

Too often missing.

Making emotional and psychological support routine in diabetes care.

What needs to happen
in Wales



Almost 195,000 people in Wales 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.

“When diagnosed, very rarely does anybody talk about the effect on your mental health.”

Person in Wales with Type 1 diabetes

Healthcare professionals have echoed this call. But they need more resources to be able to offer this support to everyone affected by diabetes in Wales. Sufficient support will be vital in helping not just the management of Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes but also the prevention of Type 2 diabetes for those at risk by helping individuals to make lifestyle changes.

“Patients are very aware of it [the effect on mental health] and they want to access integrated mental health support within physical healthcare; but nobody is funding it.”

Consultant Clinical Psychologist in Mid-Wales

The current situation in Wales

In recent years, there has been increased awareness of the role of emotional and psychological support in care, as well as the link between mental and physical health.

The need for psychological services was recognised in the Welsh Government's most recent **Diabetes Delivery Plan (DDP)²**, which estimated that 41% of people living with diabetes in Wales are believed to have poor psychological wellbeing. Yet none of the key service actions directly relate to mental health, emotional wellbeing, or psychological support, despite low levels of access to psychological support outside of paediatric services.

¹ Wales Quality and Outcomes Framework (2017–18)

Accessed at: www.gov.wales/general-medical-services-contract-quality-and-outcomes-framework-april-2017-march-2018

² Diabetes Delivery Plan for Wales 2016-2020 (2016) p10.

Accessed at: www.gov.wales/docs/dhss/publications/161212diabetes-delivery-planen.pdf

Under the DDP, Local Health Boards are required to ensure that sufficient psychological input into the management of all patients is delivered in line with national standards. Yet, NHS Wales sets itself no measurable targets on the delivery of psychological support to those with long-term conditions, with huge variance in service delivery across the nation.

Furthermore, many of the services that provide psychological support are already at breaking point and in desperate need of more resources. Clinicians told us that demand continues to rise as awareness of the effects of poor mental health increases.

Without recognition of these pressures and changes to the way NHS Wales delivers this support, people will continue to be denied the help they need to live well with diabetes.

“People would have to wait longer, we would have to start saying no to people and look at how we could narrow down the criteria [to be able to access services]. We don’t promote ourselves within the hospital as we honestly think we would just be inundated.”

Consultant Clinical Psychologist in South Wales

What needs to change

The Welsh government’s own plans state a commitment to deliver “holistic” and “patient-centred” healthcare³. To do this the Welsh government recognises the need to “shift our focus and resources to prevention and early intervention”⁴.

Evidence shows that diabetes-tailored emotional and psychological support and treatment improves the emotional wellbeing of the person, and has a positive impact on their diabetes outcomes, most specifically in reducing average blood sugar levels – called HbA1c. This may reduce the risk of serious complications developing⁵.

“If lower level psychological distress is picked up quickly and effectively it stops bigger issues developing later down the line, mentally and physically... This can save services money in five years’ time and prevent suffering for those affected by diabetes.”

Consultant Clinical Psychologist in North Wales

At Diabetes UK Cymru 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.

³ A Healthier Wales (2018). Accessed at: www.gov.wales/docs/dhss/publications/180608healthier-wales-mainen.pdf

⁴ Healthy Weight – Healthy Wales (2019). Accessed at: www.beta.gov.wales/sites/default/files/consultations/2019-01/consultaton-document_0.pdf

⁵ Schmidt CB, Potter BJ, van Loon ACM et al (2018). *Systematic review and meta-analysis of psychological interventions in people with diabetes and elevated diabetes-distress*. Diabetic Medicine 35 (9) 1157 to 1172.

Diabetes UK Cymru calls for:



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 Welsh government to publish further plans for diabetes care beyond 2020 that considers the delivery of Type 1 diabetes services, and both the prevention and care services for Type 2 diabetes. Both must include significant detail on the role of psychological support through systematic care and support planning⁶, whether in an individual plan for diabetes or a broader plan for long-term conditions, with measurable targets.
- 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**⁷ and the Diabetes UK and partners⁸ guide **Diabetes and Emotional Health**⁹ should be used within care and support planning conversations.
- All Local Health Boards to ensure that they are following NICE guidance on person-centred care¹⁰. NHS Wales should go beyond NICE guidance and establish a new standard for psychological support for people with Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes,

as well as fully adopting the All-Wales Standard for People with Diabetes Moving from Paediatric to Adult Services within NHS Wales¹¹.

