

# DIABETES MATTERS IT'S TIME FOR ACTION

Diabetes UK Cymru 2021 Senedd election manifesto

**DiABETES UK**  
DEALL DIABETES. BRWYDRO DIABETES.  
KNOW DIABETES. FIGHT DIABETES.

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# Diabetes in Wales is now a health crisis, we need bold action to tackle it and deliver the change we need.

Diabetes is on the rise; recent figures suggest 260,000 people in Wales are now living with the condition. That means roughly 1 in every 13 people in Wales now has diabetes. It's a tough complicated condition to live with and can lead to devastating consequences. The way we care for and treat diabetes, and prevent type 2 diabetes has to change.

## Here's why:

- At 7.6% of the population, Wales has the highest prevalence of diabetes in the UK.
- The number of people with diabetes has doubled in the last 20 years.
- NHS Wales estimates that 11% of our adult population will have the condition by 2030.
- 10% of NHS Wales' expenditure goes on treating diabetes or the complications of diabetes.

## **Now is time for action, that's why Diabetes UK Cymru is calling for:**

1. Improvements to the emotional support and psychological provision available to those living with diabetes.
2. Increased access to technology that can help people manage their diabetes.
3. Continued determination to tackle the rise in type 2 diabetes, including a Diabetes Prevention Plan.

These three changes will reduce the harm diabetes does. People with diabetes have told us these are the changes that matter to them. We know how we can achieve these aims. We just need your support.

If we deliver the change we need in our health services, we can not only improve life for people already living with diabetes, but also reduce the number of people developing potentially devastating complications. This action will help save our NHS money and deliver a sustainable healthcare service for future generations.

### **Dai Williams**

National Director  
Diabetes UK Cymru

# 1. Improving access to the emotional support and psychology provision available to people living with diabetes.

**Diabetes doesn't just affect someone physically. 7 in 10 people feel overwhelmed by the demands of living with diabetes, while someone with diabetes is twice as likely to suffer from depression.**

The right emotional support, mental health care and when needed, access to psychological services can help people better manage this draining and isolating condition and prevent complications.

Despite this, the support people need to cope with diabetes often isn't there. Three quarters of people who need specialist support told us they couldn't access it.

**The current Diabetes Delivery Plan estimates that 41% of people living with diabetes in Wales have poor psychological wellbeing, but none of its key service actions relate to mental health.**

People who experience these emotional and psychological conditions often do not receive the support and treatment they need; the kind which takes into account their diabetes. We want care to recognise that often the emotional and psychological distress people experience is related to their physical health condition.

Access to psychology services in Wales is lagging behind other nations. Diabetes UK Cymru talked to psychologists across Wales and found that, outside of paediatric care, most health boards had either limited or non-existent structures to allow people with diabetes access to psychological support. The psychologists we talked to were clear: access to psychology should be a routine part of diabetes care.

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

Clinical Psychologist in North Wales

## **The change we need:**

1. Services providing diabetes care to be supported by mental health professionals, including psychologists.
2. An integrated pathway for diabetes that includes emotional support and access to specialist psychological services for those who need it.
3. All healthcare professionals providing general diabetes care to have the training and skills to support emotional wellbeing and identify psychological distress.

## 2. Increased access to technology that can help people manage their diabetes.

**Diabetes is relentless. But despite living with it all year round, people with diabetes only spend around three hours a year with a healthcare professional. For the remaining 8,757 hours they must manage it by themselves. What works one day might not the next. There is never a break.**

Exciting technologies have transformed the way people can treat and monitor their diabetes. Not only can these new technologies improve people's management and reduce long term complications, they can make the lives of people living with diabetes easier.

NHS Wales should be commended for being the first nation to make access to flash glucose monitoring available on prescription across all health boards. This type of innovation is proven to help people understand and manage their blood glucose levels much more easily than the traditional finger prick method, greatly improving the quality of many people's lives. But there is still more to do.

More than a quarter of people have problems getting the technology or treatment they need to manage their diabetes, including insulin pumps, flash glucose monitors and continuous glucose monitors. Some people turn to self-funding the technology they need, despite many of these devices being supposedly available through NHS Wales.

The number of people using diabetes technology differs hugely, not just from health board to health board but from hospital to hospital. Too often the type of diabetes you have can determine the technology you are offered. We believe this should be based on what can benefit the patient, rather than whether you have type 1, type 2 or any other type of diabetes. We want action to see an end to variation and make technology available to anyone who can benefit from it.



### **The change we need:**

- 1.** A new technology fund to guarantee fair access to new and existing technologies across all health boards.
- 2.** Make technology available to all people who can benefit from it, regardless of their diabetes type.
- 3.** A plan to increase prescribing levels of already available technologies and uptake of diabetes education across our health service.

### 3. Continued determination to fight the rise in type 2 diabetes

**Wales has the highest rates of type 2 diabetes in the UK, but is the only nation not to have a diabetes prevention plan. Perhaps most worryingly, increasing numbers of children and young people are also now being diagnosed with type 2 diabetes. Yet more than half of all cases of type 2 diabetes could be prevented or delayed.**

People who are identified as at risk of developing type 2 should not be left until they have the condition to receive support. With a Diabetes Prevention Programme, we could help people to reduce their risk and live well without diabetes.

Furthermore, we now know that some people with type 2 diabetes can put the condition into remission through significant weight loss. But the society we live in makes doing this, achieving and maintaining a healthy weight, eating well, and being active – too difficult for many people. With obesity responsible for around 85% of someone's risk of type 2 diabetes and Wales having the highest rates of obesity in Western Europe - this has to change.

There is no single answer to addressing obesity. Diabetes UK Cymru welcomes the measures introduced in Healthy Weight: Healthy Wales, but we need sustained action if we want to support people to lead healthier lives, create a healthier environment, and shape a healthier nation.

**Our research found that 9 in 10 people say that clearer food labelling would help them make healthier food choices.**

We want to see a society where easy to understand nutritional information is available on all foods. We want people to have access to a variety of affordable healthy options and, for food manufacturers in Wales to be compelled to reduce added sugar and calories in products, so that the food we eat is healthier.

We also want to ensure our health service is properly equipped to help people manage their weight. It is vital that we have a service and a pathway that supports individuals from community level interventions, right the way up to specialist services like bariatric surgery, in order to lead healthier lives.




#### **The change we need:**

1. Further measures across Wales to make the healthy choice, the easy choice. These should include mandatory, clear and consistent front of pack and out of home labeling across the UK, including Wales, in addition to further restrictions on the advertising and promotion of unhealthy food and drink.
2. Further investment in weight management and remission services in every area.
3. A Diabetes Prevention Plan to deliver interventions specially designed to support people to reduce their risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

# LET'S MAKE THIS A REALITY

You can help us create a world where diabetes can do no harm by working with Diabetes UK Cymru to secure these changes in your local area and across Wales.

1. Tell your constituents why diabetes matters to you and what you will fight for in the Senedd  
 [#whydiabetesmatters](#) [#SeneddElections2021](#) and tweet us at [@DiabetesUKCymru](#)
2. **Contact us** for more tailored information about your constituency and opportunities to support our work.
3. Commit to join the Cross Party Group on Diabetes when elected.

We need your support backing to ensure people living with Wales receive the best support, treatment and care possible.

**Help us deliver the change we need in 2021.**

## GET IN TOUCH



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