SCOTTISH POETRY LIBRARY
By leaves we live

Living Voices Resource Pack

Family

- **Love and Marriage**
- **Children and Parenthood**
- **Grandparents and Grandchildren, and Other Relations**

Living Voices is a national programme run by the Scottish Poetry Library (SPL) and Scottish Storytelling Centre (SSC) using storytelling, poems and songs to engage and stimulate groups of elderly people, particularly in care homes, in conversation, creative activity and reminiscence.

The familiar patterns and rhythms of well-known songs and poems spark engagement, pleasure and reminiscence, often where participants may otherwise seem to be withdrawn or unresponsive.

This pack was produced as part of the pilot phase of Living Voices, funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, the Baring Foundation, The Gannochy Trust, the National Lottery through Creative Scotland and Aberdeen Council Social Care and Wellbeing team. We value the support of project partners and supporters: Perth and Kinross Libraries and Information Services, Aberdeen City Libraries, South Ayrshire Libraries, Aberdeen City Council, South Ayrshire Council, Voluntary Action South Ayrshire & Perth and Kinross Care Home Activity Network. We thank the National Galleries Scotland for their support in the development of the resource packs.

Living Voices Resource Pack: Family Introduction

Materials in this pack can be used to inspire conversations about being a parent, marriage and relationships, family members and friendships with them.

Instructions
The pack includes a few carefully selected poems, stories and songs, but we have included lots more suggestions of poems you can find on the Scottish Poetry Library website and from other sources. Try using these poems too – and visit your local library to see what they have that you can use.

Select a poem or story, and use the conversation topic/activity ideas to help you lead a discussion.

Use the lists of objects, photographs, playlists and songs to help you select other things to use in the session.

Remember to select what you will use before the session so you can bring a suggested prop or photograph to accompany the poems and stories you will use. We have also provided a small selection of images that reflect the themes explored for your use.

If you don't have lots of time, don't try and fit everything into one long session; you can run separate activities instead – just using a couple of items from the pack.

Conversations
You can use this pack to start conversations about lots of topics. Examples are:

- Children and grandchildren, experiences of being a parent or grandparent and parenting skills.
- Marriage and relationships – from stories of life partners to discussion of meeting a partner late in life and what it takes to make a long-term relationship work.
- Other familial relationships with meaning – whether aunties, cousins, uncles.
- The group's parents and grandparents.

Remember:
- Don't feel you need to use everything in the pack, and of course you may want to add your own choice of poems, songs or story.
- If you cannot find the right poem for your group in the pack, we have included a list of other ideas and where you can find them.
- We have included a selection of other ideas for poems you can use, many are on the Scottish Poetry Library website.
- Remember, it's good to share your opinions and tell personal stories to get conversation started – sharing a little of yourself puts people at ease and encourages them to participate. We have included ideas in the pack.

Concerned about telling stories and reading poems?
Remember there is lots of good advice in the Living Voices Handbook. Try our websites too:

- The Scottish Storytelling Centre has regular workshops on storytelling; programme details are available on the TRACS website.
- The Scottish Poetry Library New to Poetry webpage has useful advice and reading guides, including tips for reading a poem the first time.

Look around both websites – there are lots of resources, advice and ideas.

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Living Voices Resource Pack: Family

Love and Marriage

From Wanted a husband

By Marion Bernstein

Wanted a husband who doesn't suppose,
That all earthly employments one feminine knows, -
That she'll scrub, do the cleaning, and cooking, and baking,
And plain needlework, hats and caps, and dressmaking.
Do the family washing, yet always look neat,
Mind the bairns, with a temper unchangeably sweet,
Be a cheerful companion, whenever desired,
And contentedly toil day and night, if required.
Men expecting as much, one may easily see,
But they're not what is wanted, at least, not by me.

About the poem: *Marion Bernstein was a radical 19th century Glasgow poet who is not very widely known today. Her poems were published in Glasgow newspapers and often addressed political ideas and women's rights. This poem uses humour to make a point about (some!) men's expectations of their wives – it often raises a laugh, particularly from women, and can inspire heated discussion. Use it to talk about balance in relationships, the expectations partners have of each other, and of course housework!*

Conversation topics:

A traditional story: Angus of the Hillside.

