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Cardiovascular Disease Prevention Plan for Wales: An 'ABCD Plus' Approach

September 2025

'ABCD Plus' refers to Cardiovascular Disease risk factors: **A**trial Fibrillation (heart rhythm problems), high **B**lood pressure (hypertension), high **C**holesterol (hyperlipidaemia), and **D**iabetes; and health behaviours such smoking and diet.

Forewords



Dr Jonathon Goodfellow
National Clinical Lead,
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Wales faces a significant health challenge, the growing burden of cardiovascular disease (CVD), which particularly affects the most deprived communities and drives health inequalities.

A focus on prevention is urgently needed, targeting the most deprived populations and those most at risk of CVD, to improve quality of life and reduce the burden of CVD disease on our NHS. I welcome the CVD Prevention Plan for Wales to address this challenge.



Professor Jim McManus
National Director
Health and Wellbeing

Some of the strongest evidence for prevention comes from interventions which identify people at high risk of CVD and supports them through medication and risk-based advice.

This plan showcases our ambition for CVD prevention in Wales. Partners across Wales are now working to identify, prioritise and action key interventions, that will help us reach our goal to reduce both CVD-related deaths and disability, and inequalities in health outcomes.

Why do we need to prevent Cardiovascular Disease (CVD)?

What is CVD?

[CVD](#) refers to the range of conditions affecting the heart and blood vessels. This can include serious and life-threatening consequences such as heart attacks and strokes, and costs the [Welsh NHS £770 million each year](#).

 **CVD ACCOUNTS FOR 27% DEATHS**

CVD is one of the largest contributors to health inequalities

People living in the most deprived areas of Wales are more likely to experience a CVD event such as a heart attack or stroke, which are likely to be more severe, resulting in hospitalisation and death.

Prevalence and Projections of CVD in Wales

CVD mortality rates have almost halved in recent decades. However, this is changing, and we are seeing the [first sustained increase in CVD mortality for at least a generation](#), with Wales experiencing the highest rate of all the UK's four nations.

[Since 2009, heart failure in Wales has increased by 49%](#) and is projected to increase 46% over the next decade.



CVD Risk Factors

The major causes of CVD include:

- A**trial fibrillation (heart rhythm problems), high
- B**lood pressure (hypertension), high
- C**holesterol (hyperlipidaemia), and
- D**iabetes.

PLUS Key behaviours such as smoking, diet, physical inactivity, and alcohol consumption, alongside wider determinants of health, such as financial wellbeing, also increase CVD risk.

How can we prevent CVD?

Up to 80% of premature deaths from CVD are preventable.

CVD can largely be prevented by adopting healthy behaviours, for example stopping smoking, reducing alcohol intake, maintaining a healthy diet and exercising regularly.

The guidance is clear regarding the identification and management of CVD risk factors.

Chief Medical Officers from across the UK advocate for the ongoing secondary prevention of CVD. Spotting risk factors early, offering risk-based advice and prescribing appropriate medication will reduce the chance of developing potentially life-changing CVD conditions.

What do people in Wales think?

Talking to people in Wales about CVD highlighted that the least known clinical risk factors are atrial fibrillation and diabetes.

For the people who already experienced one or more of the ABCD risk factors, 46% reported that they monitor their own health and 85% want to take further action to improve their condition.



