



BRAIN HEALTH AND DEMENTIA RISK REDUCTION





Welcome

There is limited public awareness of the risk factors that contribute to dementia, despite growing evidence that around 45% of cases are linked to modifiable factors such as hearing loss, smoking, inactivity, and cardiovascular health.

This e-bulletin includes a range of projects and initiatives which focus on prevention and help limit the risk factors that can contribute to dementia.

Public Health Network Cymru organised a webinar on this topic on the 17th July 2025. The presentations and recording from the webinar can be viewed on our [website](#).

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Raising awareness of dementia prevention in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan – recent developments

Rosie Keogh,

Health and Wellbeing Officer, Cardiff Council



To improve its accessibility across communities, the dementia prevention guide produced in Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan is now available in [Arabic](#), [Bengali](#), [Urdu](#) and [Somali](#).

In addition, with the support of Cardiff and Vale University Health Board's Local Public Health team, a 30-second animation has been produced with key messaging related to dementia prevention in all six languages. The animations are available to view on the Cardiff and Vale University Health Board website: [Dementia Prevention - Cardiff and Vale University Health Board](#).

The animations are available

to be used on digital screens or shared via messaging platforms. Downloadable resources are available via the following link: <https://f.io/jNO3Cbz6>

Background

Dementia is currently the leading cause of death in Wales (1), and the number of older adults living with dementia is projected to rise by 70% by 2040 (2). Research by Alzheimer's Disease International (ADI) indicates that most people believe dementia to be a normal part of ageing, with 95% of participants thinking they could develop the disease during their life (3). However, the 2024

report of the *Lancet* standing Commission estimates that 45% of dementia cases could be preventable by addressing 14 potentially modifiable risk factors (4).

A partnership project between Cardiff Council, Vale of Glamorgan Council, Cardiff and Vale Regional Partnership Board and Cardiff and Vale University Health Board aims to raise awareness that, contrary to many beliefs, developing dementia is not an inevitable part of ageing.

[A booklet](#) has been produced, highlighting the key modifiable risk factors identified in the Lancet report, and communicating four key

messages:

Getting older does not mean that you will get dementia. You will not necessarily get dementia because a family member has.

You can take action to lower your risk of developing dementia.

It is never too early or too late to take action

Information about the risk factors is provided, along with corresponding localised signposting, to support people to make positive lifestyle changes.

20,000 booklets have been printed, and many locations across the region have been (and continue to be) supplied with hard copies, including GP surgeries, Hubs and libraries, leisure centres and community centres.

An [easy read version](#) is also available online.

The team are encouraging everyone, no matter their age, to download a copy of the booklet and share the resources with others.

To request a supply of booklets (if based in Cardiff/Vale of Glamorgan), or to request the digital files to adapt for your own region, contact dementiafriendly@cardiff.gov.uk.

This resource has been made possible through Welsh Government grant funding

and the support of the Cardiff and Vale Regional Partnership Board.

Website: [Dementia Prevention - Cardiff and Vale University Health Board](#)

References:

[Deaths registered in England and Wales - Office for National Statistics](#)

[Planning ahead: dementia services in Wales](#)

[World's largest dementia study reveals two thirds of people still incorrectly think dementia is a normal part of ageing, rather than a medical condition | Alzheimer's Disease International \(ADI\)](#)

[Dementia prevention, intervention, and care: 2024 report of the Lancet standing Commission - The Lancet](#)



RCN Prehabilitation Project – Extending the benefits to improve Brain Health and Dementia prevention

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Prehabilitation is a proactive approach that supports individuals to become as physically, mentally, and cognitively fit as possible before facing health challenges. This project extends its principles to brain health and dementia prevention, recognising that early lifestyle interventions, such as cognitive stimulation, physical activity, nutrition, and stress reduction, can significantly reduce dementia risk. By empowering healthcare professionals with practical tools, this initiative promotes resilience, slows cognitive decline, and enhances overall wellbeing. It's a patient-centred strategy that supports long-term brain health and aligns with public health goals for dementia prevention.