An old couple, Angus and Jessie, live together in a small farmhouse. They can't work as hard as they used to, so money is scarce. Angus decides he must take their cow to market to raise money and Jessie agrees. Angus goes to market, he stands all day – but no one wants to buy the cow. Saddened Angus heads home…on the way he meets a man with a horse. It's not the best looking horse in the world but the man persuades Angus he would be much better off with the fine horse than his cow, and they swap. Angus carries on with the horse and soon meets a man with a sheep – again they swap. Then he meets a man with a hen and exchanges animals again. Hungry, Angus goes to an inn and buys a bowl of soup in exchange for the hen, leaving him empty handed.

Angus meets his neighbour outside his cottage who says "Your wife will scream and shout, she'll nag you to death. She'll be so angry!" Angus says Jessie would not do that. The neighbour bets £100 Jessie will be angry and hides behind the door to listen. Angus goes in and tells Jessie the story of his day – "A horse!" she says, "oh that's wonderful. We can ride to church on a horse." She is disappointed but adaptable when she hears there is no horse – "A sheep, I can knit you a warm jumper." Then "A hen! An egg every day. How fine!" But Angus explains that he sold the hen for a bowl of soup and is empty handed. Jessie is not angry – she hugs him and says that's what she loves about him – he knows how to take care of himself. "And here you are," she says, "safe and well. What else do I need?" And of course, Angus wins the bet – so they have £100!

Story notes: *This story is an adaption of a Norwegian story – 'Gudbrant of the Hillside', it has been adapted by* ***Janis McKay*** *for Living Voices (this version ©Janis McKay). It can lead you into conversations about the nature of love and relationships (romantic or friendship). For example:*

- *Angus left home with a cow and come home with nothing - What do you think? Was he daft…and was Jessie daft for loving him anyway? How would you feel? Can you remember trusting a loved one in this way?*
- *Jessie says what she loves about Angus is that he knows how to take care of himself. What do you, or did you, like/love about the people you have had relationships with?*
- *What are the things you need to work at to make a marriage work? When all is said and done, what are the things that really matter?*

Supporting props(s) for poem and story:

- Household cleaning tools – mop, duster, scrubbing brush

Supporting sensory object(s) for poem and story:

- Brasso, coal tar soap

Personal stories: Are you comfortable sharing a little about your own, or your parents' marriage? Or perhaps you have a child who has married recently – just a small detail about a wedding day or similar that might inspire conversation and discussion.

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Children and Parents

From We and They

By Rudyard Kipling

Father, Mother, and Me,
Sister and Auntie say
All the people like us are We,
And everyone else is They.

About the poem: *This poem talks about family ties. It captures how closely knit some families can be – but consider the other side of this too; is WE and THEY really a good thing? Use the poem to talk about the positives of family connections and the support family relationships can bring; but also consider using it to explore more difficult relationships and what it can feel like for the person/people who are outside the unit - the THEYs. This is a section of a longer poem that explores cultural difference.*

A traditional story: I love you more than Salt

There once was an old King. He was getting well on in years and felt it was high time he divided his kingdom between his three sons. But how? That was the question. He wasn't simply going to just give it away – each prince would only be awarded his share after telling the King how much they loved him – and if the King was happy with what they said. He organised a fine ceremony, in front of the whole court. The king sat on his throne looking very pleased with himself and called his eldest son. "How much do you love me, eldest son?" he asked. Well, the eldest son looked about him, at the golden crown and the silver throne and saw how these riches glittered. Weren't they the most valuable thing in the world? "I love you more than gold and silver," he said. The King beamed, and gave this prince a portion of the kingdom. The King called his second son and asked the same question. The second son saw the fine emeralds and rubies inlaid in the crown, and the rich jewels on his father's robe. These were surely better than silver and gold? "I love you more than rubies, emeralds, more than every precious jewel in the whole world," he said. The hall filled with cheers and clapping as the prince was given a portion of the kingdom.

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Then all eyes turned to the youngest prince, but he stared awkwardly at the ground. "Well, come on," said the King, "tell me, how much do you love me?"

"I love you….more than salt." said the youngest son. A sigh ran round the room. This was the King's favourite son. "What do you mean?" said the King, "comparing me to common salt? Speak again." But the boy hung his head and spoke not another word. The King banished the youngest prince on the spot. He collected a few belongings and headed off to a neighbouring castle where he got a job as a lowly cook.

