

the 1990s, the number of people in the UK who are aged 65 and over has increased from 10.5 million to 13.5 million (19.5% of the population).

There is a growing awareness of the need to address the needs of older people, and the Government has set out a strategy for the 21st century in the White Paper on *Ageing Better: A Strategy for the 21st Century* (Department of Health 1999). This sets out a vision of a society in which older people are able to live well, and to contribute to society. It also sets out a number of key objectives for the health care system, including:

- to improve the health and well-being of older people;
- to ensure that older people have access to the services they need to live well;
- to ensure that older people are able to contribute to society.

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