

NORTH WEST FORUM ON AGEING



Everybody's future

North West Regional Framework for Ageing



Responding to demographic change
Executive Summary

Everybody's future

North West Regional Framework for Ageing: Responding to Demographic Change

Section One – Setting the Scene

Over the next twenty years, society faces the challenge of unprecedented demographic change, driven largely by increasing longevity and a declining birth rate, following the post-war baby boom. The impacts of these changes will be considerable and affect every area of society. As a result there is an urgent need for the North West to act quickly to address the implications and the opportunities presented by an ageing society.

According to a report from the Office of National Statistics published in June 2008, by 2030 the number of people in the North West aged 50 and over will increase by 25%, while the number of people aged 60 and over will rise by 40%. (See Figure 1.1).

Predicted population change for people aged 50 and over across the North West

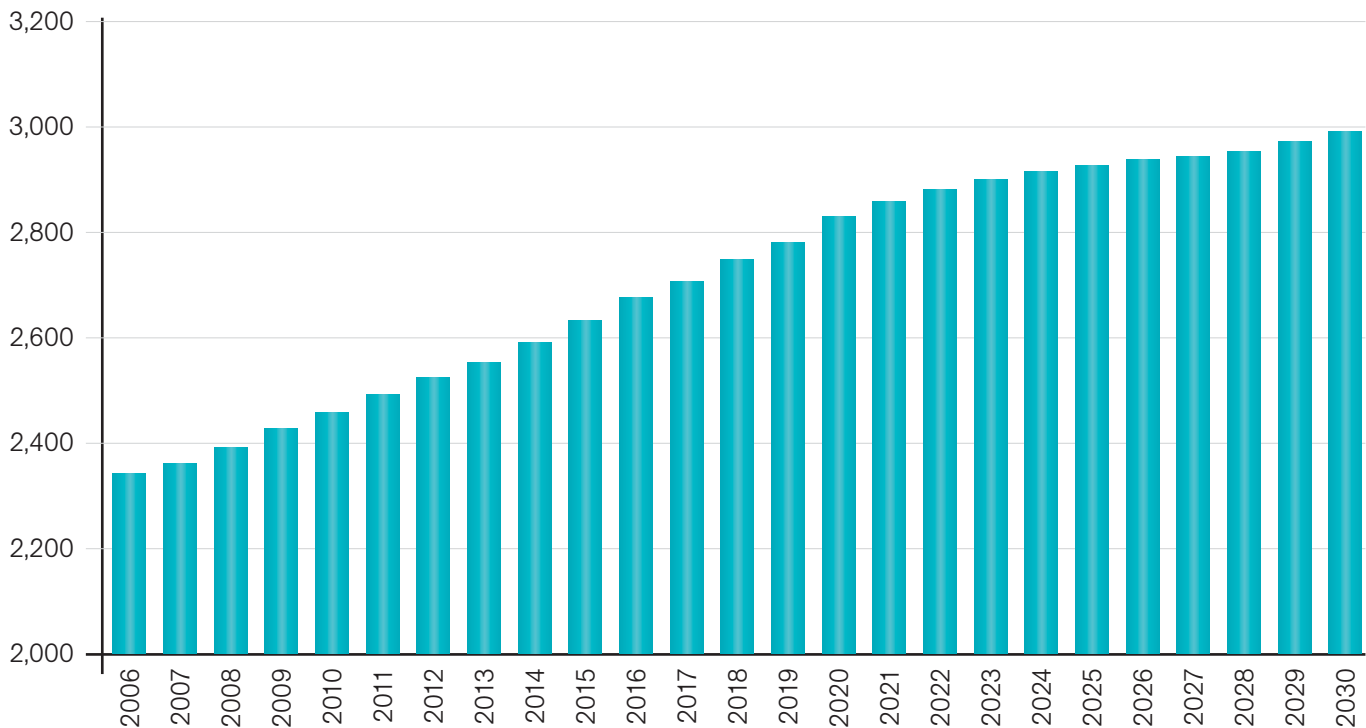


Figure 1.1

To download the full North West Regional Framework for Ageing visit www.5050vision.com

Unless action is taken the consequences of demographic change could be far-reaching for the region's economy and communities, resulting in labour and skills shortages, falling productivity and inequalities in the health and wealth of the population.

To deal successfully with the implications of an ageing population means eradicating outdated stereotypes and changing attitudes towards work, retirement and the process of growing older in our society. Plans and policies need to be considered carefully, to ensure they are sensitive towards people living longer and the complex social and personal implications which arise as a result.

The lead agencies involved in producing Everybody's Future – the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA), NHS North West, 4NW, the Regional Leaders Forum North West, Government Office North West, North West Care Services Improvement Partnership and Department of Health North West, all recognise the need to work together, through the strategic partnership of 5050vision, to create a framework that offers a consistent policy approach.