Back home all went well – at first. The princes took it in turns to entertain the old King but soon they were falling out with each other, and with the King. Things went from bad to worse. War broke out. The old king withdrew to a lonely chamber where he was neglected. The warring princes fell out with neighbours. Hunger stalked the land. Even staples like salt were in short supply. Word passed from castle to castle until it reached the ears of the young prince. He packed his bag, and returned to seek out his father. When he reached the castle was told the old king was dying. The boy went quickly to the kitchen and made soup, seasoned it and took it to the attic. The old king was there, staring into an empty hearth. His beard was tangled. His clothes were in tatters. The boy held soup under his chin. The old man ate the soup. He smiled with the taste. A warmth came into his eyes and he looked at the boy. "You are my son," said the King, "and now I know what you mean when you said you loved me more than salt."

So they embraced and the young prince was taken back in. Peace was restored between brothers, and between nations, and good times returned to the people.

Story notes: *This story has been adapted by **Janis McKay** for Living Voices (this version ©Janis McKay). It can lead you into conversations about the nature of love and relationships (romantic or friendship). For example:*

- *'I love you more than salt' is a strange but powerful way to say you love somebody. Salt is a small but important thing in life. (What is food like without salt?) Is it a good way to say you love somebody?*
- *What small but important thing could you not do without? ("I love you more than…")*
- *Often we have to go off into the world to learn things, before we come back wiser. When did you leave home – to go to work, for training/education, to get married, National Service? Did you come back wiser?*

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Children and Parents

Cuddle Doon

By Alexander Anderson

The bairnies cuddle doon at nicht
Wi muckle faught and din.
"Oh try an' sleep, ye waukrife rogues,
Your faither's comin' in."
They niver heed a word I speak,
I try tae gie a froon,
But aye I hap' them up an' cry
"Oh, bairnies, cuddle doon!"

Wee Jamie wi' the curly heid,
He aye sleeps next the wa'
Bangs up and cries, "I want a piece!"
The rascal starts them a'.
I rin and fetch them pieces, drinks,
They stop a wee the soun',
Then draw the blankets up an' cry,
"Noo, weanies, cuddle doon."

But ere five minutes gang, wee Rab
Cries oot frae neath the claes,
"Mither, mak' Tam gie ower at aince,
He's kittlin' wi' his taes."
The mischief in that Tam for tricks,
He'd bother half the toon,
But aye I hap them up an' cry,
"Oh, bairnies, cuddle doon!"

At length they hear their faither's fit
An' as he steeks the door,
They turn their faces tae the wa'
An Tam pretends tae snore.
"Hae a' the weans been gude?" he asks,
As he pits aff his shoon.
"The bairnies, John, are in their beds
An' lang since cuddled doon!"

An' just afore we bed oorsel's
We look at oor wee lambs,
Tam has his airm roun' wee Rab's neck
An Rab his airm roun' Tam's.
I lift wee Jamie up the bed
An' as I straik each croon,
I whisper till my heart fills up:
"Oh, bairnies, cuddle doon!"

The bairnies cuddle doon at nicht
Wi' mirth that's dear tae me.
But soon the big warl's cark an' care
Will quaten doon their glee.
Yet come what will to ilka ane,
May He who rules aboon,
Aye whisper, though their pows be bald:
"Oh, bairnies, cuddle doon!"

About the poem: *Written by railwayman, poet and librarian, Alexander Anderson in 1875, this poem is well-known and well-loved. Even if your group is not familiar with it, if they have brought up children they are likely to respond to its theme of the challenges of getting children to sleep…*

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Supporting photo(s): Archive photos of children in 40's/50's/60's.

Supporting props(s): Baby Clothes / Rattle / Child's blanket.

Supporting sensory object(s): Warm mild, soft wool yarn (to represent blanket), milk bottle sweets.

Discussion idea: Ask people why they were given their name; or the meaning of their name. This is a particularly good activity if your group is new and getting to know each other. Some people might not remember, or not have a story to tell, so if you do this activity make sure you research the meaning behind the names of the people in your group first. That way you can tell *them*. This can be done easily on websites or in baby – naming books, which are easy to find at the library.

A personal story: Think about a story you can tell about your own experiences – you might be comfortable telling a story about your own children (if you have them) or perhaps you can talk about your own parents. It just needs to be a simple anecdote or incident about family life. For example:

- A time you were particularly naughty as a child…and your comeuppance!
- Putting children to bed (goes particularly well with 'Cuddle Doon').
- Children loosing their first teeth and being 'the tooth fairy'.

