

**An evaluation of the paper self-completion questionnaire planned for use as part of 2008 sweep of the National Child Development Study**

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# **An evaluation of the paper self-completion questionnaire planned for use as part of 2008 sweep of the National Child Development Study**

This brief technical report aims to evaluate the usefulness of a supplementary paper self-completion questionnaire as a data collection instrument in a sweep of a longitudinal birth cohort study. The report also evaluates the benefits of including open questions in such questionnaires and compares the relative merits of two questions piloted as part of the National Child Development Study (NCDS) dress rehearsal.

## **1. Introduction**

The 2008 sweep of the National Child Development Study (NCDS) will be comprised of the following elements:

1. A 60 minute face-to-face interview which will include:
  - A 45 minute Computer Assisted Personal Interview
  - A 10 minute CASI interview (Computer Assisted Self Interviewing)
  - A series of cognitive tests
  
2. A 16 page self-completion paper questionnaire.

The paper self-completion questionnaire will be posted to cohort members with their advance notification letter and will be completed (in most cases) in advance of the main interview. The interviewer will then pick up the questionnaire when they visit the cohort member's address to conduct the interview.

Paper self-completion questionnaires have been used in previous sweeps of the study, but were not used in either of the two most recent sweeps in 2000 and 2004. This paper uses evidence from the NCDS 'pilot' (which took place in November and December 2007) and the 'dress rehearsal' (April and May 2008) to evaluate the usefulness of including supplementary paper self-completion questionnaires in a study of this kind by examining cost-effectiveness, response rates and potential bias. Two versions of the self-completion questionnaire were used in the dress rehearsal; each with a different open-question included on the final page.

This paper will describe the methodology used to pilot these questions and seeks to provide evidence on which a decision can be made as to whether to include a question of this nature in the final version of the questionnaire to be used in the main stage of the study which will start in August 2008.

The paper self-completion questionnaire covered the following topics:

- Leisure time and leisure activities
- Physical health
- Emotional well-being
- Neighbourhoods
- Feelings, opinions and attitudes

Further information about the questions and scales included in the paper self-completion questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1.

## **2. Paper self-completion questionnaires**

The most commonly cited advantage of paper self-completion questionnaires is their relative cost-effectiveness, as large numbers of questionnaires can be posted to potential respondents at relatively little financial cost. However, this advantage must of course be weighed up with the disadvantages of the approach: namely that postal self-completion questionnaires are typically associated with far lower response rates than other methods such as face-to-face or telephone based interviewing, perhaps making the representativeness of the data collected somewhat questionable.

In this section of the paper these issues are considered in relation to the appropriateness of including a paper self-completion questionnaire as an element of the forthcoming sweep of the NCDS.

### **2.1 Cost-effectiveness**

Versions of the paper self-completion questionnaire were included in both the 'pilot' that took place in November and December 2007 with specially recruited members of the public (who were of a similar age to the NCDS cohort) and the 'dress rehearsal' which took place with a small subset of actual cohort members in April and May 2008.

The 'pilot' respondents completed their questionnaires in the presence of the interviewers. The interviewers estimated that, on average, the questionnaire took respondents just under twenty minutes to complete.

The 'dress rehearsal' sought to test all procedures to be followed in the main stage of fieldwork, so the cohort members selected to participate were posted their questionnaires in advance of their main interview. Therefore, there is no data available on the time this version took to complete. Changes to the questionnaire between the pilot and the dress rehearsal were limited, but the addition of an open question on the final page (as previously mentioned) would have slightly increased the time required to complete. So it will be assumed that answering all questions would have taken twenty minutes. As it is not anticipated that there will be further changes to the questionnaire in advance of the main stage of fieldwork, it is also assumed that completing the final version of the questionnaire will also take 20 minutes.

The final version of the sixteen page questionnaire will include 161 questions (excluding the open question at the end). All 161 questions are to be answered by all cohort members. Information from the 'pilot' and 'dress rehearsal' suggests that when completing the CASI section of the core interview, respondents took on average 8 seconds to answer each question. The questions included within the CASI section of the questionnaire are of a similar nature to those included in the paper self-completion questionnaire (straightforward, with a limited number of response categories). This suggests that if the paper self-completion questions were added to the CASI section of the main interview, an additional 21 minutes, on average, of interviewing time would be required.