This flexible, short online course is designed for Royal College of Nursing (RCN) members, primarily nurses and healthcare support workers. Developed in partnership with experts in prehabilitation and quality improvement. It equips practitioners with evidence-based strategies to support cognitive wellbeing across the lifespan, especially in patients at risk of cognitive decline or dementia.

Prehabilitation for brain health involves early, multidisciplinary interventions that promote cognitive resilience. Evidence shows that lifestyle changes, such as regular exercise, balanced nutrition, smoking cessation, social engagement, and mental

stimulation, can delay or prevent the onset of dementia (Livingston et al., 2020; WHO, 2019).

Participants will learn to:

- Recognise risk factors and early signs of cognitive decline.
- Apply strategies to support brain health through diet, lifestyle, and psychosocial care.
- Communicate effectively and tailor interventions to individual cognitive needs, in line with the NHS Long Term Plan and dementia prevention frameworks.

The course is self-paced, with certification available upon completion.

The Prehabilitation Project has significantly influenced patient care by empowering RCN

members with the knowledge and tools to support patients before surgery or cancer treatments. An extension of this will support early intervention to promote brain health.

By promoting physical, psychological, and lifestyle interventions, the project enhances patient resilience, improving outcomes and reducing complications. Clinicians now feel more confident in offering personalised, proactive care, leading to quicker recoveries and better patient experiences.

Furthermore, the course has fostered a more collaborative, patient-centred approach within multidisciplinary teams, aligning with NHS goals for personalised care. Ultimately, the project bridges the gap between early intervention and improved recovery, benefiting both patients and healthcare providers.

Early intervention is key not just for physical health, but for brain health too. By incorporating cognitive and lifestyle support into routine

care, healthcare professionals can help prevent or delay dementia. The RCN calls on clinicians to embrace prehabilitation as a tool for brain health promotion. Complete the course to gain practical strategies that support cognitive resilience and align with NHS goals for personalised, preventative care. Let's act now to protect brain health and reduce the burden of dementia.

For further information please email: Nicola.Davis-Job@rcn.org.uk



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RURAL HEALTH AND CARE WALES

Research

Hearts and Minds: 14 Reasons to Move and Improve. Addressing modifiable dementia risk factors at a community level

Michelle Symes,

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Mid Wales faces increasing levels of dementia (1) due to improved longevity and health and wellbeing amongst its population. Rural Health and Care Wales (RHCW) seeks therefore to identify the level of

support available, at organisational and community level, for people affected by dementia in Mid Wales. Reviews for Ceredigion and Powys are being finalised with work in Gwynedd commencing in

Autumn 2025. The combined findings of all three county reviews will form a Mid Wales scoping report with findings presented to RHCW Stakeholders Group. This article outlines the circular

relationship between the 14 modifiable dementia risk factors (2) in Tab.1, and the alignment of these to community led activities like those identified in the scoping work.

The 14 modifiable dementia risk factors	
Air Pollution	Alcohol Consumption
Depression	Head injury / Trauma
High LDL Cholesterol	Hypertension
Low Levels of Education	Obesity
Physical Activity	Smoking
Social Isolation	Type 2 Diabetes
Untreated Hearing Loss	Untreated Sight Loss

Tab. 1: The 14 modifiable dementia risk factors (The Lancet Commission, 2024)

RHCW has reviewed to date:

419 locations - Ceredigion (n= 118) and Powys (n=301)

234 venues

100+ community groups

A range of activities were identified including coffee mornings and fitness classes, some of which had age or condition parameters, but all were open to carers. There were also opportunities for volunteering within communities.

Social isolation, through the activities shown below, is the most commonly addressed dementia risk factor identified in Ceredigion and Powys.

