

# Consultation Response



---

## Age and Experience: Consultation on the Strategy for a Scotland with an Ageing Population Consultation ends 5 June 2006

This response draws on previous work undertaken by Children in Scotland, including recent research with children and young people on equality and diversity and with grandparents who provide child care support for their working children.

### Introduction

Children in Scotland welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation on a strategy for an ageing population. As an organisation working for children, young people and families, Children in Scotland is supportive of the development of the strategy as an opportunity to improve matters such as intergenerational relations and support for grandparents.

High numbers of grandparents are providing child care support for their children and Children in Scotland believes that it would be useful for the strategy to consider ways of supporting those grandparents. Furthermore, relations between the young and old are often strained and subject to misunderstanding. Children in Scotland believes that the strategy should look at the ways in which intergenerational cooperation, understanding and support can improve the lives of children and young people and the older generation.

An increase in the age of the population undoubtedly has implications on a range of services, including health care, housing, community care and transport. These are matters that are the concern of everyone in society, including children and young people as well as older people. Children in Scotland believes that a strategy for an ageing population should thoroughly consider its impact on children and young people.

### Grandparents

Any consultation addressing the issues of an ageing population has to consider the increasingly important role of grandparents in family life and as a source of care and support for working parents. Children in Scotland strongly welcomes the Scottish Executive's recent *Charter for Grandchildren*<sup>1</sup> and would recommend that the charter, and the important role that grandparents can play in families, is recognised in the strategy.

Recent research by Children in Scotland shows that many grandparents look after grandchildren while their children go out to work.<sup>2</sup> This research shows that for many

---

<sup>1</sup> *Family Matters: Charter for Grandchildren*, Scottish Executive, 2006

<sup>2</sup> *We Help Because We Love Our Children And We Love Our Grandchildren*, Children in Scotland, 2006

grandparents this is a positive experience, allowing them to impart knowledge and skills to their grandchildren whilst contributing to their own wellbeing. However, it was also noted that caring for grandchildren incurs additional monetary costs as well as resulting in physical and mental strain. In some cases, grandparents have even had to retire early or move from one part of the country to another to look after their grandchildren. Those grandparents involved in the research wanted more support to enable them to carry out this responsibility.

Children in Scotland believes that the strategy should look at ways of providing support for these grandparents such as advice and information services, grandparent and toddler groups, or financial support in the form of enhanced pension contributions. The strategy could give consideration as to whether grandparents should be paid for providing this child care without having to register as a childminder, or whether they should instead be able to receive petrol or food vouchers.

The strategy should reflect the role that grandparents play when there are problems in families and when organisations such as social work or the courts become involved. The *Charter for Grandchildren*<sup>3</sup> states that it is important to protect and respect this role. *Hidden Harm*<sup>4</sup> also highlights the matter of children and young people in need of care and protection. The role of the grandparent in a substance misusing family, for example, can be an important one and should be recognised. Children in Scotland would suggest that support for those grandparents is promoted in the strategy.

Children in Scotland does however also believe that whilst some grandparents may care for their grandchildren, it should not be the case that they have to. This poses a wider question for child care provision in general.

Children in Scotland also believes that as well as grandparents, the strategy should recognise other older relatives who can play a significant role in children and young people's lives.

## **Work**

The consultation questionnaire asks what can be done to help people build up a better income for when they retire.<sup>5</sup> Ideally, preparation for old age should begin as soon as young people start work. According to *Being Young in Scotland 2005*, only 48% of young people agree that planning now for retirement is important.<sup>6</sup> A strategy to address issues of an ageing population necessitates consulting with, involving and informing young people who are about to enter paid employment.