The costs provided by the fieldwork contractor during the tendering process detailed the marginal costs of each extra minute of interview time and the total costs of designing and processing the self-completion questionnaire (including the keying of the data collected). These figures suggest that incorporating the additional 21 minutes of questions into the main interview would cost approximately four times as much as the paper self-completion questionnaire, providing clear evidence of the relative cost-effectiveness of the paper method.

## **2.2 Response rates and bias**

Paper self-completion questionnaires sent out by post are often associated with poor response rates and, therefore, with potentially biased achieved samples. However, the longitudinal nature of the NCDS is such that cohort members have now been involved in the study for many years and as such have developed a strong affinity with the study. The result of this is that response rates considerably higher than would normally be expected from a cross-sectional study can generally be achieved.

In addition, rather than simply being mailed a questionnaire with an envelope for return, cohort members will be advised about the forthcoming sweep of the study via an advance letter (containing a leaflet explaining exactly what will be involved). Interviewers will contact cohort members by telephone in order to arrange an appointment for a time to visit their home to conduct the core interview. Once an appointment has been arranged the interviewer will send a letter confirming the appointment date and time and the self-completion questionnaire will be included with this letter. The cohort member will be asked to complete the questionnaire in advance of their appointment so that the interviewer can collect it when they arrive.

This approach was tested in the 'dress rehearsal'. In total, 108 cohort members were selected to participate in the dress rehearsal, of whom 77 (71 per cent) were successfully interviewed. Self-completion questionnaires were completed by 72 cohort members (including one cohort member who did not participate in the main interview) equating to response rates of 67 per cent based on all issued sample and 92 per cent based on those completing the core interview. This level of response exceeded expectations as the pre-dress rehearsal estimate was that 80 per cent of those completing a core interview would also complete a self-completion questionnaire.

The overall response rate to the paper self-completion questionnaire is encouraging. But it is also worth investigating the extent to which this may differ depending on socio-demographic characteristics. If people with certain characteristics were less likely to respond to the self-completion questionnaire, then this group would be under-represented in the data collected leading to potential bias.

Tables 1A and 1B show that the response rate to both the core interview and the self-completion questionnaire varied by sex and highest qualification<sup>1</sup>. Two response rates to the self-completion element are included. The first shows the response rate

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<sup>1</sup> Where data was collected highest qualification is based on qualifications achieved by the age of 33. For the 21 cohort members where this information is not available highest qualification is based on qualifications achieved by the age of 23.

as a proportion of all cohort members issued as part of the dress rehearsal; the second shows the response rate as a proportion of all cohort members who completed the core interview.

Table 1A suggests that there was little variation between men and women in terms of response rates to the core interview. However, women were slightly more likely than men to return a self-completion questionnaire (although this difference was not statistically significant). Of the 29 women who completed a core interview, only one did not also return a self-completion questionnaire and amongst the 48 men who completed a core interview 43 (90 per cent) also returned a self-completion questionnaire.

Table 1B shows that there was some evidence to suggest that highest qualification had an impact on likelihood of completing a core interview; in particular those with no qualifications seemed less likely to participate. However, the small sample sizes make it difficult to establish whether this effect is significant. The variation in response rates to the self-completion questionnaire followed the same pattern as the variation in response rates to the core interview. This suggests that self-completion data would be no more prone to bias than data collected within the core interview.

**Table 1A: Response rates to core interview and self-completion questionnaire by sex**

	Total issued	Completed core interview		Self-completion questionnaire returned			
		n	%	All issued		All who completed core interview	
Sex	n	n	%	n	%	n	%
Male	68	48	70.6	44	64.7	43	89.6
Female	40	29	72.5	28	70.0	28	96.6
Total	108	77	71.3	72	66.7	71	92.2

