



PRESS RELEASE

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NORTH WEST ACTS TO DEFUSE DEMOGRAPHIC TIMEBOMB

England's Northwest today (24 April 2009) launched a bold new strategy to 'age-proof' its future – encouraging the abolition of the retirement age and positive action to retain more over-50s in the workforce.

Everybody's Future: A Framework for Ageing in the North West warns that, without drastic action to address the rapidly ageing population, the region faces labour and skills shortages and will struggle to maintain economic growth. It will also face huge disparities in health and wealth.

The forward-thinking strategy is the first attempt by a UK region to 'age-proof' its future policies and plan for the so-called 'demographic timebomb'. It presents a co-ordinated approach to planning for the region's economy, housing, transport and the health and wellbeing of the population.

The framework was developed by 5050vision, the North West Forum on Ageing, in partnership with the Northwest Regional Development Agency (NWDA) and a wide range of public, voluntary and private sector organisations.

The next two decades will see a 40 per cent rise in the number of over-60s living in the North West, and a relative decline in the number of people of working age. In some parts of the region, this will result in aged dependency ratios close to those in Japan – the highest in the developed world. ¹

Speaking at the official launch of the framework, NWDA Chief Executive Steven Broomhead said: "England's Northwest is entering a period of profound demographic change as the baby boomer generation comes of age.

“In response, the region’s key agencies have come together to develop a joined-up approach to the challenges and opportunities we face.

“This is a bold and far-reaching document that I believe will blaze a trail for the rest of the UK. I am proud that the Northwest has taken such a proactive role and I am confident that the framework will shape a better future for everyone in the region – young and old alike.”

Regional Minister Beverley Hughes said: “Our ageing population, especially the growing number of people over 50 at a time of extraordinary economic challenge, makes it imperative that we have clear strategies in place to address the specific needs of older people.

“This framework makes an important contribution to how government and the wider public sector responds.”

Liz North, Project Manager for 5050Vision, said: “Addressing the ageing population is not just about tackling problems. More people, living longer, healthier lives, also presents us with real opportunities – for example the chance to maintain economic growth by incorporating older people back into the workforce.

“I hope that the framework will increase national debate around this vital issue – and encourage other regions to consider their own response to demographic change.”

About the framework

- The framework was developed by 5050vision in partnership with: NWDA; Government Office North West; 4NW, the Regional Leaders’ Forum for the North West; NHS North West; the Department of Health North West; the Care Services Improvement Partnership (now the Joint Improvement Services Partnership); Age Concern and Help the Aged. www.5050vision.com
- The framework was written by Manchester-based consultancy Organisation Development Services (ODS), which co-ordinated a stakeholder engagement process involving representatives of more than 150 public, private and voluntary sector organisations. www.odsuk.com

- The framework aims to ensure a joined-up approach to planning for the changing demographic of the region – addressing issues including the local economy, housing, transport and health and wellbeing.

What happens next?

- All of the partner organisations involved in the development of the framework have committed to take forward their individual priorities. These include: securing European funding to address the priorities identified, and continuing to fund the work of 5050vision (NWDA); commissioning a review of specialist housing needs (4NW, the Regional Leaders' Forum for the North West); and lobbying for the abolition of the state retirement age (Age Concern).

***Everybody's Future: Regional Framework for Ageing in the North West* was launched at a stakeholder event at the Reebok Stadium, Bolton, on 24 April 2009. To download a copy of the framework, visit www.5050vision.com**

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1. Office of National Statistics figures published in June 2008 predicted that the North West of England will see a 40 per cent rise in its over 60s population between now and 2030. This will lead to a massive increase in the region's aged dependency ratio (the ratio of the non-working population to the working population). The North West's current aged dependency ratio of 0.3 is expected to rise to 0.42 between now and 2026. In some parts of the region the rise will be even more dramatic – coming close to the aged dependency ratio of Japan, the highest in the developed world.

Editor's notes

- 5050vision, the North West Forum on Ageing, is a strategic partnership which focuses on the issues facing people aged 50 and over. The partnership brings together a range of public, voluntary and private sector organisations and aims to ensure the implications of demographic change are addressed by policy and decision makers. The partnership, set up in 2003, was the first of its kind in the UK. www.5050vision.com
- *Everybody's Future: A Regional Framework for Ageing in the North West* – is the result of a partnership between 5050vision and: NWDA, Government Office North West, 4NW, NHS North West, DH North West, the Care Services Improvement Partnership (now the Joint Improvement Services Partnership), Age Concern and Help the Aged.
- The framework aims to ensure a coherent policy approach across the region to the implications of demographic change – providing strategic direction and practical support.

Media enquiries to: Libby Howard for 5050vision, tel. 07879 446277, email libby@lhpr.uk.com or Liz North, 5050vision project manager, tel. 07816 494633, email liz.north@nwda.co.uk.