



BGS

British Geriatrics Society
Improving healthcare
for older people



STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-29

Introduction

The population is ageing.

People are generally living longer but often with complex interacting health conditions in older age. Our health system needs a clear focus on the population group who use health services the most - older people - and we must ensure that this system is fit for the future, to cater for the growing ageing population.

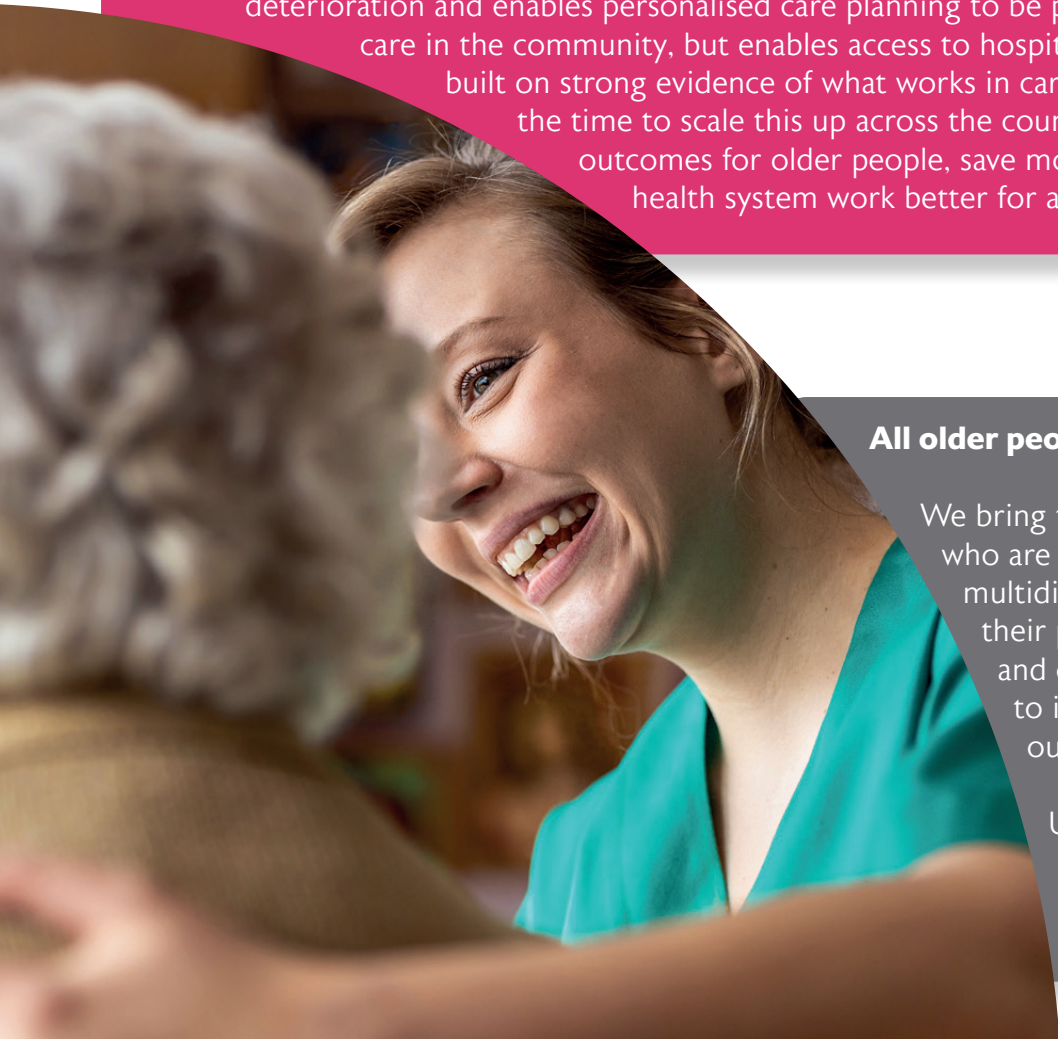
Reforms to the silo-based NHS structures of old have the potential to deliver care that is holistic, joined-up and person-centred. High-quality care like this, attuned to the needs of older people living with long term conditions, including frailty and dementia, is already being delivered in different parts of the UK. It is aligned to the local population's needs. It is proactive in early management of signs of deterioration and enables personalised care planning to be put in place. It is centred around care in the community, but enables access to hospital care for acute episodes. It is built on strong evidence of what works in caring for older people. Now is the time to scale this up across the country. This will improve health outcomes for older people, save money for the NHS and help the health system work better for all its users.