Conversation topics:

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Grandparents and Grandchildren

Grandchild

By Pauline Prior Pitt

Before he's born you can't understand
what the fuss is about. You're not
even bothered about having one.

Friends bore you with incessant chat
about their sleeping patterns, eating patterns,
bowel movements, the funny things they say.

They always have packs of photos
taken from every angle, and you
wonder if they know there's a war on.

And then your own love affair begins.
He is exceptionally beautiful of course
everyone will want to see the photographs,

will want to listen when you tell them
all the funny things he does, how well he sleeps
how very, very special he is.

And your dear grandmother friends
who know all about this obsessive love
indulge you, agreeing he is exceptionally beautiful.

And you discover that their incessant chat
about their grandchildren is compelling
and the war can wait.

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About the poem: *If you work with people who have grandchildren this poem can be a great introduction to conversations about how it feels to be a grandparent. It describes the great detail people can go into describing their own grandchildren, the feelings of the person who has to listen…. and the pride and love when you have your own grandchildren. Are these feelings familiar?*

Supporting photo(s):

- Baby photos.

Supporting props(s):

- Baby Clothes / Rattle / Child's blanket.

Activity: if appropriate for your group and all participants are comfortable with sharing, consider asking people to share photographs of their own relations and talk to the group about them.

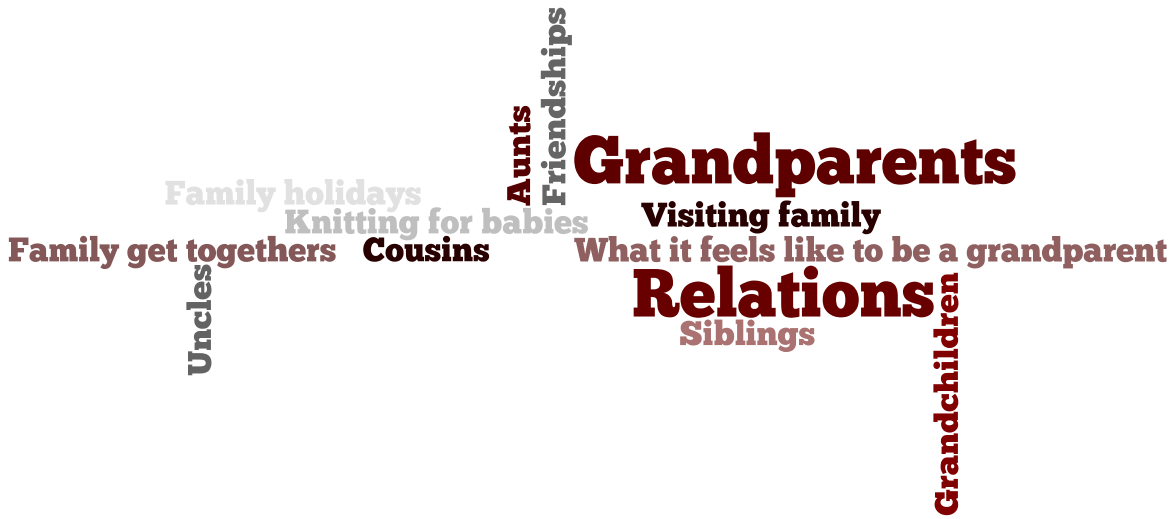
A personal story: Do you remember your own grandparents or another favourite relation? Tell a story about them, their lives and what they were like; or your memories of them. You could:

- Talk about visiting your grandparents as a child
- Talk about whether you saw them regularly, or very rarely
- Talk about friendships with your grandparents

Or, do you have grandchildren yourself? If you are comfortable to do so, tell the group a little about your grandchildren:

- Do you recognise the feelings in the poem? If so, tell the group a little about this.
- Do you have a funny story or anecdote about your grandchild/children?

Conversation topics:



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Living Voices Resource Pack: Family

Images

1. Master Baby

Use with the poems ‘Grandchild’ and/or ‘Cuddle Doon’. Talk about what is happening in the picture; what does parenthood feel like?

2. Sir John Halkell and Family

Use with the poem ‘Father, Mother and Me’ – talk about different sizes of family – this one is rather larger than the one in the poem!

3. A Day Dream

This picture shows two children on a riverbank, it is a good resource for exploring the theme of siblings, especially as there is not a poem/story included on this topic.