- Diabetes structured education programmes to further recognise the importance of emotional and psychological wellbeing in diabetes, and signpost to other information and support.



NHS Wales and the third sector to work together at a national and local level 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:

- NHS Wales and Local Health Boards to engage in an initiative to connect the third sector with local services and community initiatives. This is in line with **A Healthier Wales** objectives to support people to manage their own health and wellbeing¹² through strengthening options for social prescribing and peer support.
- The third sector and local organisations to connect with national and local NHS Wales services, ensuring that healthcare professionals are aware of the services and support they offer for referral and signposting.

⁶ Year of Care. Year of Care House. Accessed at: www.yearofcare.co.uk/house

⁷ 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

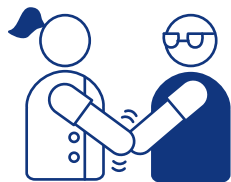
⁸ This resource was adapted from the original Diabetes and emotional health A handbook for health professionals supporting adults with Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes which was developed by the Australian Centre for Behavioural Research in Diabetes (ACBRD), the National Diabetes Services Scheme (NDSS) and Diabetes Australia in 2016

⁹ 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

¹⁰ 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

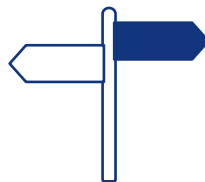
¹¹ All-Wales Standard for People with Diabetes Moving from Paediatric to Adult Services within NHS Wales (2017) Accessed at: www.cypdiabetesnetwork.nhs.uk/files/4015/2631/0959/Transition_Standard_ReportV8.pdf

¹² A Healthier Wales (2018) Accessed at: www.gov.wales/docs/dhss/publications/180608healthier-wales-mainen.pdf p.3.



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:

- Local Health Boards to ensure diabetes services include an integrated mental health professional with knowledge of diabetes who can both give advice and provide care.
- Any future plans detailing the strategy for delivering diabetes care in Wales to make specific implementation plans on improvements to the current psychological services and to improve access for those who need it, and identifying high risk groups.
- The Welsh government to increase funding for the provision of psychological and emotional support across all seven Local Health Boards.
- People affected by diabetes who are routinely seen in primary care and who require specialist mental health support to be able to access it. GPs are already able to refer people with acute physical or mental health problems to specialists. Local Health Boards should work with primary care clusters to promote the use of referrals to specialist psychological support services where available.



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

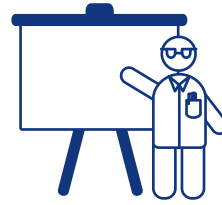
- NHS Wales to work with the third sector to develop and endorse a care pathway with indicators for people with long-term conditions like diabetes who need psychological support. This will help show what services and support are needed in all areas, and support implementation across the country.
- Local decision makers to commission services according to a nationally agreed framework and pathway. This must include specialised diabetes mental health professionals (i.e. clinical psychologists) embedded within diabetes multidisciplinary teams, and liaison psychiatry services which specialise in the interface between physical and mental health in secondary care.

¹² 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



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:

- Local Health Boards in Wales to ensure that all healthcare professionals working with people affected by diabetes have training to include management of emotional and psychological care, and implementation of care and support planning.
- All training and education of healthcare professionals who work with people affected by diabetes in Wales to be reviewed to consider whether it adequately recognises the emotional and psychological aspects of living with diabetes, or caring for someone who does.
- Healthcare professionals providing diabetes care to refer to the guide on providing emotional and psychological support, **Diabetes and Emotional Health**⁹, and complete available training courses on diabetes.
- A Mental Health in Long-Term Conditions Forum to be established with representatives from the third sector and clinicians from across Wales, in order to share best practice and develop knowledge and skills.



Mental health professionals providing care for people affected by diabetes to 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:

- 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**⁹, and complete our available training courses on diabetes.
- Commissioners to ensure mental health professionals who work with people with diabetes in every part of NHS Wales receive diabetes-specific training. They should be able to recognise and 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, in order to ensure everyone receives the right care or support.

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