**Table 1B: Response rates to core interview and self-completion questionnaire by highest qualification**

Highest qualification (age 33)	Total issued	Completed core interview		Self-completion questionnaire returned			
				All issued		All who completed core interview	
Degree or higher	24	20	83.3	17	70.8	17	85.0
A-Level or equivalent	15	11	73.3	11	73.3	11	100.0
GCSE or equivalent	34	24	70.6	23	67.6	22	91.2
CSE or equivalent	8	7	87.5	7	87.5	7	100.0
Apprenticeship or other	3	3	100.0	3	100.0	3	100.0
No qualifications	24	12	0.5	11	45.8	11	91.7
Total	108	77	71.3	72	66.7	71	92.2

### 2.3 Core interview length and flow

As previously noted, adding the 161 questions included within the paper self-completion questionnaire to the CASI section of the core interview would lengthen the interview by over twenty minutes, taking the total length of the average interview to over 80 minutes.

The CASI section of the core questionnaire and the paper self-completion questionnaire both contain a number of well-being scales. Therefore, adding the paper self-completion questions to the CASI section of the core questionnaire would not just have made the CASI section much longer, but would also have made the section very repetitive.

The use of the paper questionnaire is therefore an effective method for reducing the length and improving the flow of the core questionnaire. This will hopefully ensure that cohort members' participation in the study is as positive an experience as possible.

### 2.4 Item non-response

Following a preliminary check of both the self completion data collected in the dress rehearsal, it was evident from the data collected that there were a very low number of missing values. Of the 161 questions there were 16 questions that had each not been answered by one cohort member (1%) and 2 questions which had each not been answered by 2 cohort members (3%) members. In total less than 0.2% of potential responses were missing.



This suggests that the majority of the cohort members did not struggle to understand the task in hand, nor did they struggle more specifically with the wording of the questions, the answer scales or the categories available to them.

### **3. Open-ended question**

Space on the back page of the self-completion questionnaire made possible the inclusion of an open-ended question. This gave cohort members the opportunity to write in their own words a few lines of text which could hopefully be transcribed or coded and analysed in conjunction with the quantitative data collected both within the self-completion questionnaire and the main interview.

A shortlist of five possible questions was drafted which included questions that fell into three broad categories:

- Retrospective questions - primarily involving asking the respondent to think back over a certain period - e.g. the past five years or their adult life - and recall key events/experiences that had the most significant impact on their lives.
- Current evaluations of life - involving asking the respondent to consider the relative advantages and disadvantages of their current stage in life in relation to the past and future.
- Prospective questions - involving asking the respondent to consider what their lives might be like at some given point in the future.

These draft questions were largely based on questions which had been included in other longitudinal studies (e.g. the British Household Panel Survey). A consultation process took place both within CLS and with external advisors and two questions received the most support:

#### **Question A (Retrospective)**

*Looking back over the past five years is there anything that has happened to you (or your family) which has stood out as important? This might be things you've done, or things that have been of interest or concern. Just whatever comes to mind as important to you.*

This question would give the respondent an opportunity to put forward in their own terms the issues which have been most pertinent to them over the period that is covered by the main interview. This could then provide useful contextual information when analysing the quantitative data. A question such as this could potentially be repeated in subsequent sweeps of the study.

## **Question B (Prospective)**

*Imagine that you are now 60 years old...please write a few lines about the life you are leading (your interests, your home life, your health and well-being and any work you may be doing).*

This question would parallel a question asked of the cohort members when they were 11 years old and wrote about their imagined life at age 25. Asking a question such as this on a longitudinal study will, in subsequent sweeps of the study, allow comparisons to be made between actual circumstances at this future point and the future as imagined at age 50. The question could also potentially be used as a way to code for cohort members pessimism or optimism about the future and the extent to which the future is planned for. In addition, the question could also be of methodological use as it could potentially inform the design of future sweeps by providing evidence of some of the key concerns of cohort members at this point in the life course.

In order to decide which question would be included in the final version of the self-completion questionnaire, it was decided that both questions would be piloted in the NCDS dress rehearsal. Two versions of the self-completion questionnaire were printed: Version A contained retrospective Question A and Version B contained prospective Question B. Dress rehearsal interviewing took place with cohort members in 8 selected clusters across Great Britain. The two versions of the questionnaire were allocated to four clusters so that all cohort members within each cluster received the same question. Clusters varied in size but not significantly so that each version of the questionnaire accompanied approximately half of the mailed advance letters (56 cohort members were sent Version A and 52 cohort members were sent Version B).

