

Dear Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Health and Social Care,

I am writing to you following the release of new Diabetes UK analysis outlining that over 12 million people or 1 in 5 adults are now either living with diabetes or have prediabetes in the UK.

These new figures are a critical reminder that diabetes is one of the largest health challenges facing the UK. The NHS is currently spending £10.7bn a year on diabetes and if prevalence continues to rise at its current rate, it is projected to cost the NHS £18 billion by 2035.

Diabetes is a gateway to other serious conditions, and can lead to life limiting and life shortening complications. Each year, diabetes causes more than 48,000 strokes, 34,000 heart attacks and 155,000 cases of heart failure. Almost a third of people needing kidney dialysis or transplant have diabetes.

Currently 60% of NHS spending on diabetes is on treating these largely preventable but devastating complications of diabetes, rather than on the treatment that could prevent them.

Concerningly, increasing numbers of people are developing type 2 diabetes at a younger age, with serious consequences for their family life and ability to work, their risk of developing multiple conditions and their life expectancy. However, as many as half of those under 40 are estimated to be undiagnosed, delaying their access to preventive care.

As the Prime Minister and Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, you can make a difference. We welcome your pledges to change our healthcare system from treating sickness to preventing ill health and your urgent intervention is now required to alleviate this crisis through your 10 Year Health Plan.

The 10 Year Health Plan must prioritise urgently identifying those with pre-diabetes and those who have undiagnosed type 2 diabetes, for instance through improved NHS Health Checks, and ensure they have the support and care they need. This includes investing in vital prevention support like the NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme with proven success in preventing ill health.

As diabetes is a gateway to many other serious health issues, the Plan must also include a commitment to continued improvement in care for people with all types of diabetes, providing targeted support to those most at risk from devastating complications. As part of your ambition to shift the healthcare system from analogue to digital, the Plan should ensure that all those eligible for diabetes technology receive it as a key part of their care.

Achieving this change would make a real difference to the lives of millions across the UK, enabling them to live their lives in confidence and good health. I do hope that you will use the opportunity of the 10 Year Health plan to substantially improve the care, treatment and support for people living with diabetes and pre-diabetes in the UK.

Yours sincerely,

Colette Marshall  
Chief Executive Officer, Diabetes UK.