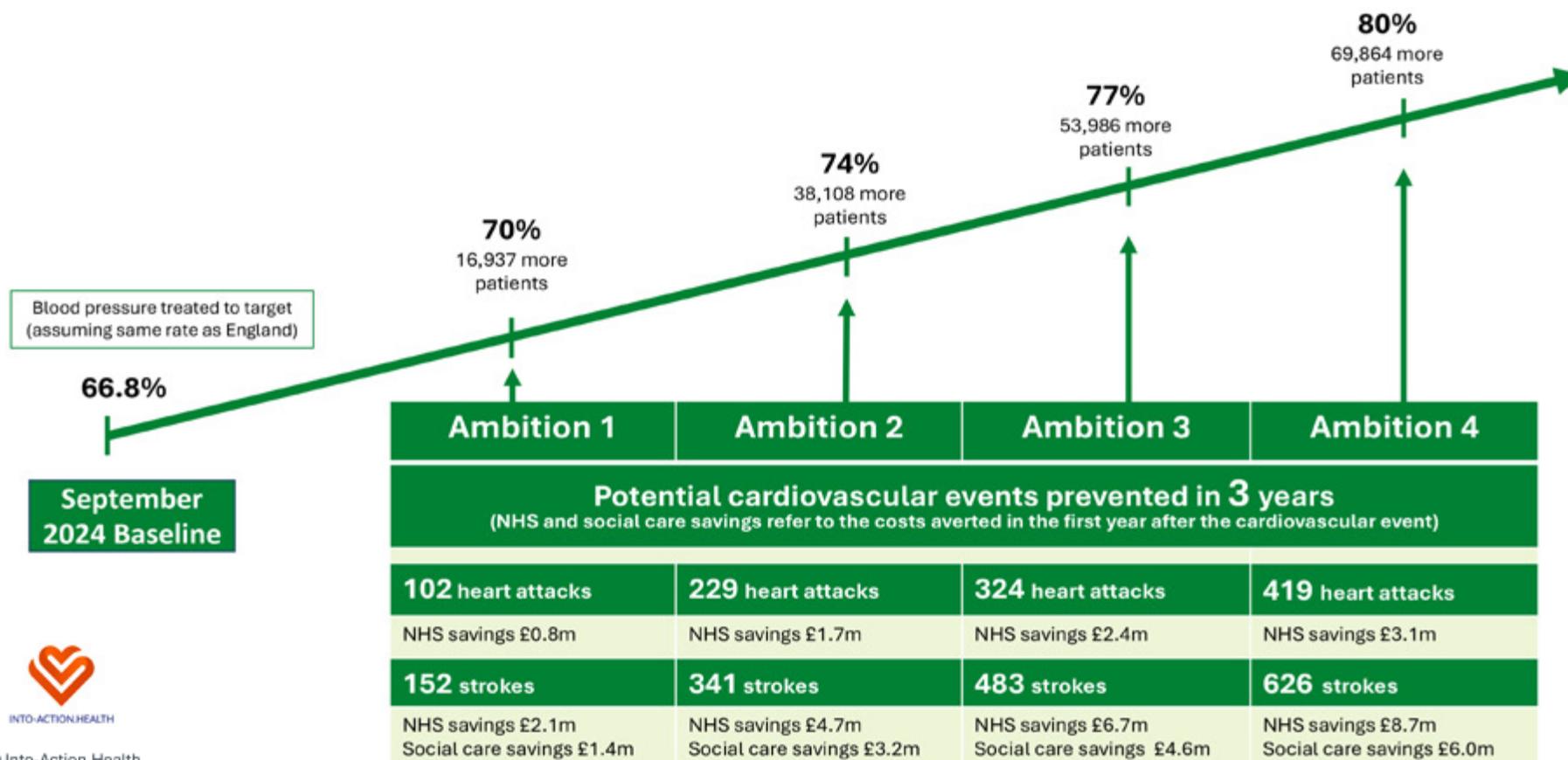
46%
MONITOR
OWN HEALTH

85% WANT TO ACT
TO IMPROVE
THEIR CONDITION

How much of a difference can we make?

An example of the Size of the Prize for one CVD risk factor.

The Size of the Prize is a modelling tool based on an estimated % of people with diagnosed and controlled hypertension. It shows that supporting people to control even one risk factor, such as high blood pressure, can prevent hundreds of heart attacks and strokes across Wales.



INTO-ACTION HEALTH

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How do we support people to reduce their CVD risk? An 'ABCD Plus' Approach.

Cardiovascular Disease Prevention Plan for Wales

Helping people who are at risk of developing cardiovascular disease
to manage their health risks

Our ambition is to:



IDENTIFY 'ABCD Plus' risk factors in people who are at high risk
of developing CVD



ABCD

Atrial fibrillation
(abnormal
heart rhythm)

Blood
pressure
(hypertension)

Cholesterol
(hyper
lipidaemia)

Diabetes
(and pre-
diabetes)



PLUS

Smoking, diet, physical activity, and alcohol consumption,
(as well as factors that impact on health such as financial
wellbeing).



TREAT ABCD risk factors and **SUPPORT** people to have healthy
behaviours in a way that focusses on what matters to them



A Cardiovascular Disease Prevention Plan for Wales

Embedding an ABCD Plus approach.



OUTCOMES
Our aim is to achieve

- A reduction in the incidence and prevalence of CVD mortality and morbidity in Wales, and inequalities in CVD outcomes



We will do this by considering:

- IDENTIFICATION 'Who'
- INTERVENTION 'What'
- IMPLEMENTATION 'How'

- We need to enable identification and management of people with ABCD Plus risk factors using evidenced-based, equitable approaches and to improve people's understanding and awareness of their ABCD Plus risk
- We need to deliver ABCD Plus, for those with ABCD Plus risk factors
- We need to agree activity needed to deliver ABCD Plus at scale, avoiding unwarranted variation



WORKFORCE
We will consider the support the workforce needs to deliver ABCD Plus

- We need to develop long-term capacity, knowledge and skills across the wider primary and community care workforce, to deliver ABCD Plus, for those with, or at high risk of having, ABCD risk factors



SYSTEM ENABLERS
What do we, as the wider system, need to do to support ABCD Plus

- We need to develop connected data and digital systems to streamline identification of people with ABCD risk factors
- We need to provide the primary and community care workforce with the tools to undertake risk stratification and prioritisation to manage people with the highest risk first
- We need to support, with public and patient involvement, the ongoing monitoring of population health indicators for those ABCD risk factors, and collaborate with key stakeholders to develop the evidence base as novel approaches evolve

CVD Prevention in Action: Case Studies

Delivering 'ABCD Plus' as part of Diabetes Care

The close link between CVD risk and diabetes is reflected in [nine key care processes](#), which help reduce the risk of complications for patients with type 2 diabetes. The care processes ensure those people are tested, and treated, for example for high blood pressure and for behaviours such as smoking.

Taking a quality improvement approach to CVD Prevention in People with High Blood Pressure

The GMS Project: [CVD Prevention in People with High Blood Pressure](#) encourages GP practices to consider their approach to: increasing the identification of patients not currently on the hypertension register; reviewing the current annual recall and prioritisation process; and enhancing the hypertension annual review to deliver an ABCD Plus approach.



CVD Prevention in Action: Case Studies

Reducing CVD inequalities through targeted local interventions

The [WISE Prevention Programme](#) focuses on identifying individuals at risk of CVD and helping them lower that risk through medication and promoting healthy behaviours. The program aims to decrease early deaths and address health inequalities by prioritising the most disadvantaged communities that experience the highest CVD mortality rates.

Digital solutions to make CVD data actionable in real life

[CVD ACTION](#) is a program designed to translate data into real-world actions. Its goal is to help clinicians easily identify high-risk patients who are receiving suboptimal treatment. The program prioritises and organises patients to ensure manageable numbers, while also addressing multi-morbidity and targeting health inequalities.





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