Community activities identified through the RHCW scoping review:

Ceredigion and Powys

Afternoon Tea Experience People Affected by Dementia including Carers

Art and Art Therapy Groups

Arthritis Care Group

Bingo

Book and Book Exchange Groups

Bore Coffi / Coffee Mornings

Bracken Trust Information Hub

Carer's Only Groups

Children's Play Facilities

Community Café

Community Lunch Club

Craft and Creative Cafes

Dance classes

Dementia Information Hubs, Meeting Centres, Living with Dementia and Community Dementia

Action Groups

Friends Tea Bar

Gardening Groups

Gentle Years Yoga

Keep fit
Knit and Natter
Leg Club
Local History Group
Men's Sheds
Older Persons Exercise Classes
Parent and Toddler Groups
Parkinson's Disease Group
PAVO Welfare Hubs
Read and Remember Group
and Reading Clubs
Senior Citizens Club
Short Mat Bowls
Sight Life for the Partially
Sighted / Visually Impaired
Club
Sound Bath Sessions
Soup Kitchen
Stay and Play Groups for
Children
Table Tennis
The Arches Memory Lanes
Social Group
Walking Groups
Warm Spaces
Yoga
Young carers drop-in sessions
Young Onset Dementia Group

Community activities
identified through the RHCW
scoping review: Ceredigion
and Powys (RHCW, 2025)

A circular relationship
between social engagement
and other modifiable dementia
risks is suggested in the
literature reviewed as part of
this scoping work, with social
engagement often cited as a
co-combatant for depression,
alongside physical activity and
reduced alcohol consumption
(3).

Physical activity in turn
impacts positively on the
management of weight, type
2 diabetes, LDL cholesterol
levels and hypertension.
Physical activity is further
reported to reduce
cardiovascular disease and
stroke risk (4).

Social engagement also
enables awareness of, and
understanding of how to
address, dementia risk factors,
thus reducing the risks
associated with low levels of
education.

A number of groups to support
people with visual impairment
were also identified addressing
the risks associated with
untreated sight loss but risks
associated with smoking
and untreated hearing are
less commonly addressed in
communities.

Similarly, air pollution and
head injury appear difficult
for communities to address
in isolation in both instances,
however, working with sports
clubs, or resident groups to
affect change enables cross-
generational and social
engagement.

Reduced alcohol consumption
is generally accepted as an
enabler to participation in
both social and physical
activities.

The RHCW scoping work has

so far enabled contributions to
discussions on establishing an
Age Friendly Ceredigion, and
health service provision with
Powys Teaching Health Board
(PTHB) and Powys Association
of Voluntary Organisations
(PAVO). RHCW has also
disseminated organisational
dementia support data via
Ceredigion Association of
Voluntary Organisations
(CAVO).

Lessons learnt from this
scoping, focus on the:
alignment of community
activities to modifiable
dementia risk factors
requirement for sustained
funding for community venues
and groups
reliance on community-based
volunteers

The impact of the county
and Mid Wales reports is yet
to be ascertained, however
as movement and self-
improvement, are not only
good for the brain but also the
heart and general wellbeing,
there is more we can all do to
address our own modifiable
health risks, and support
others to do the same.

Glossary of terms

CAVO – Ceredigion
Association of Voluntary
Organisations
LDL – Low Density
Lipoprotein
PAVO - Powys Association of
Voluntary Organisations
PTHB – Powys Teaching

Health Board
RHCW – Rural Health and
Care Wales

Figures

Fig 1 – Map of Wales with Mid
Wales highlighted

Tables

Tab. 1 The 14 modifiable
dementia risk factors (The
Lancet Commission, 2024)

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19.08.2025



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Commentary

Brain Health and Dementia Risk Reduction – How can we affect change?

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There is limited public awareness of the risk factors that contribute to dementia, despite growing evidence that around 45% of cases are linked to modifiable factors such as hearing loss, smoking, inactivity, and cardiovascular health.

