

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: Our Future* (Department of Health, 1999). This paper sets out the following objectives:

- (i) to improve the health and well-being of older people;
- (ii) to improve the quality of life of older people;
- (iii) to improve the opportunities for older people to contribute to society;
- (iv) to improve the support available to older people.

The White Paper also sets out a number of key principles which will guide the development of the strategy:

- (i) to support older people to live independently and to be active and engaged in their communities;
- (ii) to ensure that older people are able to live in their own homes and communities for as long as possible;
- (iii) to ensure that older people are able to access the services and support that they need;
- (iv) to ensure that older people are able to contribute to society.

The White Paper also sets out a number of key actions which will be taken to achieve these objectives:

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