

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 of 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'.

The concept of 'active ageing' is defined by the World Health Organization (1999) as:

...the process of developing and maintaining the functional abilities that enable people to participate in society to the greatest extent possible as they age (World Health Organization 1999).

The concept of 'active ageing' is based on the idea that people should be able to live independently, participate in social activities and maintain their physical and mental health.

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