

Living in poor areas quickens ageing process

By **Richard Elias**

LIVING in a stressful area is directly related to ageing faster, according to new research.

A study by Scots experts found that people who reported problems in their local area – such as assaults, burglaries, litter and vandalism – had noticeably higher biological age.

The reported problems in people's environment also included muggings, smells and fumes and disturbances by children or youngsters.

Experts analysed part of an individual's DNA known as telomeres to come up with their result. They are a marker for biological ageing which give a measure of 'miles on the clock,' or person's biological age.

Telomere length is a biological marker of age that gets shorter over time and the effect was found to be more marked among women.

Stressful

The study is a collaboration between social scientist Professor Anne Ellaway, from the University of Glasgow, and Prof Paul Shiels at the University's Institute of Cancer Sciences.

Prof Ellaway said: "Our research showed that chronic neighbourhood stressors were associated with accelerated ageing – and the effect was more marked on women.

"We think this may be because women spend more time in the local neighbourhood, and/or because men and women process stressful environments differently in ways which might lead to different physiological responses. Therefore, improving run-down areas may combat this acceleration in ageing."

Prof Shiels said: "The positive news is that neighbourhood environ-

ments are potentially modifiable, and future efforts directed towards improving disadvantaged local environments may be useful to lessen the effects how fast people age."

