

Prevention is better than cure: Our vision to help you live well for longer

1. Summary –

The following document is a summary of the Department of Health & Social Care’s vision entitled: Prevention is better than cure: Our vision to help you live well for longer (05/11/18). The vision stipulates that prevention should be central to national health care.

2. The Main Objective –

‘Improve healthy life expectancy so that, by 2035, we are enjoying at least five extra years of healthy, independent life, whilst closing the gap between the richest and poorest.’

3. Definition of Prevention –

‘Helping people stay healthy, happy and independent for as long as possible. This means reducing the chances of problems from arising in the first place and, when they do, supporting people to manage them as effectively as possible. Prevention is as important at seventy years old as it is at age seven.’

Chapter 1 - Why Prevention Matters and the Case for Change

- Improves Economy: Ill health costs the economy £100bn per year.
- Reduce pressure on NHS: Hospital attendance is rising (+22% over the past 9 years).
- We all desire to live well for longer.

Ill Health:

- Although we live longer, an average of 20% is spent in poor health
- As we live longer illnesses become more complex
- Issues regarding inequality continue to prevail (and widen).

Main Causes of Ill Health:

Unhealthy lifestyles -

- Smoking: cost approx. £2.5bn to NHS and £760m to local council social care, 6m adults smoke.
- Obesity: cost approx. £6bn to NHS, £27bn to wider society, over ¼ adults obese in England.
- Alcohol: 10m adults in England drink to a harmful level, 1.4% dependent on alcohol, 1m+ hosp. admissions.
- Additional: insufficient sleep, high screen time and cyber bullying.

Housing –

- Damp, mould is linked to asthma, and rotting floorboards and insufficient lighting are linked to falling risk.
- Overcrowded residences have a negative affect on mental health and relationships.
- Neighbourhood: Access to green space & safety linked to physical & mental health (also link to air pollution).

Unemployment –

- 10m unemployed who do not access health benefits of employment (wage, sense of purpose, self-esteem, etc.)

Isolation –

- Research shows that loneliness is linked to increased risk of depression, low self-esteem and higher stress.

Contribution:

- £20.5bn by 2023/24 will not be sufficient alone; an integrated solution is key across both health and social care.
- Health and social care must prioritise prevention, whilst simultaneously increasing the utilisation of technology.
- Collaboration across health and social care, national and local gov. and communities and employers.

Chapter 2 – Preventing Problems in the First Place

Promote healthy lifestyles for all ages:

- 5 a day/eat well, limit sugar, alcohol and salt intake, exercise and ‘don’t smoke’

Health and social care must tackle the causes, not the symptoms, of poor health:

- £97bn spent last year curing diseases, only £8bn spent on prevention.

Preventing problems:

- Local Gov. realising their potential as leaders (Dir. Public Health plays important leadership role, local expertise allow tailoring of services to local needs).
- Prioritise investment in primary and community care and continue vaccination programme.
- Use size of NHS presence (influence on air pollution, improve health and wellbeing of staff)

Helping those most at Risk:

- Smoking, mental health, obesity, high blood pressure and alcohol.
- Issues within these groups must be tackled to prevent widening inequalities and worsening situations.

Predictive Prevention –

- Harness digital technology and personal data (allows for more reliable predictions and individualised approaches)
- Public Health England will coordinate a range of experts to build, evaluate and model predictive prevention.

Action from National and Local government to help people make healthier choices:

- Encourage healthier pregnancies, improve early years reading and language acquisition, adopt a whole family approach, improving children’s dental health, protect and improve children’s mental health.
- School also play an important role: food they serve, activities they provide and support in mental health.
- Support healthier food and drink choices (half child obesity by 2030, reduce salt intake, etc.)
- Improve physical activity (‘Sporting Future’ (2015), ‘Sport England’ ¼ total budget to tackle inactivity).
- Encourage Travel (double level of cycling by 2025, improve cycling safety, improve walking safety).
- Reduce loneliness and social isolation

Environmental factors: Where we live and work:

- Workplace (healthy design of workplace is important, also great settings for advertising a message.
- Air quality (£3.5bn to reducing harmful emissions, ammonia emissions, Gov. commits £25m to tech for pollution)

Chapter 3 – Living Well in the Community

Prevention should be at the core of the health and social care system:

- Cancer deaths are avoidable (stage 1 = 4/5 survival, stage 4 = 1/5, 50% of patients diagnosed stage 1 or stage 2)
- By 2028, Gov. aim for 75% of cancers should be diagnosed in stage one or stage two.

Stopping problems from getting worse and supporting recovery:

- Around 1 in 6 emergency admissions to hospital are due to avoidable complications.
- Some people stay in hospital longer than needed which puts pressure on beds.
- An integrated solution is recommended, as this allows for adapting to a variety of circumstances.

Primary care is a central part of our vision:

- Increase general practise workforce (increases - 5,000 more doctors & 5,000 other practise staff), retain experienced GPs, encourage GPs to work more closely.

Helping people manage their own conditions:

- Growth in: remote monitoring, virtual consultations & patients sharing experiences online.

Growing community health is essential to meet future challenges:

- Hospitals need to work in closer proximity with community health services and social care.
- Recruit/retain staff in community mental health (nurse population in community grew by under 1% 2016/17)

Supporting the whole person, not just treating symptoms:

- We need to recognise the importance of geriatricians, GPs, district nurses and other generalists
- We need to change the mind set from condition management to health creation.
- We must ensure better integration between health and employment support services to help people with health conditions to enter and stay in work

Living well in the community involves more than the healthcare we receive:

- The support we get from friends and family can be just as important as the health and social care we receive
- The voluntary sector also plays a vital role supporting people without family and friends who can help them, or for those with more specific needs.
- Changes to our home can help us continue to live independently and well.
- Local authorities have an important role to play in terms of adult social care services.
- Employer behaviour is also a key driver of our health.
- The health and social care system can help people manage their symptoms. But the workplace is also vital.
- If more employers acted like the best, this would help us achieve our ambition of seeing one million more disabled people in work by 2027.