The open question was completed by 58 cohort members (54 per cent of all dress rehearsal cases, 75 per cent of those interviewed and 81 per cent of those completing the self-completion questionnaire). In total there were 29 responses to Question A and 29 responses to Question B. Examples of responses to both questions are shown in Appendix 2.

### **3.1 Possible impact on main interview response rates**

Although highly interesting information could be obtained by asking open questions like those mentioned above, it is the data obtained within the core face-to-face interview which is more central to the study, as it is here that details of the key events and experiences of the cohort members are collected and added to the longitudinal record which has been built up over the course of the study. Cohort members are well used to providing information to the study but there was a slight concern that responding to questions of this nature may be considered a burdensome task by some. This could lead to respondent fatigue and subsequently lower response rates for both the self-completion questionnaire and more importantly, the core interview.

It is therefore worthwhile comparing response rates achieved in clusters allocated Version A with those allocated Version B. Table 2 shows that the number of full interviews achieved as a proportion of all cases where it was established that the

cohort member was living at the issued address, did not differ significantly between those sent questionnaire Version A and those sent Version B (79 per cent compared with 78 per cent).

**Table 2: Core interview response rate by version of self-completion questionnaire**

	Version A (Retrospective)			Version B (Prospective)			Total	
		% all issued sample	% eligible		% all issued sample	% eligible	% all issued sample	% eligible
<b>Total sample issued</b>	<b>56</b>			<b>52</b>			<b>108</b>	
<b>Eligibility not established</b>								
Non-contact	3	5.4		7	13.5		10	9.3
<b>Eligibility established</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>94.6</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>86.5</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>98</b>	<b>90.7</b>
<b><i>Unproductive outcomes</i></b>								
Refusals	8	14.3	15.1	3	5.8	6.7	11	10.2
Other unproductive outcome	3	5.4	5.7	7	13.5	15.6	10	9.3
<b><i>Productive outcomes</i></b>								
<b>Full interview</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>75.0</b>	<b>79.2</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>67.3</b>	<b>77.8</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>71.2</b>

### 3.2 Possible impact on self-completion questionnaire response rates

In the majority of cases (94 per cent) self-completion questionnaires were completed by cohort members in advance of their main interview, meaning that interviewers were able to collect the questionnaire when visiting the cohort member to conduct the interview. However, if the cohort member had not completed the questionnaire in advance of the interview, cohort members were asked to complete it at their earliest convenience and return via the post. Self-completion questionnaires were not always returned, so the response rate to this element was slightly lower than the core interview response rate. Table 3 shows the proportion of those completing a core interview that also completed the self-completion questionnaire by version.

Of those who completed a core interview (n=77), 95 per cent of those who were sent self-completion questionnaire Version A returned the questionnaire, whereas those who were sent Version B the completion rate was slightly lower at 89 per cent (although with such small sample sizes this difference must be interpreted with caution). As mentioned previously, one additional cohort member did complete the self-completion questionnaire, but chose not to participate in the core interview.

**Table 3: Self-completion questionnaire response rate (by version)**

	Version A (Retrospective)		Version B (Prospective)	
	n	%	n	%
Core interview completed	42		35	
Self-completion questionnaire returned	40	95.2	31	88.6

### 3.3 Item non-response

As noted above, a slightly lower (although not statistically significant) proportion of those who completed a core interview returned Version B self-completion questionnaires than Version A questionnaires. However, as Table 4 shows, of the questionnaires which were returned, cohort members were significantly more likely to have actually answered prospective Question B than retrospective Question A. Ninety four per cent of those completing a Version B questionnaire wrote some form of response to the prospective open question, but only 71 per cent of those completing a Version A questionnaire wrote some form of response to the retrospective open question.

**Table 4: Open question completion rate (by version)**

	Version A (Retrospective)		Version B (Prospective)	
	n	%	n	%
Self-completion questionnaire returned	41		31	
Open question completed	29	70.7	29	93.5

### 3.4 Depth of responses / Volume of text

The space provided to cohort members for answering the open questions covered just over half an A4 sheet. However, the amount written by cohort members varied greatly. It is arguable that the greater the volume of text that an open question elicits, the greater the possibilities for in-depth analysis. Table 5 shows the mean average number of words generated by the two questions.

