



## Older People

### Where we are now

Older people make up a significant percentage of the population within East Sussex. This percentage is set to grow as people live longer and also move into the county to retire. The number of very elderly (85+) is predicted to rise by over 60% by 2026. Older people are also among the most active members of society and this picture is strongly replicated in East Sussex. There is evidence to suggest that populations with large numbers of people in older age groups have high levels of skills, time and energy that produce significant economic outcomes as well as social dividends for local communities.

Services are being delivered through the Joint Commissioning Strategy for Older People which reflect the needs and aspirations of older people. Much work has already been done to increase participation by older people in planning these services. Seniors' forums have been established in District and Borough Council areas, brought together under the countywide East Sussex Seniors Association. In addition, District and Borough housing authorities, NHS East Sussex Downs and Weald, NHS Hastings and Rother and East Sussex County Council have carried out surveys and run consultation workshops for people over 50 to consult them on their future housing and support needs. The results of these consultations are being fed into locality Housing and Support Strategies for Older People. Local older people, service users and carers have also been involved in the design, purchasing and monitoring care and support services and major investment projects.

There are approximately 18,000 older people living in low-income households in East Sussex, and the proportion of older people living in low-income households has increased from just under 11% in 2004 to nearly 14% in 2007. In Hastings, more than one-in-five older people live in low-income households. Low incomes, coupled with poor housing and transport access for example, can lead to other problems such as poor health and isolation. We must therefore do more to tackle poverty, and encourage the take up of benefits, grants and support services.

### The Challenges Ahead

We want East Sussex to be a county that values the contribution that older people make to our community and ensures they are able to make a contribution for as long as they want to by providing services that keep them healthy, independent and active. We also want to provide extra help and support to older people when they need it through a range of services that have been designed and developed with their input. To do this we need to ensure flexibility and choice in health, social care and housing services. We need to enable people to live healthy and active lives for as long as possible and to work proactively with an older workforce to get the most out of the contribution they can make to the county's economy and prosperity. We also need to work with carers of all ages to make sure they have the support they need to care for older family members and others, whilst developing the full range of strong community-based support services to enable people to stay in their own homes for as long as possible.

**Our strategic priority for 2026** is to support older people and carers to have a healthy, active and independent life

**Our key tasks** (listed below) are integrated into the themes.

Underpinning them will be to ensure that older people continue to be involved in, and consulted about, the services that do, or may, affect them.

- Develop high quality, modern and efficient health, social care and housing support services
- Provide opportunities for continued learning and development in later life
- Assist older people and carers to play an active part in community life and have a collective voice
- Provide access to activities that promote a healthy lifestyle
- Assist older people and carers to gain better access to services and transport, and those on lower incomes to gain better access to financial support and benefit