---

<sup>3</sup> *Family Matters: Charter for Grandchildren*, Scottish Executive, 2006

<sup>4</sup> *Hidden Harm - Next Steps: Supporting Children Working with Parents*, Scottish Executive, 2006

<sup>5</sup> *Age and Experience: Developing the Strategy for a Scotland with an Ageing Population*, Scottish Executive consultation document, 2006

<sup>6</sup> *Being Young in Scotland 2005: Young People's Participation in Youth Work, Arts, Culture and Sport*, Research Study Conducted for Scottish Executive Education Department & YouthLink Scotland by MORI 31, 2005

Young people have to choose to invest in their old age but living costs often interfere even when the will to invest exists. For example, starting and supporting a family is costly, more so, when it entails giving up work and decreases the ability for parents, and especially mothers, to make pension contributions. Parents in general face many pressures, both financial and emotional, and the strategy should consider how to provide better support for parents to enable them to go back to work. High quality, flexible and affordable child care is essential. However, parents who decide to care for their children themselves should not be penalised by reduced pensions in later life, especially as the majority of these are women who on average have earned less than men throughout their working life.

## **Intergenerational relations**

Children in Scotland welcomes the ageing strategy as an opportunity to address intergenerational relations. *For Scotland's Children Report*<sup>7</sup> acknowledges the breakdown in relationships between children and young people and adults. The document also notes that children and young people think that adults, especially the older generation, see them as troublemakers. Children in Scotland's research with children and young people confirms this and also shows that children and young people think the older generation display fear or antipathy toward them in public places.<sup>8</sup> The ageing strategy presents an opportunity to address this deteriorating relationship between the generations and should look at ways of promoting an understanding between children and young people and older people as a means of encouraging a sense of respect and community.

The background information booklet to *Age and Experience*<sup>9</sup> says that older people have a key role in creating stronger communities and that local participation improves the perception and reality of local safety. However, it is important to consider and involve the whole community in local decisions. Children in Scotland recognises the importance of citizenship education in promoting active citizens now and later in life. By working together in the community children, young people and older people would learn to respect and value each other. Both generations have lots to learn from each other and Children in Scotland believes that the strategy should encourage a two way sharing of knowledge and skills. For example children and young people have skills in information technology that could be imparted to older people.

Children in Scotland believes that it is also important for the strategy to promote the value and importance of volunteering, especially when this facilitates different ages working together. There is much to gain from intergenerational skill swapping, both for children and young people, and older people.

Children in Scotland would recommend that the strategy should promote these relationships and consider ways of addressing the fear that some older people have towards young people.

---

<sup>7</sup> *For Scotland's Children Report*, Scottish Executive, 2001

<sup>8</sup> *What's the difference? Views and experiences of young people in Dumfries and Galloway concerning equality and diversity*, Children in Scotland, 2006

<sup>9</sup> *Age and Experience: Developing the Strategy for a Scotland with an Ageing Population, Background information*, Scottish Executive consultation document, 2006

## Health

Children in Scotland notes that the background information booklet for *Age and Experience* mentions *Delivering for Health*<sup>10</sup> and is encouraged that it states that the ageing population strategy must link with this and other policy initiatives. The background information booklet also states that people's housing, income, diet and level of physical activity can all have an impact on people's health and well-being later in life. Children in Scotland believe that developing a healthy lifestyle in the early years is an effective way of ensuring good physical health later in life. Therefore, Children in Scotland would suggest that the ageing population strategy should support ways to encourage healthy diets and lifestyles from childhood.

**Children in Scotland** is Scotland's national agency for organisations and professionals working with and for children, young people and their families. It exists to identify and promote the interests of children and their families and to ensure that policies, services and other provisions are of the highest possible quality and are able to meet the needs of a diverse society.

Children in Scotland represents over 400 members, including all major voluntary, statutory and private children's agencies, professional organisations, as well as many other smaller community groups and children's services. It is linked with similar agencies in other parts of the UK and the European Union.

The work of Children in Scotland encompasses extensive information, policy, research and practice development programmes. The agency works closely with MSPs, the Scottish Executive, local authorities and practitioners. It also services a number of groups such as: the Cross Party Parliamentary Group on Children and Young People; the National Children's Voluntary Forum; the National Early Years Forum and the Additional Support Needs Network. Children in Scotland also hosts Enquire, the advice service for additional support for learning.

For further information please contact Sheona Lawson at

[slawson@childreninscotland.org.uk](mailto:slawson@childreninscotland.org.uk)

Prepared May 2006

---

<sup>10</sup> *Delivering for Health*, Scottish Executive, 2005