

the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are aged 65 and over has increased by 1.5 million (1990-1999) and is projected to increase by a further 1.5 million by 2010 (Office for National Statistics, 2000).

There is a growing awareness of the need to develop strategies to meet the needs of the ageing population. The Department of Health (1999) has identified the need to develop a new paradigm of care for the ageing population, one that is based on the concept of 'active ageing'. This paradigm is based on the idea that older people should be able to live independently, to participate in social and community activities, and to maintain their physical and mental health. The Department of Health (1999) has identified a number of key areas for action, including: (1) the need to improve the physical and mental health of older people; (2) the need to improve the social and community participation of older people; and (3) the need to improve the independence of older people.

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