All older people should expect good healthcare.

We bring together healthcare professionals across the four countries of the UK, who are committed to ensuring older people experience good care. Our 5,600 multidisciplinary members are the lifeblood of the BGS. The BGS supports them in their professional practice, helping them to learn, develop, and educate themselves and others. We also use our expertise to advocate for older people's care, seeking to influence those making policy, programme and resource decisions that affect outcomes for older people.

United by a common purpose, together we can drive change in the availability and quality of care for older people at local, regional and national levels across the four countries of the UK. This Plan sets out what we want to achieve and the part the BGS will play in making that happen.



Our vision
is of a society where all
older people receive
high-quality, personalised
care when and where
they need it.



Our mission
is to improve
healthcare
for older people.

This means
supporting the
multiprofessional workforce
who deliver that care with
education, training, clinical
resources, research evidence
and the networks and
commitment of a strong
community.

It also means
influencing how
health systems and
policies are designed
and implemented.



This means enabling
and supporting older
people to lead independent,
healthy, happy lives in their
communities for as long as
possible.



The unique role of the BGS

The BGS has a unique role in breaking down the silos of disciplines, professions, care settings and specialties to enable holistic care.

This is because our members come from many healthcare professions across the four countries of the UK and work across different care settings. They are skilled in delivering person-centred holistic care for older people. It is that ability to see the whole person that distinguishes our workforce and specialty. It also gives us insight into individuals' experience of the health and care system: an experience that is currently fragmented, fraught with delays and duplication and often insufficiently focused on what is most important to people.

Older people are the group who use health and care services the most. Getting the system right for them not only delays the onset and progression of disabling health conditions, but improves their quality of life, saves the NHS money and enables the system to work better for all its users.

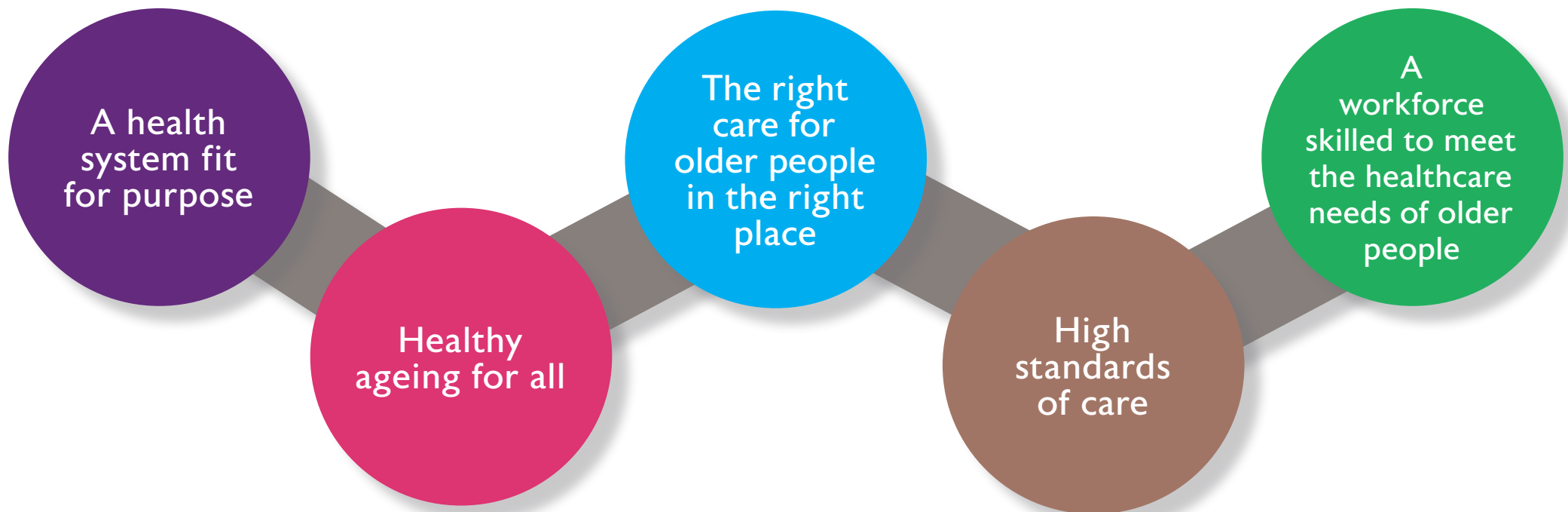
The BGS is uniquely equipped to offer policy, clinical and research expertise on older people's needs to help address the significant challenges facing the delivery of healthcare in the UK.



