

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

23 March 2016

### **Call for society-wide support for Scotland's 'bellwether condition'**

**Patient charity Diabetes Scotland leading discussion on behalf of the diabetes community:  
Scotland's largest constituency**

With the prevalence of diabetes increasing, Diabetes Scotland is calling on society-wide support for people to live well with diabetes and prevent the rising number of people developing Type 2 diabetes.

'The Bellwether Report', published by Diabetes Scotland and representing the views of people affected by diabetes, outlines various considerations and measures that should be introduced to improve life for everyone in Scotland. The patient charity is calling for the condition to become a national outcome – one of the means by which the health and wellbeing of the nation is measured.

Ryan McFadden, Policy Manager at Diabetes Scotland and lead author of The Bellwether Report, said: "Diabetes is Scotland's bellwether condition, not only due to its increasing prevalence but also because it helps us understand the wider challenges facing the nation. How we acknowledge and react to these challenges is a reflection of our nation's priorities and what we hope people across the country can achieve.

"We know that people with all types of diabetes are more likely to live in areas of deprivation, more likely to smoke and more likely to experience depression and other mental health issues. People with diabetes are also at risk of complications including stroke and cardiovascular disease. If we make a concerted effort to improve diabetes care and support, as well as taking action to prevent the rise of Type 2 diabetes, we can also have a positive impact on these other areas."

With over 276,000 people currently living with diabetes, 45,500 thought to be living with undiagnosed Type 2 diabetes, and 500,000 people at high risk of developing Type 2 diabetes, plus their family, friends and networks; the diabetes community is Scotland's largest constituency. Prior to drafting the report the team at Diabetes Scotland gathered the opinions of people living with the condition through conversations, surveys and group events in order to genuinely represent the needs and priorities of those who are most affected.

Due to the wide impact of the condition, the report covers many areas which can be improved with a focus on health inequalities, living well with the condition and prevention of Type 2 diabetes.

Ryan said: "We know there is some excellent care in Scotland but it is not available everywhere and there are also disparities in the delivery of care depending on the type of diabetes you have. We need to work together across Government, NHS Scotland and communities, to ensure fair and equal access. The forthcoming integration of health and social care is a great opportunity for us to deliver

the support and care that people need in a more accessible way but we must strive for person-centred care with the patient at the heart of the decision making process.”

Since 2008, there has been a 28 per cent increase in the number of people living with Type 2 diabetes and the numbers are still rising. While there are many factors which can lead to a person developing the condition including age, ethnicity and family history; lifestyle is significant. People who are overweight or have a large waist circumference have an increased risk. With 65 per cent of the population of Scotland considered overweight, the charity is calling for the Scottish Government, NHS Scotland, Local Authorities, communities and the food and drink industry to support whole-society interventions which enable people to more easily make healthy lifestyle choices.

Ryan said: “No one government can hope to make profound lasting changes to health outcomes in a five year election cycle. That’s why the Scottish Government needs to build support from across society and have the confidence to positively influence all aspects of people’s lives. We need whole-society solutions and interventions to support people living with and at risk of diabetes. We’re calling on people, communities, politicians, healthcare professionals and the food and drink industry to stand for diabetes and sign up to the Diabetes Bellwether Essentials\*. We cannot hope to improve the health and wellbeing of the people of Scotland without first addressing diabetes.”

To download a copy of The Bellwether Report by Diabetes Scotland: [bit.ly/DiabetesScotBellwether](https://bit.ly/DiabetesScotBellwether)

**ENDS**

### **Notes to Editor**

\*The Diabetes Bellwether Essentials are:

- People with diabetes should experience no economic or social disadvantage as a result of living with the condition
- No child to begin their diabetes journey with a misdiagnosis, emergency admission or diabetic ketoacidosis
- Everyone should have the same level of diabetes care not matter their age or where they live
- Every child with Type 1 diabetes to have access to the same childhood experiences as their peers - attend school trips, birthday parties, sleepovers, enjoy sport and other achievements
- Every person with diabetes to receive the nine care processes every year regardless of type of diabetes, where they live, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexuality, age or disability
- Every person with diabetes who can join the workforce to be supported to do so without discrimination and with reasonable adjustments to manage their diabetes
- The prevention of Type 2 diabetes should be a national priority for everyone

### **About Diabetes Scotland**

- Diabetes Scotland is part of Diabetes UK, the leading UK charity that cares for, connects with and campaigns on behalf of all people affected by and at risk of diabetes. For more information on all aspects of diabetes and access to Diabetes Scotland activities and services, visit [www.diabetes.org.uk/scotland](https://www.diabetes.org.uk/scotland)

- There are over 276,000 people living with diabetes in Scotland, and around 45,500 more who have Type 2 diabetes but are undiagnosed.
- Diabetes is a condition where there is too much glucose in the blood because the body cannot use it properly. If not managed well, both Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes can lead to devastating complications. Diabetes is the leading cause of blindness in people of working age in the UK and is a major cause of lower limb amputation, kidney failure and stroke.
- People with Type 1 diabetes can't produce insulin. About 10 per cent of people with diabetes have Type 1. No one knows exactly what causes it, but it's not to do with being overweight and it isn't currently preventable. It usually affects children or young adults, starting suddenly and getting worse quickly.
- People with Type 2 diabetes don't produce enough insulin or the insulin they produce doesn't work properly (known as insulin resistance). 85 to 90 per cent of people with diabetes have Type 2. Risk factors leading to the development of Type 2 diabetes include being overweight, family history, age, and ethnic background. It starts gradually, usually later in life.
- For more information on reporting on diabetes, download our journalists' guide: [www.diabetes.org.uk/journalists-guide](http://www.diabetes.org.uk/journalists-guide)