

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). The number of people aged 65 and over is projected to increase by 2.5 million by 2020 (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 published a strategy for the ageing population, which sets out the government's commitment to improve the health and social care of older people. The strategy is based on the following principles: (1) to improve the health and social care of older people; (2) to ensure that older people are able to live independently; (3) to ensure that older people are able to participate in society; and (4) to ensure that older people are able to live in their own homes.

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