In total, around 150 partners and stakeholders have contributed to the development of the full Everybody's Future report, including representatives from business, public sector, voluntary and third sector organisations, together with community and special interest groups and forums, and specialist and expert groups.

The proposals in the report are designed to inform the North West's strategy for responding to demographic change. The aim is to influence the new Regional Strategy for England's Northwest spanning 2010 – 2030, which is currently being developed by the NWDA, 4NW and their partners and ultimately to create a better future for everyone.

Planning for Change

It is essential that public, private and not-for-profit organisations plan an effective response to demographic change. By implementing practical medium and long term policies, organisations and communities can ensure maximum benefit.

By planning and coordinating their actions, organisations in all sectors can make the most of the opportunities that demographic change will bring, while lessening the risks to the quality of life and maintaining the advantages the North West has to offer.

The pioneering regional proposals outlined in the report are designed to help businesses, organisations and communities act now. The Framework provides direction and support for those making major policy and investment decisions to ensure their policies consider the changing demographics of the population – otherwise known as 'age-proofing.'

Employing the Over 50s

Over the next 20 years, the number of people living longer and healthier lives will grow dramatically in relation to those aged between 15 and 60 years. This will result in a huge increase in the ratio of non-working people to working people in the region (the age dependency ratio). In some areas this rise will be even more acute. The ratio is set to soar in areas such as Cumbria where, according to a report by Experian in January 2008, 'Demography, Migration and Diversity in the North West', it will almost match that in Japan where the figure is the highest in the developed world.

These inter-regional variations signal further problems for rural and coastal regions, such as Cheshire, where the percentage of people 65+ is increasing the most rapidly. Partly due to the outward migration trend among younger people towards cities and inward migration of 'retirees', the under 50 workforce will be insufficient to meet the local demands arising from the large number of elderly people, some with extensive health and social care needs.

Unless the North West can employ those who are over 50 in significant numbers, its core labour and skills supply will suffer enormously and impact directly on maintaining and achieving economic growth in the region.

Currently, the North West's Gross Value Added (GVA), which measures the contribution to the economy of each individual producer, industry or sector in the UK, is 12% lower than the England average. The GVA created by the traditionally younger working population will not be sufficient to compensate for the lower economic activity rates of older people.

Employing the over 50s is not only an opportunity to achieve economic benefit through retaining the older population as a workforce, it can also help organisations respond to the growing importance of the 'silver pound' or ageing markets.

Although the equalisation and increase in the State Pension Age are important milestones, these do not address the scale of the challenge the 50+ generation faces in prolonging their working lives and striving to create a secure financial future.

Raising Awareness

Lower numbers of the over 50s in work and fewer young people in the population will affect the North West's GVA, as labour and critical skills shortages will compromise business, public and voluntary sectors.

There is an opportunity for the North West to take a lead role nationally by adopting a proactive response to demographic change. In addition, there is potential to work alongside growing European Union interest in the implications of demographic change and increasing longevity.

Indeed, in a November 2008 Department of Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform report, the Government identified demographic change as a key challenge if the UK is to compete and prosper globally. Moreover, current economic difficulties must not be allowed to divert attention or resources from longer term regional planning around this issue. By planning for demographic change now, the North West can maintain a workforce which meets the expected demand for skills, and plan strategies to sustain health and wellbeing, such as choosing to continue to work and contribute to society. Housing, transport and leisure needs should be designed and tailored to meet the choices of the 50+ population.

Raising awareness of the issues surrounding our ageing society will help policy and decision makers challenge attitudes and perceptions towards people over 50, in turn encouraging positive views, and experience of living longer.

Businesses can test how fit for purpose their existing and future policies are using the Key Questions in Section Three of the full report to 'age-proof'.

Section Two – Key Pillars and Building Blocks

To successfully respond to the challenges of demographic change, action needs to focus on four key pillars:

1. Economy
2. Housing
3. Transport
4. Health and wellbeing

These are supplemented by the common themes of equality and diversity, creating sustainable communities, choice, information, intelligence and advice. These interdependent blocks are critical in how they impact on the North West's older population and how they secure the opportunities the ageing demographic offers.

It is important to remember that the over 50 group spans at least three generations. As well as different ages, there will be differing views, values, needs and expectations represented. Planners should take these differences into account when developing intervention, investment and infrastructure policies.

Within Section Two of the full report, the issues, priorities for action and anticipated results surrounding the four building blocks are explored fully. It also contains suggestions on what strategic partners can do to achieve the outcomes set out within the Framework.

1. Economy

The first pillar is the economy, which is seen as the bedrock to success in the North West. In 2004 an Age Concern Report, *The Economic Contribution of Older People*, stated the over 50s in the region created 23% of the region's wealth. However, there is also a higher rate of inactivity amongst them with the Office of National Statistics reporting in February 2008 that 47% of incapacity benefit claimants in the North West are over 50.