What we want to achieve

Over the next three years, the BGS will work collaboratively with others towards achieving five strategic outcomes. We do not believe the BGS alone can achieve these significant goals but we believe we play an instrumental role in showing what good care for older people looks like at service and system levels, promoting evidence-based practice and advocating for older people.

This Strategic Plan comes at a time of considerable strain within the health and care system. The impact of the COVID pandemic in 2021/22 is still being felt, compounded by economic and political pressures at a global, national and regional level that challenge the traditional model and resources of the NHS. Transformation is needed. The BGS will bring its expertise, community and solutions to that task, with a focus on those who have the most complex needs and who use health and care services the most. Ageing is a universal condition and care needs are greatest towards the later stages of life.



These ambitions will need to be met by a renewed focus on the basics of good care for older people. This does not only involve specialists, but also many other healthcare professionals who provide care for older people. We accept our responsibility in providing accessible information, training and practical guidance to better equip this wider workforce to care for older people with long-term conditions including frailty and dementia.


Our aims: What we will do to achieve these ambitions

A health system fit for purpose

The health system across the UK is not currently designed to meet the needs of those who use it most. We will contribute to the transformational change needed to modernise the system for current and future users, bringing our experience, expertise and solutions to influence how system design and implementation can better serve older people's needs.

We will

- Advocate for better design and delivery of the health and care system in the four countries of the UK around the needs of older people.
- Encourage national, regional and local commissioners to implement models of care and services for older people as set out in evidence-based reports such as the BGS Blueprint and supporting documents.
- Help to demonstrate through research and practice how integrated systems attuned to those living with frailty, dementia and long-term conditions deliver improved outcomes for older people, aid flow and better utilise NHS resources.
- Champion the use of technology where this benefits the care of older people, remaining alert to the risks of digital exclusion.
- Promote good practice in the use of data and AI through examples and practical resources, to help streamline patient identification and care delivery.



The disparity in life chances and health between those in the poorest versus the most affluent parts of the UK is significant and widening. Mental and physical health in older age is largely down to genes, fortune and external circumstances, including social determinants of health. To counter these pervasive structural inequalities, we will support healthy ageing, prevention and rehabilitation initiatives and challenge inequality of access and experience for older people using the health and care system.

Healthy ageing for all

We will

- Support healthy ageing and public health campaigns led by partners that encourage activity, nutrition, hydration, social interaction and purpose, so that older people are supported to maintain independence and quality of life for as long as possible.
- Champion proactive care via population health management to identify those at risk of frailty and to delay its onset or slow its progress.
- Encourage and promote good practice in the provision of prehabilitation and rehabilitation to enhance prospects for recovery following illness or injury.
- Campaign for the provision of better end of life care for older people, by promoting good person-centred practice, highlighting that the majority of those who die each year do so in older age with progressive long-term conditions, and supporting upskilling of the generalist frontline workforce.
- Represent older people and the professionals who care for them in the development and implementation of any new legislation on assisted dying that may come into force, to help ensure appropriate safeguards.
- Help to mitigate the climate crisis by promoting sustainable practices in healthcare for older people, including more efficient use of resources and minimising waste, via information, guidance and peer exchange.
- Challenge ageism that leads to unequal access or experience for older people, or groups within the older population, and empower healthcare professionals to address such inequalities.
- Champion and facilitate the inclusion of older people in research and service design, both within specialist services for older people and across the whole health and social care system.



