



# Focus on Type 2 prevention

Too many people are dying from or living with serious chronic health conditions that are preventable. It is essential that we focus on actions that can stop people developing conditions such as diabetes, says **Dr Jim O'Brien**

**f**ocusing on prevention will not only improve health outcomes, but it also means that we are actively addressing wellbeing and tackling health inequalities. Furthermore, we can also potentially reduce the workload of frontline healthcare staff and help ensure the sustainability of our health service. The NHS and organisations within the wider health system have recognised that more needs to be done to respond to the prevention challenge. This means getting really serious about delivering early interventions and preventive services.

## Time for a national prevention programme

Plans to act on prevention of long-term conditions have already taken shape in the form of the NHS Prevention Programme Board, which was established in January 2015. Chaired by Duncan Selbie, Public Health England's Chief Executive, the board has made a strong start since the first meeting to make sure we deliver on our promise to get serious about prevention. Work under way in the past year includes the NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme (NHS DPP). Read more about this exciting new programme in Louise Ansari's article on page 31 and find out how healthcare professionals can get involved.

Most people would be shocked to know that around 22,000 people with diabetes die early every year. It is estimated that there are five million people at high risk of Type 2 diabetes in England – a disease that is often preventable. Diabetes is a serious chronic health condition and it is the leading cause of preventable sight loss in people of working age, as well as being a major contributor to kidney failure, heart attack and stroke. As well as the human cost, Type 2 diabetes costs the NHS £8.8bn every year, which is around 9 per cent of its annual budget.

There is a direct association between the growth in Type 2 diabetes and Britain's expanding waistline, as those who are overweight or obese are at higher risk of developing the condition. As many as two-thirds of English adults are currently overweight or obese and, even more concerning,

one in five children is overweight or obese on starting primary school, and one in three when they leave. We therefore have a multi-generational problem on our hands. According to current trends, these figures are set to increase; 70 per cent of people will be overweight or obese by 2034 and one in 10 will develop Type 2 diabetes. Until we tackle overweight and obesity, we won't reduce Type 2 diabetes.

## A real game changer

A large proportion of Type 2 diabetes can be prevented. England will be the first country to implement a diabetes prevention programme nationally. This will be the first programme of its kind to be carried out at a nationwide scale, and will deliver on the prevention commitment that was set out in the NHS Five Year Forward View and Public Health England's Evidence into Action last year.

The programme, which is a collaboration between NHS England, Public Health England (PHE) and Diabetes UK, aims to significantly reduce the number of people from developing the condition by 2025. The new programme will target people at high risk of developing Type 2 diabetes and support them in making those lifestyle changes that will help them to reduce their risk. In 2015/2016, we are working with seven demonstrator sites who will collaborate with us on developing and implementing this national programme. This will then be followed by a procurement of behavioural interventions and the commencement of a phased national roll-out in 2016/2017.

I believe that the NHS DPP has the potential to be a truly game-changing programme, helping people regain better health, by reducing obesity and delaying or stopping the progression of Type 2 diabetes, all of which will help reduce pressure on the NHS.

For regular updates on the programme go to [www.england.nhs.uk/ndpp](http://www.england.nhs.uk/ndpp). We will be pleased to answer any questions you have about the programme, so feel free to contact us at [diabetesprevention@phe.gov.uk](mailto:diabetesprevention@phe.gov.uk)

## BIOGRAPHY

### DR JIM O'BRIEN

**Jim's background is in public health medicine. He trained as a GP in the Republic of Ireland and spent many years as a district medical officer in Malawi and the Solomon Islands. On his return, he worked across the South of England in various academic and service public health posts. In March, Jim was appointed Director of the NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme at Public Health England.**

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