Although the number of people aged 50 to 65 will rise, their participation rate in employment is lower than younger generations. To plug the labour supply gap, overall employment needs to be increased, including the over 65 population, raising the number of people aged 50 to 65 in work from 72% to 80%, while the available workforce needs to be healthy and possess the correct skills.

2. Housing

Housing demand is increasing due to the number of smaller and single person households, which in turn is influenced by improvements in health and longevity. The availability of affordable and suitable housing needs to rise to match the growth and needs of people over 50 in the North West. This will also help to eliminate fuel poverty, where households cannot afford to heat their home adequately, and create housing which promotes community contact.

3. Transport

As the proportion of older people in the North West increases, regional strategies must take into account the changing needs of the population. For 50-plus people the importance of transport – including walking, cycling, motoring or public transport is widely recognised. The growth in people claiming concessionary or subsidised travel (at both on and off peak times) could potentially put financial pressure on transport authorities. Priorities should include easy access to transport, looking at eligibility criteria for reduced-cost travel and rail and road investment for long-term variations in demand and use.

4. Health & Wellbeing

Demographic changes affecting the North West will have a number of health and social care implications. Increased longevity leads to more demand for services. The most effective response to increased demand is 'positive ageing', where people are encouraged and supported to maintain healthy, active lifestyles, stay in jobs, enjoy more choice and social interaction. Policies therefore need to place greater emphasis on prevention and longer term fitness, influencing health improvement and the reduction of health inequalities.

Section Three – Next Steps

By June 2009, the partner organisations involved in drawing up the North West Regional Framework for Ageing aim to agree clear leadership arrangements to ensure the Framework's implementation and full integration with the overall Regional Strategy for England's Northwest, which is due for launch in 2010. A celebrity 'ambassador' role has also been proposed.

Sponsoring organisations must continue to work in partnership and, because of the complexities involved in demographic change, 5050vision should continue to take the lead in maintaining stakeholder commitment and distributing evidence and good practice related to the ageing agenda. This will continue to ensure that 5050vision, the North West Forum on Ageing, continues to be seen as a model to be emulated in other regions because of its beneficial multi-agency approach.

After developing a preferred management model, it is intended that partner organisations will nominate or appoint a North West executive lead to support delivery of the Framework's outcomes, create a formal Partnership Management Board comprising of a designated member from an agency involved, and commission new North West stakeholder engagement arrangements.

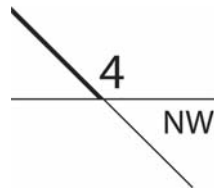
Section Four – North West Priorities for Action

At a glance North West priorities for action

Economic	Housing	Transport	Health and wellbeing
Achieve current employment rate target of 80%	Increased affordable and suitable housing to match the growth in the numbers of over 50s in the North West	Public transport vehicle operating conditions need to meet needs of older travellers	Tackle health inequalities experienced by particular groups in the 50+ population
Demographic change will require the Region to employ increasing numbers of 50+ to replace the shortfall from the 18-50 pool.	Sufficient supply and range of high quality accommodation to meet demands arising from the demographic change	Integrated travel planning needs to incentivise and optimise access to appropriate modes of transport	Plan for longer term fitness and health of population
Increase options for flexible retirement and working	Housing conditions promotes choice, independence and wellbeing	Rural options and priorities identified in face of ageing population, depopulation of villages and environmental constraints	Focus on prevention of ill health and early interventions to reduce the impact of disease processes
Engage and influence employers to change employment practice and to utilise the benefits of the 50+ workforce	Suitable housing available for 'vulnerable groups'	Tackling congestion in metropolitan areas	Reduce negative impact economic exclusion/ inability to participate in the workforce
Audit and forecast skills gaps	Create opportunities for people to release equity in their homes	Managing balance of demand in rural areas, particularly tourist 'honey-pots'	Provide choice about care and provider of care/services to meet specified needs
Region to maintain and improve productivity (GVA) through 50+ contribution	Reduction of the number of people/households that experience fuel poverty	Rail and road investment for long-term changes in demand and use	Increase demand for integrated, accessible services closer to home
Recognise and develop indicators to put a cost value to 'unpaid' work or to release resources for others to work	Reduce known risks faced by frail elderly	Greater numbers eligible for subsidised and concessionary access to public transport. Clearer targeting of benefits	
Improve its business start up rates, NW currently 18% below the England average	Create range of housing options that promotes intergenerational mix and social inclusion	Integrate fares and ticketing systems	
Forecast the reduction in the 18-50 market	Support choice of community and accommodation to suit life stages		
Maximise 50+ customer base, maximise 50+ new markets	Create range of housing options that promotes intergenerational mix and social inclusion		
	Support choice of community and accommodation to suit life stages		



The following organisations sponsored the development of the **Framework**



To download the full North West Regional Framework for Ageing visit www.5050vision.com