

the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are aged 65 and over has increased from 10.5 to 13.5 million (1990–2000) and is projected to increase to 17.5 million by 2020 (Office for National Statistics 2001).

There is a growing awareness of the need to develop strategies to support the ageing population. The Department of Health (2000) has identified the need to develop a 'new paradigm' for the care of the elderly, one that is based on the concept of 'active ageing' and 'active living' (Department of Health 2000). This paradigm is based on the idea that older people should be able to live independently, actively and healthily, and that they should be able to contribute to society.

The Department of Health (2000) has identified a number of key areas for action in order to achieve this paradigm. These include: (1) promoting healthy living; (2) supporting independence; (3) promoting social participation; (4) promoting active living; and (5) promoting health and well-being.

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