Prevention is both possible and powerful and targeted outreach is needed while addressing stigma and fear around diagnosis. Although dementia is one of our greatest health challenges, it remains low on the public

agenda—underscoring the need for urgent, equitable, and prevention-focused action across the system.

Building understanding of dementia risk requires not only raising awareness of individual lifestyle factors but also challenging widespread misconceptions about the condition. One of the most pervasive is the belief that dementia is an inevitable part of ageing—when in fact, evidence shows that up to 45% of future dementia cases could be prevented by addressing

14 modifiable risk factors identified in [The Lancet report](#) on dementia prevention and care. Some of the risk factors are not modifiable by an individual on their own, despite their best efforts, but come from society and the environment. Dementia risk reduction policies could have huge impacts in terms of dementia costs and population health and wellbeing.

The [World Alzheimer Report 2023](#), published by Alzheimer's Disease International (ADI), focuses

on reducing dementia risk and highlights that it's **“never too early or too late”** to take action. The report discusses both modifiable and non-modifiable risk factors and advocates for population-based systemic changes to promote risk reduction.

Tackling dementia risk is both a personal and collective responsibility. While not every case can be prevented, we have the tools, knowledge, and evidence to significantly reduce the number of people affected and to delay onset for many others. This requires sustained commitment—from individuals being aware of the impact of making healthy choices, to communities fostering supportive environments, to policymakers embedding prevention into health, education, and urban planning. Every year we delay action, thousands more lives are touched by a disease. By acting decisively now, we can not only change the future burden of dementia but also improve quality of life and wellbeing across the lifespan. Prevention is not only possible—it is a moral and societal imperative.

Regions across Wales are involved in the Quality, Safety & Improvement (Q,S&I) dementia programme and through their community workstreams they are focussed on highlighting these messages across services and communities. If you would like to learn more or get involved in work in your own region work please contact us at: PHW.ImprovementCymruDementia@wales.nhs.uk and we can provide the appropriate contact details.



Practice

Alzheimer's Society intergenerational poster for Brain Health messaging

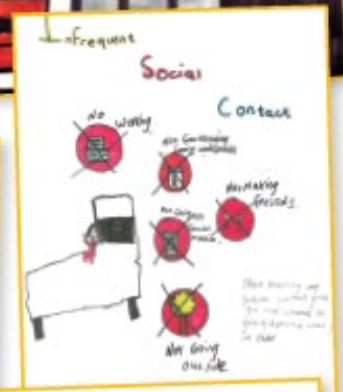
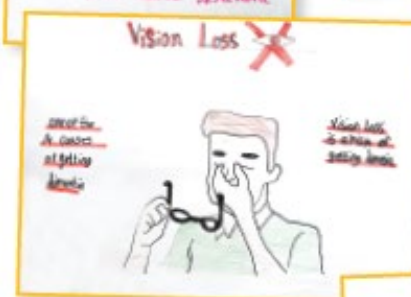
Louise Nicholas,

Local Services Manager for Powys and the Welsh Dementia Support Line Team. Alzheimer's Society Cymru

As part of the All-Wales Dementia Care Pathway of Standards the task group in Powys recognised the need to promote the brain health messaging. Schools in Powys were invited to enter a competition to design a poster promoting these messages, which would also raise awareness in local schools. The winners were Presteigne school in Powys. The Alzheimer's Society and Powys Teaching Health Board jointly funded the printing of the poster, which has been circulated in Powys.

