

Public sector

Summary

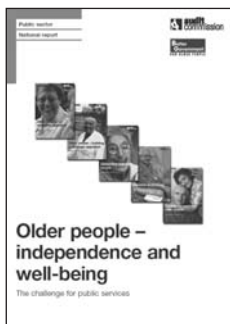


# Older people – independence and well-being

The challenge for public services

*The Audit Commission is an independent body responsible for ensuring that public money is spent economically, efficiently and effectively, to achieve high-quality local and national services for the public. Our work covers local government, housing, health, criminal justice and fire and rescue services.*

*As an independent watchdog, we provide important information on the quality of public services. As a driving force for improvement in those services, we provide practical recommendations and spread best practice. As an independent auditor, we monitor spending to ensure public services are good value for money.*



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### **We live in an ageing society. The shift in proportion, composition and attitudes of the older population has profound implications for public service.**

- most older people can now look forward to many more years of healthy life after retirement than ever before
- at the same time, our society is becoming more diverse and expectations are changing

### **We need to see a fundamental shift if we are to meet the aspirations of older people.**

- we need to stop thinking in terms of dependence and deficit and start thinking about independence, well-being and citizenship
- older people whose health has begun to fail also need new forms of support, including new technology, to allow them to enjoy life as fully as possible

### **When they are asked, older people are clear about what independence means to them, and what factors help them to maintain it.**

- having choices and exercising control are important, so is **interdependence** – which is making a valued contribution to the community
- key dimensions of independence involve having a safe comfortable home, being close to friends and amenities in a safe neighbourhood, being able to take part in social activities, keeping busy, getting out and about and using transport, paying for new expenses, knowing how to find the way around the system and having good access to health services and advice on how to stay healthy

### **Some councils are already using their community leadership role, working with older people and partners to improve the lives of their older citizens.**

- strategic approaches to older people, independence and well-being must have the views of older people at their heart and should go beyond care services to tackle the range of issues that older people see as most important

### **All councils and their partners should now respond to the challenge for change by securing...**

- a strategy which goes beyond care services, addresses older people's priorities and employs strong partnerships and whole systems approaches
- processes to involve older people, keep them informed and up to date and use their views in designing provision and evaluating its impact
- information on the local population of older people and future trends
- commitment and leadership, reflected in specific organisational roles
- a comprehensive range of care services, including proactive support and assistive technology, that are underpinned by values of citizenship and tackling ageism
- co-ordinated and comprehensive support for carers

### **The Audit Commission, in partnership with other regulators, is committed to playing its part in advancing this agenda. We will...**

- contribute to the continuing review of the National Service Framework for older people and incorporate the criteria for successful performance into the comprehensive performance assessment for 2005 onwards