

AGE DISCRIMINATION

I have to say that I am appalled by the Government's record on age discrimination. I am afraid that this is just another example of Labour's broken promises. Prior to coming to power in 1997, the then Labour spokesman Ian McCartney MP promised:

"An incoming Labour Government will introduce comprehensive legislation to make age discrimination in employment illegal."

We Conservatives believe that it is very important to acknowledge that discrimination is not just a workplace issue. While the Government has introduced some legislation which has changed older peoples' rights in the workplace, we think that they have left important issues unaddressed. We think that the Government has not fulfilled its pledge that older people would no longer have to fight for fair treatment in and out of the workplace. And in the provision of goods, facilities and services, age discrimination remains unchecked.

As things stand, older people have fewer rights to redress if they are discriminated against because of their age, compared to those who suffer discrimination because of their race, sex or sexual orientation. I can assure you that Conservatives are looking at this issue as part of our policy formation process for the next election manifesto.

Many older people are rightly concerned that, particularly when they come to plan their healthcare and buy financial services, insufficient protection is provided by the law to guard against discrimination on the grounds of their age.

Over the coming years the state pension age will rise to 68 and we think that the Government should carefully consider how this change will impact on the provision of goods and services to older people. It seems unfair to ask people to work longer without addressing the problem of age discrimination adequately.