Factors linked to the risk of getting dementia

Ffactorau sy'n gysylltiedig â'r risg o gael dementia



Early life

Quality of education

Mid life

Hearing impairment

High cholesterol

Diabetes

Smoking

Depression

High blood pressure

Traumatic brain injury

Obesity

Physical inactivity

Excessive alcohol

Later life

Social isolation

Air pollution

Uncorrected vision loss

Bywyd cynnar

Ansawdd addysg

Canol oes

Nam ar y clyw

Colesterol uchel

Diabetes

Ysmygu

Iselder

Pwysedd gwaed uchel

Anaf trawmatig i'r ymennydd

Gordewdra

Anweithgarwch corfforol

Gormod o alcohol

Bywyd diweddarach

Ynysu cymdeithasol

Llygredd aer

Colli golwg heb ei gywiro

Source / Ffynhonnell: Alzheimer's Research UK

Pictures are drawn by children from Proseigne Primary School, Powys

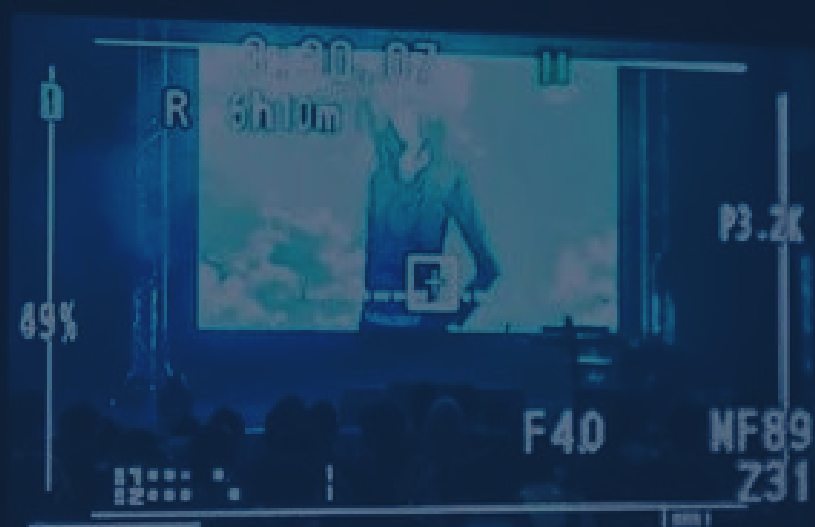
Mae lluniau yn cael eu tynnu gan blant o Ysgol Gynradd Llanandras, Powys



Bwrdd Bedydd Addysgu Powys
Powys Teaching Health Board



Videos



BARS

EVF DTL

ZEBRA

LCD

WFM

COUNTER—RESET/TC SE

FUNCTION SHTR/F



Brain Health and Dementia Risk Reduction – How can we affect change?

There is limited public awareness of the risk factors that contribute to dementia, despite growing evidence that around 45% of cases are linked to modifiable factors such as hearing loss, smoking, inactivity, and cardiovascular health.

Watch



Building Strong Foundations | Cardiff Highlights

The conference aligned with the PHNC objectives of sharing knowledge, facilitating the developments of solutions and approaches and connecting members and building a community.

Watch



Building Strong Foundations | Llandudno Highlights

The conference aligned with the PHNC objectives of sharing knowledge, facilitating the developments of solutions and approaches and connecting members and building a community.

Watch

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News & Resources





[One in five people in Wales are making positive changes to reduce type 2 Diabetes risk](#)

21-08-2025



[Consultation on raising minimum alcohol price in Wales](#)

14-08-2025



[Creating healthier homes is key to supporting family wellbeing in Wales](#)

05-08-2025

All News

[Putting food in the frame](#)

Frameworks UK

[Building a Healthier Wales Summary of Activity 2023-25](#)

Building a Healthier Wales

All Resources

Next Issue

PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN



The World Health Organization's new 2025 report, Preventing Violence Against Children: A Social Determinants Framework for INSPIRE Implementation, was produced in partnership with Public Health Wales and Bangor University. It draws on a global systematic review of evidence to highlight effective policies and laws that prevent violence against children or positively influence risk factors linked to the Wider Determinants of Health. For our upcoming bulletin we are inviting contributions from projects and initiatives which focus on tackling the root causes of violence against children. These can be national, regional or local initiatives, policies or programmes.

Our [article submission form](#) will provide you with further information on word count, layout of your article and guidance for images.

Please send articles to publichealth.network@wales.nhs.uk by 18 September 2025.

Contribute