The right care for older people in the right place

The majority of older people live at home and the strengthening of services in the community, nearer to where they live, is an important part of making healthcare more accessible and person-centred. We support integrated care, available close to home where possible. When hospital attendance and admissions are needed, high-quality care should be available, minimising delays and the risks to older people that come from long stays.

We will

- Help to strengthen neighbourhood and community services that deliver proactive, ongoing and urgent care and rehabilitation for older people, at or close to home, by contributing expertise and developing useful resources.
- Advocate for effective management of older people's hospital care through best use of specialists in older people's care, front-door frailty services, value-adding interactions, timely transfers of care and continuity of care.
- Promote holistic person-centred care based on effective working between teams and disciplines, accessible data and patient information, and shared decision-making focused on honest conversations and what matters most to the individual.
- Work with partners to advocate for a sustainable solution to the social care crisis, and provide relevant educational resources for domiciliary and care home staff supporting the care of older people.
- Support research and amplify the resulting innovations, impactful practice and integrated solutions that build the evidence base for high-quality care of older people.


Evidence-based practice is a vital part of the care of older people, and we have an important role in supporting the generation, communication and implementation of such evidence. Because many older people have multiple long-term conditions, they present with complexity, requiring judgement by clinicians on the balance of benefits versus harms from interventions. This understanding of complexity and a holistic approach distinguish geriatric medicine from single-organ specialties. We help build healthcare professionals' knowledge and skills to deliver high-quality care for older people.

High
standards
of care

We will

- Curate resources, produce practical guidance, showcase examples and share good practice across key clinical areas of older people's healthcare.
- Ensure the BGS is the go-to place for expertise, information, advice, education, research and tools on the management of health in older age.
- Contribute to quality standards and efforts to reduce unwarranted regional variation.
- Support the generation and dissemination of robust evidence from research and evaluation to drive implementation of evidence-based clinical practice.
- Continue to advance the BGS journal, Age and Ageing, as the highest-impact clinical geriatrics journal in the world.
- Communicate and promote the basics of good care of older people to educate the wider workforce beyond our specialty, and the public.
- Provide a means of learning and exchange on all key topics within geriatric medicine to inform clinical practice and the generation and use of evidence.
- Promote holistic care in line with realistic medicine principles, which responds to older people's mental, physical and psychosocial needs and takes account of their personal wishes and the support around them.



A woman with short brown hair, wearing a patterned orange and black shirt, is seated in a blue exercise chair. She is holding a pink resistance band with both hands, pulling it upwards towards her head. The background shows a bright room with a window and a framed picture on the wall.

A workforce skilled to meet the healthcare needs of older people

Skilled healthcare professionals are essential for the delivery of high-quality care for older people. This involves education and training to equip the workforce with the capabilities, knowledge and behaviours to deliver expert care. Complementing formal training programmes for doctors and other healthcare professionals, the BGS provides scientific meetings, online webinars and courses, educational materials and information. We also campaign for the right workforce, optimally deployed to deliver good care for older people. Through our community we aim to foster job satisfaction and pride in the specialty.

We will

- Make the case for recruitment, retention, development and support of specialists in older people's healthcare, through a compelling narrative and analysis based on robust data.
- Deliver a wide array of education and learning opportunities with accredited CPD to support the geriatric medicine curriculum and the learning needs of those providing healthcare for older people.
- Advocate for a multi-professional approach to older people's care which values the contributions of different disciplines and makes best use of specialist skills.
- Support the wider workforce delivering care to older people by providing online learning in varied and accessible forms.
- Nurture emerging leaders in older people's care through training, information and leadership opportunities.
- Foster the wellbeing of professionals in older people's healthcare across all care settings, through the BGS community.
- Promote and support leadership, delivery and use of research by all members of the multiprofessional workforce to underpin best care for older people.
- Promote recruitment and flexible working approaches for roles in clinical and research settings, encouraging pride in working with older people.



