

What needs to happen in Northern Ireland



In Northern Ireland more than 96,000 people are diagnosed with diabetes¹. Living with diabetes can be tough, and keeping on top of it can be a struggle. People have told us that good emotional and psychological wellbeing is critical to managing their condition.

In a survey of more than 2,000 people living with diabetes across the UK, 7 in 10 told us that they feel overwhelmed by its day-to-day demands. They told us that they wanted more support for their emotional and psychological wellbeing as part of their routine diabetes care. Of those we surveyed who had felt they needed specialist care from a mental health professional, 7 in 10 couldn't access it.

“I think the emotional impact diabetes has is often overlooked.”

Person with Type 1 diabetes

Healthcare professionals echoed this call. But they need more backing to be able to offer this support for everyone affected by diabetes in Northern Ireland.

Things have to change. We want diabetes care that sees and supports the whole person. The emotional and psychological impacts of diabetes should be recognised in all diabetes care. And everyone affected by diabetes must have access to the support they need, when they need it.

¹ Northern Ireland Quality and Outcomes Framework (2017–18).
Accessed at: www.health-ni.gov.uk/publications/quality-and-outcomes-framework-201718



The emotional and psychological impact of diabetes to be recognised in all diabetes care, through systematic care and support planning and better conversations. To support this, we call for:

- The Northern Ireland Diabetes Network to ensure further prioritisation of emotional and psychological support across its workstreams, and support growth of the workforce of diabetes-specialist psychologists.
- Local decision makers to ensure healthcare professionals working with people affected by diabetes are supported to care for their emotional and psychological wellbeing through the implementation of systematic care and support planning².
- Healthcare professionals delivering diabetes care to ensure they provide the opportunity for conversations about emotional wellbeing during appointments. Resources such as our Information Prescription **Your Emotions and Diabetes**³ and the Diabetes UK and partners⁴ guide **Diabetes and Emotional Health**⁵ should be used within care and support planning conversations.
- The Health and Social Care Board to explore implementation of person-centred outcomes, which encompass the emotional and psychological aspects of living with diabetes, into quality improvement programmes.

- NICE guidance on Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes to be updated to include further guidance on the importance of identifying emotional and psychological support needs in all diabetes care⁶.
- Local decision makers to monitor compliance with relevant NICE guidance on diabetes and person-centred care⁷.
- Diabetes structured education programmes to further recognise the importance of emotional and psychological wellbeing in diabetes, and signpost to other information and support.



Health and Social Care Services and the third sector at a national and local level to work together to provide services such as peer support, community groups, education and self-help resources for people affected by diabetes. To support this, we call for:

- The Health and Social Care Board and local policy makers to increase access to social prescribing, including commissioning peer support services, and referring to Diabetes UK services.
- The third sector and local organisations to connect with national and local Health and Social Care Services, ensuring healthcare professionals are aware of the services and support they offer for referral and signposting.



Services providing diabetes care to be supported by specialist mental health professionals, including psychologists and liaison psychiatrists, to ensure effective provision across all levels of need. To support this, we call for:

- Commissioners to ensure diabetes services include an integrated mental health professional with knowledge of diabetes who can both give advice and provide care.



An integrated care pathway for diabetes and emotional and psychological wellbeing to be developed and implemented in Northern Ireland. To support this, we call for:

- The Diabetes Network – as part of the Building Capacity and Enhancing Skills in Frontline Staff objective in the Diabetes Strategy – to develop and endorse an integrated care pathway, and indicators, for diabetes and mental health. This will help to show what services and support are needed in all areas, and support implementation across the country.
- Local decision makers to commission services according to a nationally agreed framework and pathway. For example, specialised diabetes mental health professionals within diabetes multidisciplinary teams, and liaison psychiatry services which specialise in the interface between physical and mental health in secondary care.

- Local decision makers to assess and review local services and availability in order to support implementation of a care pathway, and ensure they bolster local services providing emotional wellbeing support, and specialist psychological services.



All healthcare professionals providing general diabetes care to have the training and skills to identify and support the emotional and psychological wellbeing of people affected by diabetes. To support this, we call for:

- The Health and Social Care Board, the Public Health Agency, academic institutions, and local training providers to further develop and fund training for diabetes staff to include management of emotional and psychological care, and implementation of care and support planning.
- Healthcare professionals providing diabetes care to refer to the guide on providing emotional and psychological support **Diabetes and Emotional Health**⁵, and complete available training courses on diabetes.
- Mental health professionals who are integrated into diabetes services to support staff by sharing their expertise.

² Year of Care. Year of Care House. Accessed at: www.yearofcare.co.uk/house

³ Diabetes UK Information Prescription: Your Emotions and Diabetes. Accessed at: www.diabetes.org.uk/professionals/resources/resources-to-improve-your-clinical-practice/information-prescriptions-qa

⁴ This resource was adapted from the original Diabetes and emotional health A handbook for health professionals supporting adults with Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes which was developed by the Australian Centre for Behavioural Research in Diabetes (ACBRD), the National Diabetes Services Scheme (NDSS) and Diabetes Australia in 2016

⁵ Diabetes UK (2019) Diabetes and Emotional Health – a practical guide for healthcare professionals supporting adults with Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes. Accessed at: www.diabetes.org.uk/emotional-health-professionals-guide

⁶ NICE. NG17 Type 1 diabetes in adults: diagnosis and management, NG28 Type 2 diabetes in adults: management

⁷ NICE. CG91 Depression in adults with a chronic physical health problem: recognition and management, CG138 Patient experience in adult NHS services: improving the experience of care for people using adult NHS services, CG136 Service user experience in adult mental health: improving the experience of care for people using adult NHS mental health services, NG3 Diabetes in pregnancy: management from preconception to the postnatal period, NG17 Type 1 diabetes in adults: diagnosis and management, NG28 Type 2 diabetes in adults: management



Mental health professionals providing care for people affected by diabetes should have knowledge of diabetes and an understanding of the impact the condition can have on physical, emotional, and psychological wellbeing. To support this, we call for:

- Community Adult Mental Health Teams, and other mental health professionals working with people affected by diabetes to receive diabetes-specific training. To understand the emotional and psychological impact of diabetes, and of associated mental health problems that can arise and are specific to diabetes, such as diabetes distress, or diabulimia.
- Commissioners to ensure Community Mental Health Teams, and other mental health professionals working mainly with people with severe mental illness to have training to understand the emotional and psychological impact of diabetes. And of associated mental health problems that can arise and are specific to diabetes, such as diabetes distress, anorexia nervosa, or diabulimia.
- Those providing mental health services for people affected by diabetes to refer to the guide on providing emotional and psychological support, **Diabetes and Emotional Health**⁵, and complete available training courses on diabetes.

Join us

We've spoken to thousands people affected by diabetes and they told us that when people are struggling, too often the support they need is missing.

Help us make emotional and mental health support a part of everyone's diabetes care.

Visit our website at: www.diabetes.org.uk/emotional-wellbeing