

To: SOCIAL WORK (OPERATIONS AND SERVICES) SUB COMMITTEE		Subject: DEFINITION OF OLDER PEOPLE
From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK		
Date: 5 OCTOBER 2004	Ref: JN/TJC	

1. Purpose of Report/Introduction

This report clarifies for Committee various definitions for the term "older person" and outlines the position of certain statutory agencies with regard to the definition of an older person.

2. Background

- 2.1. The term "older person" has no formal or legal definition ascribed to it and various statutory, public and independent agencies have differing interpretations of the term.
- 2.2. In a report to Committee in August 2004 the Scottish Household survey identified the three main definitions of older person currently in use within formal agencies;
 - i) What has become known as the European definition of over 50 years or colloquially "the third age".
 - ii) The state retirement pensionable age.
 - iii) Over 75 years, used predominantly in health and social care fields.

3. Financial/Personnel/Legal/Policy Implications

- 3.1. The Social Work Department uses all three of the above definitions, each for a different purpose. The following clarification may assist Committee in considering future reports where one or other of the definitions is being applied.

3.2. The Third Age (Over 50 years)

This definition is used largely for forward planning purposes and where preventative strategies in health and care are being developed. Examples include Joint Community Care Planning and consultation, the "A Home for the Future" strategy and health promotion initiatives in the Joint Health Improvement Plan.

3.3. State Pension Age (60 – 65 Years)

At present, the state pension age for retirement pension is 60 years, but men do not receive the pension until age 65 years. Government action to harmonise the position will have both men and women receiving the pension at age 65 years.

This definition is the most commonly used one in Social Work. It is used as one criteria for accessing older people's services in Social Work and is the definition used in all reporting activity on performance in older people's services.

3.4. Over 75 Years

This definition is used as one of a number of indicators of vulnerability in older people. It is also used as a basis for measuring equitable service provision and delivery and, despite the regular application of pension age as one eligibility criteria, over 75's represent the overwhelming majority of Social Work users in the older persons services sector.

4. Recommendation

4.1 Committee is asked to:

- (i) note the contents of this report

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Megan" followed by a stylized monogram or initials.

Director of Social Work
(21st September 2004)

For further information on this report please contact Jim Nisbet Manager Older Peoples Services on telephone 01698-332031