Enabling actions

We will support delivery of this Strategic Plan:

By strengthening our membership

Members are fundamental to the BGS achieving its mission. We depend on individuals' willingness to be active in the Society, something they do on top of busy day jobs. Members act as office-bearers, taking on roles on committees, Special Interest Groups, the editorial board of Age and Ageing or the BGS Board of Trustees. They contribute by developing clinical resources, writing blogs, sharing resources on social media, speaking at scientific meetings, providing case studies, commenting on consultations, acting as media spokespeople, and much more. They provide the BGS's legitimacy and we aim to give them excellent member value. This Plan is informed by members' feedback from a survey conducted in May/June 2025. We aim to increase our membership significantly over the period 2026-29 from 5600 in October 2025 to 8500 by March 2029. We will strengthen ways members can be active within the BGS and the benefits they gain from doing so.

By working with others to achieve common goals

The BGS is part of a complex ecosystem; we have a unique contribution to make to improving older people's care, but we are one player amongst many. We commit to working with like-minded partners in the voluntary and community, public and private sectors to achieve our common goals. The BGS always aims to be constructive – to offer solutions rather than merely describing problems. We will build on our existing relationships across the four countries and forge new ones to create alliances committed to improving care for older people.

By innovation

This is a time of great technological and digital advances, many of which may benefit the care of older people. We will support research and innovation into how such advances can be harnessed to improve care and to overcome the digital exclusion experienced by some older people. Technological developments, digitisation, big data and AI can all support improved, more efficient care, and we will help our members explore their potential.

By increasing the sustainability of our business model

We have big ambitions for improving older people's healthcare across the UK. Over the last few years we have increased the range and visibility of our activities. We commit in this Plan to developing more sustainable income, particularly as we strive to reach beyond our specialty to provide accessible information and training about older people's care to wider health and care professionals. We will develop a detailed business plan setting out the path to achieving growth of an additional 25% annual income by the end of this Strategic Plan. Meanwhile we will retain a careful approach to cost control, and be aware of how the increased cost of living affects our members and older people.



By using our voice and brand

We have been advocating for older people's care for the last 80 years and we build on strong foundations. We will use our credible and authoritative voice to speak up for the rights of older people and to offer evidence-based examples of effective clinical practice. We aim to be timely and accessible in our communications, harnessing the power of our responsive network.

By sharing our clinical practice and research internationally

The UK is a world leader in geriatric medicine and while our main constituency is the UK, we have a responsibility to share our learning and expertise for the good of older people, wherever they live. In the first year of this Strategic Plan, we will develop our international approach, fostering mutually beneficial global connections and exploring how our global reach can contribute to our sustainability.

By harnessing our values and unique strengths

The BGS is proud to have multidisciplinary membership. Older people's care is a team sport, involving the skills and perspectives of different disciplines. Members work in different care settings, which enables us to speak with the authority that comes from experience of acute, primary and community care and the interface with social care. Health is devolved to the four nations of the UK. We are enriched by our engagement with different health systems, approaches and examples from England, Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales. Our values as BGS are closely aligned to our members' approach to providing care to older people: person-centred, inclusive, collaborative and proactive.

By monitoring progress and adapting as needed

The NHS is a complex system with many moving parts. The BGS must be ready to act nimbly to influence how older people's care develops over the coming period. We will monitor and measure progress, correcting course as needed during the three years of this Plan.

Conclusion

This Plan commits the BGS to act on the challenge from the Chief Medical Officer (England) in his 2023 Annual Report: *Maximising the health and therefore the life chances, of older adults should be seen as a major national priority, and one where we can make very significant progress.*

Working with our dynamic membership community, a committed workforce and partners, we believe it is possible to transform care for older people.

Over the next three years, working together, we will strive to ensure that all older people in the four countries of the UK receive high-quality joined-up care when and where they need it.

