Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee on petition PE2277: Recognise ageing as a disease and launch a National Longevity Mission lodged by James Bond

Brief overview of issues raised by the petition

This petition calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to recognise biological ageing as a treatable medical condition in NHS Scotland policy and, in doing so, create a National Longevity Mission with a funded Nanomedicine Authority to deliver clinical trials for senolytics and age-reversal therapies, fulfilling the fundamental duty to protect our people from biological ageing and biological death. We must eradicate biological death to secure a future of absolute health for humanity, deploying clinical Artificial Superintelligence (ASI) to attain Longevity Escape Velocity (LEV).

Background

Scotland's population is ageing. In 2024, 1 in 5 people were aged 65 and over (compared to 1 in 8 people in 1980), and this increase is projected to continue until 2047 as the youngest of the 'baby boom' generation reach their 80s.

Ageing describes a gradual decline in physiological health across an individual's life span, ultimately leading to decreased physical and mental abilities, a growing risk of disease, and eventually death.

Life expectancy

Life expectancy and healthy life expectancy data help us understand not just how long people live, but also the quality of those years, indicating how long someone can expect to live in good health. Scotland has the lowest life expectancy in the UK. For healthy life expectancy, England has the highest healthy life expectancy at birth for both males (60.9 years) and females (61.3 years). Scotland had the lowest across the UK for males (59.1 years) and Wales had the lowest for females (58.5 years). More information is available in the SPICe Blog: Scotland's life and healthy life expectancy: Key facts and figures.

Life expectancy and healthy life expectancy vary by gender, region, and socio-economic background. Healthy ageing is affected by environmental and lifestyle factors more than genetics, emphasising the importance of a healthy diet, physical activity, and social connections to maintain good health into old age.

The Scottish Government's Population Health Framework sets the aim of improving Scottish life expectancy, whilst reducing the life expectancy gap between the most deprived 20% of local areas and the national average, by 2035. Public Health Scotland's 10-year strategy (to 2035) has the aim of improving average life

expectancy by at least 1 year and narrowing the life expectancy gap between the poorest areas and the average.

Measuring ageing

While chronological age measures the number of years since birth, biological age describes the rate that the body itself is ageing. Growing evidence suggests people biologically age at different rates, affecting their quality of life and disease-risk. The pace at which an individual biologically ages is influenced by a combination of personal characteristics, their physical environment, social interactions, and their genetic make-up.

Geroscience and emerging anti-ageing drugs

Geroscience is a scientific field that studies the fundamental biology of ageing. The ultimate goal of geroscience is to accelerate research into the basic mechanisms driving ageing, which could lead to the development of anti-ageing drugs.

In 2024 the Royal Society published a briefing on increasing healthy life expectancy: the policy implications of geroscience. This outlined four areas for development:

1. A collaborative and interdisciplinary research and innovation ecosystem focussed on the ageing process as a whole.

2. A need for ambitious and sustained funding.

3. The importance of an adaptable regulatory framework that prioritises inclusion of older people with multimorbidity into clinical trials and enables the use of mixed trial endpoints.

4. Alignment across different policy domains to translate scientific advancements into tangible benefits for the UK population.

Research into anti-ageing drugs shows promise in extending healthy life expectancy by targeting biological ageing processes, but some argue further investment is needed to boost their discovery and development. The use of anti-ageing drugs would mark a paradigm shift: from treating each age-related medical condition separately, to treating these conditions together, by targeting ageing itself.

A number of drugs are currently in human clinical trials that have the potential to slow biological ageing and the onset of age-associated diseases. These include Metformin, GLP-1 medicines and senolytics, a class of drugs that selectively eliminate senescent cells[1]. More information is available in the SPICe briefing SPICe Briefing: Promoting Healthy Ageing in Scotland.

Longevity Escape Velocity

This is the theoretical idea that medical developments could extend biological life expectancy by more than one year, each calendar year, and as a consequence life

[1] Senescent cells are cells that are “alive” (metabolically active), but can no longer replicate, hence their nickname: zombie cells. They secrete harmful proteins that contribute to biological ageing and disease.

expectancy would extend indefinitely. This is explained in a blog from the University of Edinburgh.

Research funding

In the 2026-27 budget the Scottish Government allocated funding to health research, innovation and diagnostics and genomics.

2026-27 budget		(£million)
Research funding	To provide support for clinical research in NHS Boards and by Higher Education Institutions, research charities and other research funders. It also includes the Scottish Government's health contribution to the National Institute for Health Research enabling access for clinical researchers in Scotland to UK-wide research funding programme.	72.833
Health innovation	To provide support for the promotion, development and adoption of innovative products, technologies, and services to drive improvements in NHS service delivery and patient care and to support economic growth in the Scottish life sciences sector.	3.360
Innovation adoption fund	Includes investment in a "once for Scotland" Accelerated National Innovation Adoption (ANIA) infrastructure, providing a process for joint assessment and decision making between the NHS and the Scottish Government on which innovations should be prioritised for national adoption, as well as implementation of other new innovations.	4.650
Diagnostics and genomics	Covers investment in the development of genomic medicine for the diagnosis of rare diseases and characterisation of cancers for targeted treatment.	5.669

NHS Research Scotland is a partnership of Scottish NHS Boards and the Chief Scientist Office of Scottish Government. It aims to promote and support excellence in clinical and translational research in Scotland.

Key Organisations and relevant links

- The University of Edinburgh Institute for Regeneration and Repair
- Public Health Scotland
- Chief Scientist Office Scotland

- NHS Research Scotland
- Professor Dame Linda Partridge

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9 November 2026

The purpose of this briefing is to provide a brief overview of issues raised by the petition. SPICe research specialists are not able to discuss the content of petition briefings with petitioners or other members of the public. However, if you have any comments on any petition briefing you can email us at spice@parliament.scot

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