**Table 5: Number of words written in response to open question (by version)**

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Question A (Retrospective)	29	1	150	37.8	41.38355
Question B (Prospective)	29	5	140	59.7	35.98799

Responses to Question A ranged from a minimum of one word to a maximum of 150. Responses to Question B ranged from a minimum of 5 words to a maximum of 140 words and on average it was Question B that generated the fullest responses in terms of number of written words. The mean number of words written in response to prospective Question B was just under 60 words, around 22 more words than were written on average in response to retrospective Question A. The examples provided in Appendix 2 show responses of differing lengths.

### 3.5 Writing style

The difference in volume of text that the two questions generated was largely attributable to the differing writing styles which cohort members used to respond. When responding to retrospective Question A, a substantial proportion of cohort members adopted a bullet-point based approach to briefly list the key issues they wished to mention, whereas when responding to prospective Question B, the tendency was to make use of full sentences and paragraphs. This difference could mean that responses to Question B could be used not only for the kind of analyses mentioned above, but could also be used by researchers as a tool for assessing current levels of literacy or for other forms of linguistic analysis. The examples provided in Appendix 2 show responses using differing styles.

### **3.6 Information gain**

#### *Question A (Retrospective Question)*

The principal benefit of opting for Question A would be that of providing cohort members with an unconstrained opportunity to recount the events that they themselves consider to have had the greatest impact on their lives during the reference period covered by the main survey. This could yield useful contextual data which could be illuminating when analysing quantitative data. However, if there was a tendency for cohort members to provide responses which duplicated information which was collected within the core questionnaire, this would render the question less valuable.

A breakdown of the responses provided by cohort members is provided in Table 6. In addition, Table 6 also indicates whether each issue mentioned duplicates information which is covered by the core questionnaire.

Table 6 indicates that the vast majority of events that have happened to cohort members (or their families) that are considered to be of importance are events about which the details would be captured within the core questionnaire. This suggests that inclusion of retrospective question A may not yield vast amounts of additional information. The most common responses related to having grand-children (mentioned by 8 cohort members - 28 per cent); changes in job/career (mentioned by 5 cohort members - 17 per cent) and new relationships (also mentioned by 5 cohort members - 17 per cent).

Four cohort members (14 per cent) mentioned the ill-health of a parent. This is an issue which is not directly covered by the core interview, although the 'older relatives' module does include questions which ask whether the cohort member worries about their parents' health and whether they provide care to their parents. Similarly four cohort members mentioned children starting school or university. This again is not something tackled directly by the core interview although if going to university involved leaving the parental home this would be captured by the household grid and 'absent children' module. In addition, the 'older children' module covers the highest qualification for children aged over 16, from which it would be possible to ascertain whether a child has attended college / university.

Other important issues that were mentioned but are not covered by the core interview included holidays and travel (mentioned by three cohort members - 10 per cent) and other personal achievements (also mentioned by three cohort members - 10 per cent).

**Table 6: Most significant events of last five years**

	n	%	In core questionnaire?	Module
<b>Relationships</b>				
New Relationship	5	17.2	Yes	Relationship history
End of relationship	4	13.8	Yes	Relationship history
Wedding anniversary	1	3.4	Yes	Relationship history
<b>Children</b>				
Children marrying	1	3.4	No	
Children moving away / moving into own home	2	6.9	Yes	Household grid and Absent / Older Children
Child started new job	3	10.3	No	
Children starting school / university	4	13.8	No	
Children achieving qualifications	2	6.9	Yes	Absent / Older Children
Other achievements of children	3	10.3	No	
Children having children (Grandchildren)	8	27.6	Yes	Absent / Older Children
Child's ill health	1	3.4	No	
<b>Siblings</b>				
Death of sibling	1	3.4	No	
<b>Parents</b>				
Death of parent	4	13.8	Yes	Older relatives
Parent's ill-health	4	13.8	No	
<b>Partner</b>				
Partner's ill health (or recovery from ill health)	3	10.3	Yes	Record linkage
Partner gaining qualifications	2	6.9	Yes	Partner
Partner getting new job	1	3.4	Yes	Partner
Partner's unemployment	1	3.4	Yes	Partner
<b>Health</b>				
Physical health problem	2	6.9	Yes	Health
Mental health problem	1	3.4	Yes	Health



