a former client and suggested he get in touch with GRFW, for help to apply for Universal Credit to top up his earnings until he was able to get back to a full wage, he needed help with rent etc.

At the time of contact we were able to meet at The Grange on a 1-1 basis in a safe environment – masks, hand sanitizer and clear screens between the computers.

S had little IT skills, low confidence and needed support to apply, which is very difficult when maintaining social distance rules.

We managed to successfully register and apply online and contacted his housing provider to notify them of the situation.

S was very emotional; he had felt very lost and feared losing everything he had worked for and hadn't known where to go for help until his brother suggested GRFW. I reassured him that we would continue to offer support and kept in telephone contact for the next few weeks to ensure his claim had been processed. We also gave him MCC Support Hub information, food bank information including the Pandemic Pantry.

“Thank you for your help and support, I feel so much better now I’ve been able to sort things”

Skills Support for Employment Service

- 8.10 Manchester has a disproportionate number of residents with no or low skills, the over 50s making up the largest proportion of this group. A lack of digital skills has been identified as a particular issue for this age group. Some lower level qualifications have little value in the labour market with a need for greater focus on skills and work experience.
- 8.11 The Skills Support for Employment (SSE) service has been commissioned across Greater Manchester to meet some of that need. Delivered by The Growth Company in Manchester it provides participants with a learning mentor to ensure a tailored support package, including careers advice, pre-employment support and accredited qualifications, as well as employment opportunities for residents with low skills as a barrier to work.
- 8.12 Across Greater Manchester since April 2019 there have been 1,534 over 50's signed up to SSE out of a total of 3198 (47%). Of these 592 have achieved a qualification, 120 have entered further education and 286 have gone into employment.

National Careers Service (NCS)

- 8.13 Since October 2018 the NCS has included people aged over 50 as a priority group. The service provides personalised careers information, advice and guidance to assist young people and adults to make informed choices about learning, employment and skills. It helps residents to understand employer demand and skills gaps through government data presented in accessible job profiles, and assists residents to plan their progress through skills assessment, and a detailed directory of courses and vacancies. Officers from the City Council work closely with The Growth Company to ensure the service reaches those it is designed to help, including an increased focus on residents over the age of 50. 3,497 GM residents over 50 have accessed this service in the last 12 months.
- 8.14 The Midlife MOT project in Greater Manchester was delivered in partnership with the Growth Company, the prime contractor for the National Career Service. The project delivered a series of bespoke webinars, one per week for five weeks covering topics relating to employment and skills of those aged 50+. It also established a Midlife MOT webpage on the existing EmployGM

website, which introduces the service and information on how to access the support on offer. <https://employgm.org/midlife-mot/> remains live and is updated as and when new resources become available.

GM Over 50's and Employment Project

- 8.15 The Centre for Ageing Better in partnership with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) are working on a project with a joint aim to improve the economic activity rate amongst people aged 50 to State Pension age (SPa). As part of this Humanly has been commissioned to conduct a design-led project to develop new approaches to supporting people aged 50 to SPa into work in Greater Manchester. The project began in July 2020 and will be completed in January 2022.
- 8.16 Co-creation activities were targeted in Moss Side and Cheetham Hill in Manchester alongside two areas in Trafford and Wigan. Co-creation has been conducted with a range of participants, including people with lived experience, service providers, employers and wider stakeholders. The target locations and participants were selected to ensure diversity of ethnicity, age, socio-economic profiles, levels of unemployment or economic inactivity, transport links, links to industry, and experience of long-term ill health or disability. Three concepts have been taken to prototyping. These are: (1) 'Reach', a coaching model linked to digital self-guided support (2) 'Give Back', a placement project with employers, (3) 'Person centred procurement' which tests the bidding and assessment process for employment support funding. Five residents from Manchester with lived experience and several organisations including One Manchester, YES Manchester, The Boiler House and North Manchester Community Partnership are actively involved in this phase of the project. Prototyping began in April 2021 and will run until January 2022. During this time ideas will be brought to life on a small scale to see what could work in practice and whether they could be scaled up.

GM Working Well Work & Health Programme

- 8.17 The Greater Manchester Working Well Work & Health programme, being delivered by The Growth Company in Manchester, has been commissioned to support disabled people or those experiencing health conditions to address their barriers to work and move into employment. The Work & Health programme delivers holistic, intensive and personalised support through a key worker who draws on, sequences and integrates other public service interventions to support them back to work.
- 8.18 The programme evaluation has identified that people aged over 50 are more likely to have been unemployed for a longer period of time and to have severe physical health issues. A further finding suggests that many older people have the perception that they are viewed as less worthwhile to an employer compared to a younger person. This perception linked with low self-confidence acts as a barrier to work.

- 8.19 In Manchester, 37% of participants on the programme are over 50 years old. To date the Work and Health programme has supported 1212 residents aged over 50 in Manchester, 340 of whom have gone into employment.
- 8.20 The programme has prioritised supporting those over 50 with employment, health, skills and qualification support.

GM Job Entry Targeted Support (JETs)

- 8.21 As part of the Work and Health programme, JETs is aimed at residents who have been unemployed for 13 weeks and in receipt of benefits. The service began taking referrals in October 2020 and is a light touch programme for those closer to returning to employment. The programme is being delivered by the Growth Company in Manchester and offers support with CV's, job applications and transferable skills, along with links and signposting to support around mental health, skills and debt. As of June 2021, in Manchester 2614 people had received support with 840 securing employment. Of these 464 were over 50 years with 43 moving into employment.

