

PM's speech at Diabetes Charities Reception: 24 June 2019

Welcome everyone.

As Prime Minister – I host a great many receptions here at Downing Street, but of course today, this time, it's particularly personal.

So it really does give me great pleasure to see you all here – and for me to be able to say a wholehearted thank you for everything you do to support and help people with diabetes.

I also particularly want to mention the children we have here with us – and who I know have achieved some extraordinary things – in sport, in raising awareness, and through their invaluable contribution to our understanding about how we can better help and treat people with diabetes.

You show tremendous courage, every day, in the things that you do.

You don't let diabetes hold you back.

You show what is possible.

And you are a source of great inspiration, so please everyone, let's give these amazing young people a round of applause.

I will never forget the shock I felt when I was first told I was diabetic.

I imagine it must be the same for many people.

It was not something I ever expected. And to be honest, I didn't know you could get Type 1 diabetes at my age.

But I will be forever grateful to all those who taught me how to manage my condition – and reduce the impact it has on my life.

People like those of you here in this room today.

The one thing I told myself when I found out – was that I was not going to let diabetes stop me from getting on with my life, and getting on with my job.

But it is only thanks to the advice and support I received that I have been able to keep that promise to myself – the help from my GP, the consultants – but also most memorably the clinical nurse specialists from my local hospital.

Today we know that the rate of diabetes is rising dramatically – with 3 million people in England registered as living with Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes with a GP – although the true number is likely to be higher with up

to a million more people yet to be diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes.

And behind those statistics – as everyone here is well aware – are the devastating consequences for people's health – people of all ages, young and old.

So this really is one of the great health challenges of our time.

And I am very pleased that we have here people who are leading the charge in the way that we deal with diabetes.

I know only too well the difference simple advances can make – because, as some of you may know, I wear a FreeStyle Libre – which makes all the difference to me in being able to monitor my glucose levels.

And we are taking great strides forward in other areas.

From the new apps that help people monitor their condition.

From continuous Glucose Monitoring for all pregnant Type 1 diabetics which will be available on the NHS by 2020/21.

To the doubling of funds for the NHS's Type 2 diabetes prevention programme through the Long-Term Plan for the NHS.

But for today, this really is a chance for me to say a very personal thank you:

To those of you working to raise awareness and funding for research.

To those working on innovations, treatments and exploring possible cures.

And to those of you who care for people living with diabetes and provide the support so that they can live the best possible lives.

I want to end with a quote by Olympic Gold medal winner Steve Redgrave – whose advice I took to heart when I was first diagnosed.

It's one I've quoted before – but it's a good one – so I think it bears repeating.

“Diabetes must learn to live with me rather than me live with diabetes.”

It's a sentiment I have always found gave me incredible inspiration. And I hope it provides inspiration for the many who are determined not to let diabetes get in the way of living their lives to the fullest.