**Table 6: Most significant events of last five years (continued)**

	n	%	In core questionnaire?	Module
<b>Employment / Training / Qualifications</b>				
New job / Change of career / Career progression	5	17.2	Yes	Employment
Qualifications achieved	2	6.9	Yes	Qualifications
Unemployment	1	3.4	Yes	Employment
<b>Housing</b>				
New home	2	6.9	Yes	Housing
Moved to new area	1	3.4	Yes	Housing
<b>Leisure</b>				
New hobby / leisure pursuit	2	6.9	Yes	Exercise / Social Participation
Holidays / travel	3	10.3	No	
<b>Finance</b>				
Reduction in family income	1	3.4	Yes	Family income
Mortgage paid	1	3.4	Yes	Housing
<b>Purchases</b>				
Purchase of a product or service	1	3.4	No	
<b>Attitude shift / realisation</b>				
Change of attitude / realisation	3	10.3	Yes	Self-completion questionnaire
<b>Other</b>				
Other personal achievement	3	10.3	No	
New pet / death of pet	2	6.9	No	
Other	3	10.3		

Base: All cohort members completing questionnaire Version A (n=29)

*Question B (Prospective Question)*

The nature of the prospective question is such that any response will yield information which will not be collected by the core interview. The core interview does include a number of prospective questions. However, the future period these questions ask the cohort members to consider is fairly short-term. For example, cohort members are asked to consider their likely financial situation in a year's time in relation to their current situation. Similarly, employees are asked how likely they

are to be working for the same employer in a year's time. However, Question B (as currently drafted) invites cohort members to imagine their circumstances at a date far further into the future.

Table 7 shows the responses that were given by the 29 cohort members who completed questionnaire Version B. Responses cover a full range of domains and in general showed that cohort members are optimistic about the future. For example, 20 cohort members (69 per cent) imagined themselves having good health, whereas only 1 cohort member mentioned poor health.

In general, the responses provided relate to circumstances which could be, and in fact typically do, feature in the modules of the core questionnaire. This suggests that in ten year's time the fascinating opportunity to make comparisons between current circumstances and circumstances as imagined at age 50 could be fairly straightforwardly achieved.

**Table 7: Life at 60**

	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Work / economic activity</b>		
Continuing with current work	11	37.9
Working part-time or working less hours than currently	6	20.7
Voluntary work	4	13.8
Retired / Semi-retired / Preparing for retirement	7	24.1
<b>Health</b>		
Good health / keeping fit	20	69.0
Poor health / deterioration of health	1	3.4
<b>Relationships / Family / Friends</b>		
Continuation of relationship with current partner / spending more time with partner	13	44.8
Children moving out from home	5	17.2
Spending time with family / children / grandchildren	11	37.9
Making new friends / social circle / spending time with friends	9	31.0
<b>Social participation / leisure</b>		
More free time	2	6.9
Holidays / travel	8	27.6
Learning new skills / taking up new interests / leisure activities	6	20.7
Continuing to pursue current interests / leisure activities	13	44.8
Being unable or finding it increasingly difficult to continue to pursue a current interest / leisure activity	4	13.8
Political activity	1	3.4
<b>Housing</b>		
Moving home (abroad)	3	10.3
Moving home (same locality)	1	3.4
Staying in same home	1	3.4
<b>Finances</b>		
Financially comfortable	2	6.9
Mortgage paid off	2	6.9
<b>Happiness / Well-being</b>		
Happy / Enjoying life	8	27.6
Looking forward to the future	3	10.3

Base: All cohort members completing questionnaire Version B (n=29)

## 4. Conclusion

This paper has evaluated the usefulness and appropriateness of including a paper self-completion questionnaire in the forthcoming sweep of the National Child Development Study. It was shown that the use of a paper self-completion questionnaire was a very cost-effective way of asking a considerable number of additional questions. If these questions had been added to the core interview, this would have added considerable length which would invariably lead to both a financial cost and a poorer interview flow. In addition, the paper questionnaire response rate was only marginally lower than that achieved for the face-to-face interview and there was little evidence of disproportionately lower response rates amongst particular groups.

