



What do 60.2 million UK residents all have in common? Many of us would hate to admit it, but with each passing day we're all getting older!

In 1901 the average life expectancy was 45 years and that by 2025 it is forecast that it will have risen to over 80 years, and more than a third of the UK's population will be over 55 years-of-age.

Alongside, people's expectations for their quality of life and ability to participate in a wide range of activities are rising, and they have more resources with which to purchase assistive devices. These changes lie behind a rapid expansion of the demand for assistive technology, rehabilitation products and supportive services. As noted in a recent DTI report, the Assistive Technology and Telecare (ATT) sector offers exciting, demand driven opportunities for UK technology over the coming decade.

In South Yorkshire has one of the largest clusters of medical device manufacturers in the UK, with 8% of all companies. However, the region's businesses lag behind the rest of Europe in terms of R&D investment, and this is holding back the region's economic renewal.

To ensure that the region's businesses are well placed to exploit these opportunities, Objective One has supported and part-funded a £1.9 million Advanced Care Technologies (ACT) Programme. It will interact with organizations that develop, manufacture, provide and use assistive technologies to develop new and improved products and systems to support people with mobility or activity limitations.

The programme was jointly conceived by Professor Tony Warnes of SISA, University of Sheffield, and Professor Mark Hawley, Director of R&D and of Medical Physics and Clinical Engineering at Barnsley NHS Foundation Hospital Trust. It brings together ten collaborative partner organisations, from manufacturers and suppliers of telecare systems and response services, to care-home providers and older people's advocacy organisations.

The ACT Programme team and its partners will promote innovative and multi-disciplinary networks and collaborative partnerships between industry, university and the NHS, to raise the level of awareness of assistive technology and telecare across the region, they can investigate the most effective application of assistive technology and telecare to raise the quality of life for South Yorkshire's ageing population.

Two-thirds of the programme's resources will be dedicated to new R&D, and one-third to knowledge transfer activities. Both groups of activities will make strong contributions to the 'economic stimulation' and 'growth sector champion' roles of the programmes aims and objectives, which support many of the governments policies, across the UK, to support the growing needs of an ageing population. The programme has four main objectives:

1. To create and develop new ATT support and care products and delivery systems.
2. To work with manufacturing and delivery companies to raise the effectiveness and user acceptability of existing ATT products.
3. To provide companies with market intelligence that supports their expansion into new markets.
4. To stimulate increased research awareness, capacity and activity across South Yorkshire's businesses.

The programme and its Website will be launched on Tuesday 17th April 2007 at the University of Sheffield.

To find out how your company can engage with and benefit from the ACT programme, call Suzanne Westran now on 0114 2226263.