

# Get on your (Deliveroo) bike if you need to work, minister tells over-50s

Mel Stride says economically inactive older people should ‘seek new opportunities’ to boost finances

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Economy



Mel Stride at the Deliveroo headquarters in London. More than 3.4 million people aged between 50 and 65 are classed as economically inactive

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The over-50s should consider delivering takeaways and other flexible jobs traditionally targeted at young people if they want to maintain their lifestyle into old age, a cabinet minister has said.

In an interview with The Times, Mel Stride, the work and pensions secretary, said older people needed to be thinking about jobs they “might not have otherwise thought of” if their finances were stretched.

Stride urged employers to give older workers greater flexibility, to [attract them back to the workplace](#). He also suggested that companies should avoid getting dragged into political debates, to make older workers feel at home.

Since the pandemic there has been a [sharp rise in economic inactivity](#): people who are neither working nor looking for work.

About 8.6 million people, equivalent to one in five working adults, are classed as economically inactive, according to the Office for National Statistics. More than 3.4 million of them are over 50 but under the retirement age.

The figures are of acute concern because of the strain they have already placed on a labour market where many employers are struggling to recruit. The Bank of England has warned that the situation will make high inflation persist.

Analysis from the Institute for Fiscal Studies think tank has found that nearly half of older people who dropped out of the workforce at the start of the pandemic are struggling financially.



Stride said employers who wanted to hire older workers would need to make them feel welcome

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Stride said he did not want to imply there was anything wrong with retiring early, but that it was his “mission” to “try and open people’s eyes to what their current situation is and what the opportunities are”.

The minister was speaking on a visit to the food delivery firm Deliveroo's headquarters in London. The company has recorded a 62 per cent increase in riders aged over 50 since 2021.

Asked if the over-50s should apply for jobs traditionally seen as being for younger people, Stride replied: "There are loads of great opportunities out there for people and it's of course good for people to consider options they might not have otherwise thought of."

He said of firms such as Deliveroo: "What we're seeing here is the ability to log on and off anytime you like, no requirement to have to do a certain number of hours over a certain period of time, which is driving huge opportunities . . . From an employer's point of view in a tight labour market, it's absolutely essential if you want to access all the available talent that you provide as flexible an offer as you can."

The government has introduced digital "midlife MoTs" that allow people to take a realistic look at not only their health but their finances. Stride said: "You really do need to sensibly stop, take where you are in life, and assess whether for example you've got enough money to get you through with the kind of lifestyle and living standards that you're expecting."

"We tend to think everything is going to continue roughly as it is and you'll always be able to find a job later on in life. I think it's always valuable just to take stock every now and again and have a look at that."

Although some have opted for early retirement, [a record 2.5 million people are not working](#) because of long-term sickness. Stride said he was keen to see companies implement occupational health schemes to keep people in work.

He said he "found myself identifying" with Abdul Javaid, 51, a Deliveroo rider who had lost 10kg since taking up the job. Javaid, a grandfather based in Kingston

upon Thames in southwest London, said: “It can help with fitness, it can help with flexibility, it can help with fitting into a part of their life where it serves a useful purpose, amongst other things, and not every kind of job offers that.”

Stride said it was also down to employers to make older staff feel welcome, urging them to ensure that their workplace culture or stance on social issues did not alienate the over-50s.

“I think most people find it deeply unattractive to go and work for an employer that’s all about politics and all of that kind of stuff,” he said. “It has to be a sensible balance, and I think older people have generally had enough life experience to roll with those kinds of things anyway.”

For his part, Stride, 61, said he had no intention of retiring early and was planning to stand at the next election. “I’m very happy doing what I’m doing at the moment,” he said. “Of course, as we know in politics, nothing is certain, so who knows where I’ll be in many years’ time — but I very much hope and aspire to be continuing to do this job, because it’s the greatest job in the world.”

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/get-on-your-deliveroo-bike-and-work-minister-tells-over-50s-68qbk9dtm>