This paper has also described the methodology used to pilot the inclusion of an open-ended question to the self-completion questionnaire. Two versions of the paper self-completion questionnaire were used in the NCDS dress rehearsal – Version A which included Retrospective Question A and Version B which included Prospective Question B. The two questions were evaluated in terms of their potential impact on response rates to the core interview; potential impact on response rates to the paper-self completion questionnaire; levels of item non-response; depth of responses; writing style employed and potential information gain in order to establish which of the two questions should be included in the final version of the questionnaire.

For the following reasons, Prospective Question B will be included in the final version of the questionnaire:

- No variation in response rate to core interview between those sent Questionnaire Version A and those sent Version B.
- Significantly lower item non-response amongst those completing Questionnaire Version B.
- Greater volume of text entered at open question by those who answered prospective question.
- Responses to prospective question written in full sentences, furthering scope for possible analyses.
- Responses to retrospective question duplicates information gathered by main questionnaire, whereas responses to prospective question gather new information, creating exciting possibilities for future analyses.

## Appendix 1

### Scales / questions to be included in the NCDS8 paper self-completion questionnaire:

Leisure activities	12 questions from The British Household Panel Survey
Personality Inventory	50 questions from the International Personality Item Pool (IPIP). See: <a href="http://ipip.ori.org/ipip/">http://ipip.ori.org/ipip/</a>
Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS)	For further information see: Tennant, R. <i>et al.</i> (2007) The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS): Development and UK validation, <i>Health and Quality of Life Outcomes</i> , 5(63).
Short Form 36 (SF-36)	See: <a href="http://www.sf-36.org">http://www.sf-36.org</a>
Sleep	4 questions from the Medical Outcomes Study. See: Hays, R. D. and Stewart, A. L. (1992) 'Sleep measures'. In A. L. Stewart and J. E. Ware (eds) <i>Measuring functioning and well-being: The Medical Outcomes Study Approach</i> . Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
Values and attitudes	21 questions used previously in cohort studies.
Neighbourhood	9 questions on neighbouring and psychological sense of community (from British Household Panel Survey).
Control Autonomy Self-realisation Pleasure – CASP-14	See: Wiggins, R. <i>et al</i> (2004) 'Quality of life in the third age: key predictors of the CASP-19 measure', <i>Ageing &amp; Society</i> , 24(5).
Values (relative importance of wealth, children, job satisfaction and relationships)	4 questions from British Household Panel Survey

## Appendix 2

### Examples of responses to open questions:

#### Question A (Retrospective)

Looking back over the past five years is there anything that has happened to you (or your family) which has stood out as important? This might be things you've done, or things that have been of interest or concern. Just whatever comes to mind as important to you.

I was married for 13 yrs, that ended when my wife met someone new. We remain friends. I have always been honest where my sexuality is concerned and I am now in a gay relationship.

Daughter gained degree  
Daughter moved into our home  
Dog died.  
Turned 50!  
Visited New York.

## Question B (Prospective)

Imagine that you are now 60 years old...please write a few lines about the life you are leading (your interests, your home life, your health and well-being and any work you may be doing).

I am happy & healthy, working less hours. Happy to have helped my children through school (college) etc. I will be enjoying holidays on our caravan and have more time for my husband and relaxing. The home improvements would be finished.

I am still working and doing a job I value for its interest more than the remuneration, I am planning to work until I am 70, perhaps part-time after 65. Learning a language - completing an open-university degree. Too old for playing football - however playing tennis and doing yoga - keeping fit and supple, - walking is important. Cycling. An active Grandfather am still in a happy marital relationship with my wife. Traveling the world - city breaks for example. A major hobby is following the national Scottish football team abroad. I believe Scotland will have changed - perhaps independent & I may get more involved politically. I will campaign for human rights.