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1. Master Baby, by Sir William Quiller Orchardson, 1886

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2. Sir John Halkett of Pitfirrane, 4th Bart (1720 - 93), Mary Hamilton, Lady Halkett and their Family, by David Allan (1781)

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3. A Day Dream, By Edward Arthur Walton (1885)

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Living Voices Resource Pack: Family

Families playlist – consider for background music on cd/mp3 or to sing	
• 'When I'm 64', The Beatles	• 'Wooden Heart', Elvis Presley
• 'Chapel of Love', The Dixie Cups	• 'Love & Marriage', Frank Sinatra
• 'Mhairi's Wedding'	• 'Colter's Candy'
• 'Oh ye cannae shove yer grannie off the bus'	• Traditional Lullabies
Families– ideas for supporting photographs	
• Photos of your own relatives • Archive pictures of children in 40s, 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s	• Residents' photos of family/weddings etc. • Archive pictures of weddings in 40s, 50s, 60s, 70s, 80s
Families- ideas for supporting objects and sensory items	
• Wedding dress/veil (or pictures)	• Confetti
• Garter	• Silk Rose Petals
• 'Old, new, borrowed, blue' items	• Tin cans on string
• Wedding Hat	• Wedding Favours
• Love heart sweets	• Horseshoes
• Jelly babies	• Baby clothes
• Iced Fruitcake	• Terry nappy
• Rusks	• Baby bottle
• Matinee Jacket	• Shawl
• Christening Bracelet or Mug	• Child/baby knitting patterns and knitted clothes
• Lullaby Mobile/ Music Box	• Family objects or heirlooms, e.g. inherited or given by a loved family member
• Milk teeth/locks of hair	
• Toys	
• Castor Oil/syrup of figs/Cod Liver Oil	• Baby/toddler's shoes

More Ideas

Other poems that have been used by Living Voices:

Marriage and Relationships

- **Anthologies of wedding poems** are a good way to source poems about love, marriage and making a lifelong commitment to someone. Try:
  - *Handfast: Poems for Weddings and Affirmations* (Scottish Poetry Library, 2004).
  - *Picador Book of Wedding Poems*, ed. Peter Forbes (Picador, 2012).

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- **Why it took so long** is a poem about finding love in later life. It is by Diana Hendry, you can find it in her book *Late Love & Other Whodunnits* (Mariscat Press, 2008).
- **The Owl and the Pussy Cat**, by Edward Lear, a well-loved classic. www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poetry/poems/owl-and-pussy-cat

Childhood and Parenthood

- **Sarah: Fed up**, Janet Paisley, in *100 Favourite Scottish Poems*, ed. Stewart Conn (Luath, 2006).
- **Lord Ullin's Daughter**, by Thomas Campbell, a popular poem about a father forgiving his daughter – but too late. www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poetry/poems/lord-ullins-daughter
- **The Sair Finger**, by Walter Wingate - helping with a splinter! www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poetry/poems/sair-finger
- **The Land of Story-Books**, by Robert Louis Stevenson – a boy imagines the adventures he finds in stories as his parents sit by the fire. www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poetry/poems/land-story-books

Other relations

- **The Boy on the Train** by Mary Campbell Smith is a well-loved poem about visiting a grandparent. www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poetry/poems/boy-train
- **Grandpa's Soup** by Jackie Kay is a poem about soup, but also about loving, remembering and valuing grandparents. www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poetry/poems/grandpas-soup
- **Your Aunties** by Liz Lochhead a funny poem about aunties and great to perform out loud, in *The Colour of Black and White: Poems 1984-2003* (Polygon, 2005).
- **Aunty Mary had a Canary…** is a rhyme many in your group may remember from childhood – there are many variations, lots quite rude!

Other sources to find your own poems:

- For a selection of poems about relations try the anthology *Kin, Scottish poems about family*, (Scottish Poetry Library, 2009). The Scottish Poetry Library website has a selection of other poems on families, explore them at: www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poetry/tags/families

Other materials you can use:

- Find and read different **wedding vows** – they can prompt interesting discussions, for example on wives 'obeying' husbands.
- **Real life relationship advice:** agony aunts, advice books etc. Modern or old-fashioned. There are lots of modern anthologies of old-fashioned advice available cheaply (e.g. the *Don'ts for Husbands*; *Don'ts for Wives* and *Don'ts for Weddings*, re-published by A&C Black Childrens & Educational in 2010).
- **Traditional proverbs** and sayings about love and marriage – what do you know yourself? What are the group's favourites? Is there a grain of truth in the proverb?

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