DWP Restart Programme

- 8.22 The Restart programme is part of the government's Plan for Jobs and will give Universal Credit claimants who have been out of work for at least 12 months enhanced support to find employment. Ingeus is delivering the programme in Manchester. Referrals started in July 2021 and over the next three years a projected 11,800 residents from Manchester will be supported. The programme design allows for flexibility to tailor support to priority groups, including the over 50's.
- 8.23 There is a separate report on the above Working Well programmes on this agenda which will provide more detail.

Employer Engagement

- 8.24 Manchester City Council is becoming a Timewise Council which will promote flexible hiring and working across the Council. This will better meet the needs of some of our over 50s group who may need to balance work with health demands and other responsibilities and interests. It will also meet the needs of other groups such as women returners, disabled people and those who have been long-term unemployed for whom a part-time or more flexible employment pattern would be more sustainable.
- 8.25 GMCA Age Friendly Employer Engagement Toolkit - Nearly one in three workers in the UK are aged 50 and over, and with the average employee in the UK in their 40s, this is set to grow over the next decade. With many more people working into their 60s and beyond, people aged 50 may have another 20 years of working life ahead of them.

- 8.26 Being an age friendly employer is more crucial than ever. However, many businesses struggle to understand how they can adapt their policies and practice to support the recruitment and retention of older workers.
- 8.27 Manchester has been involved in testing an employer engagement toolkit which aims to equip businesses with the tools to become more age-friendly employers. The toolkit designed by GMCA and the Centre for Ageing Better will be launched in late Autumn 2021.
- 8.28 Self-employment offers an opportunity for older people with greater flexibility and control. Pre-Covid, People Plus who are currently delivering the Start Smart self-employment support contract for the Business Growth Hub across Manchester, delivered two pilot programmes specifically aimed at residents aged over 50 in the south of the city and Wythenshawe. 31 residents attended the two projects. The evaluation highlighted the need for upfront IT support, social media skills development and peer networking from those of a similar age group. Learning from the pilots has been used to influence delivery of larger business support programmes.
- 8.29 Enterprising You - A pilot project to support Greater Manchester's self-employed and those working in the gig economy launched February 2020. Enterprising You is aimed at those who find themselves in more vulnerable situations, for instance where regular income is insecure and/or there is a high dependence on welfare support. Delivered by GM Growth+, a new partnership between the Growth Company and PeoplePlus Enterprise, the programme covers all types of self-employment across any sector. The project supports workers to increase their earnings by providing support to upskill and enhance their business knowledge.
- 8.30 Over 50's self-employed is a priority group within the programme and supports with dedicated over 50's business coaches. In Manchester of the 337 on the programme 16% (53) are over 50 and 3% (8) are 60 years of age.
- 8.31 Over the last couple of years the Work & Skills team has developed a social media campaign to coincide with National Apprenticeship week which has as specific focus on the over 50s and include a positive image campaign for apprenticeships. The intention is to run this again early in the new year. [See Appendix 1.]
- 8.32 Ensuring opportunities in key sectors such as digital, health and care remain strong in Manchester are open to people of all ages is crucial to overcoming both the external ageism of some employers and the internalised ageism of jobseekers. We will continue to work with employer networks and employers to develop age-friendly employment practices.

Uncertain Futures – Women over 50 and Work

- 8.33 Uncertain Futures is a collaborative artwork, created by women from Manchester's diverse communities with internationally renowned socially engaged artist Suzanne Lacy. For over a year, the project at Manchester Art

Gallery has explored intersectional issues on paid and unpaid work through the lens of women over 50, focusing on gender, age, race, disability, and class. Uncertain Futures launched on 24 June 2021 with an installation and programme of online and in Gallery events and runs until May 2022.

- 8.34 Developed with the University of Manchester: School of Social Sciences, Department of Law and Manchester Metropolitan University: Department of Social Care and Social Work, Uncertain Futures is an art and research project where the women, all activists and leaders in their communities, have formed an Advisory Group, met weekly over the past 15 months, and stayed connected despite Covid. Working collectively to advocate for policy change, they have identified and made public the issues confronting older women and work, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 8.35 Phase 2 of the project will include a series of employment and skills webinars and workshops developed to support women around topics such as menopause and work, language and work, digital skills, changing careers and leadership. The sessions will run monthly from October to May 2022. Later in the year Manchester Institute for Collaborative Research on Ageing (MICRA) will be hosting a solutions focused event for policy makers to review and address the issues raised through the project.

9.0 Conclusion

- 9.1 It is clear that the pandemic has had a significant impact of 50-67 year olds both in health and economic terms and some of this will result in increased levels of longer-term unemployment and involuntary early retirement. However, much has been learnt nationally and from our partners, including new ways of working, that can be built on. Work is underway to address over 50's employment with focused projects and initiatives and we are working with wider DWP commissioned programmes to make the over 50's a priority group. Similarly, the Council's Social Value Policy identifies those economically disadvantaged, including the over 50's as a priority group for organisations bidding for contracts.
- 9.2 The robust partnerships in place and strengthened relationships across the work & skills sector as well as employers should mitigate against the challenges highlighted in this report and provide increased offer and opportunity for older works to return to and remain in work. It is expected that the strength of Manchester's economic recovery and the levelling up agenda will provide further opportunities, that if properly targeted at this age group, and accompanied by the support measures outlined in this report will benefit Manchester 50-67 year olds further.