

# How to...

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## **Deliver a successful local network for improving diabetes care**

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### Use this guide to:

- Start a new local diabetes network based on best practice.
- Improve the impact and sustainability of an existing network.

### This guide is for:

- Anyone involved in leading or delivering a local diabetes network.

# What are networks and why are they useful?

**A network is a community of professionals and people with diabetes who come together with the shared goal of improving care.**

A successful network taps into the collective skills and experience of its members. Together they identify gaps in care, test and co-produce solutions, and drive improvement.

## Essentials for starting a network

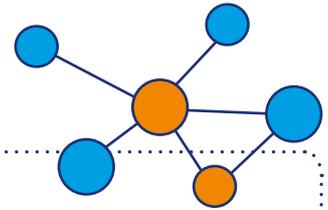


- Establish a clear purpose for starting your network. Be specific – what do you aim to achieve and why is it important for people with diabetes?
- Set a compelling vision. What does care look like for people with diabetes in the future?
- Identify essential roles: a chairperson and an administrator to coordinate your network and take minutes at meetings.
- Identify the key people who need to be involved (see page 4).
- Plan for possible costs, like meeting space and administrative support, but don't let them be a barrier. A network is successful because of its members, not its financing.
- Determine how to measure the effectiveness of your network. Consider using the network effectiveness scorecard at six month intervals (see page 7).
- Determine how to monitor and evaluate the impact of your network. How will you know you have achieved your aim? How will you use data to monitor progress and drive continuous improvement?
- Start recruiting. Use your vision to inspire people to be a part of your network.

### More key things to consider

- Was there a similar network previously in place. What worked? What didn't?
- Are there any barriers to involvement? What are the perceptions and concerns of the people that need to be involved?
- What value will the network bring to its members?
- How can you involve people with diabetes from the beginning to make sure their voices are heard?
- How can the voluntary sector add value to the network?

# Delivering a network



## Planning the first meeting

- Finalise the list of members.
- Set a date for the first meeting.
- Find a venue.
- Order refreshments, if needed.
- Draft a terms of reference for the network.
- Create a meeting agenda.
- Plan the structure of the meeting, who will lead it and how.
- Send out invites and any papers.
- Determine any ongoing costs associated with the meeting and plan how to fund it.

## At the first meeting

- Share your vision for the future.
- Be compelling – this is the time to reinforce why each member is essential and how you can drive change as a group.
- Discuss why each person is there. What's their motivation for joining? What can they offer to the group? What do they hope to achieve?
- Allocate the chairperson and administrator roles.
- Agree the network's terms of reference.
- Determine what success will look like to the group. Agree a few simple, measurable objectives to help monitor progress.
- Agree on how to monitor actions. Consider using an action log and review it at the beginning of each meeting.
- Explore how the group might keep in contact between meetings.
- Hand out a list of members' contact details.
- Set a date for the next meeting.

## Six months to one year in

- Revisit the aim and objectives of your network. Are they still relevant?
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the network using the network effectiveness scorecard (see page 7).
- Evaluate the progress made towards your objectives. Update or create new objectives as needed.
- Ask members for informal feedback at regular intervals. This can be done individually or as a group. Is your network doing what they expected?
- Establish a monthly newsletter to share updates and key successes. These can later be used to create an annual report showcasing what the network has achieved.



### Top tip

Meetings are important but you need to be in contact and working together towards actions between meetings if your network is going to succeed.

## How do I recruit members?

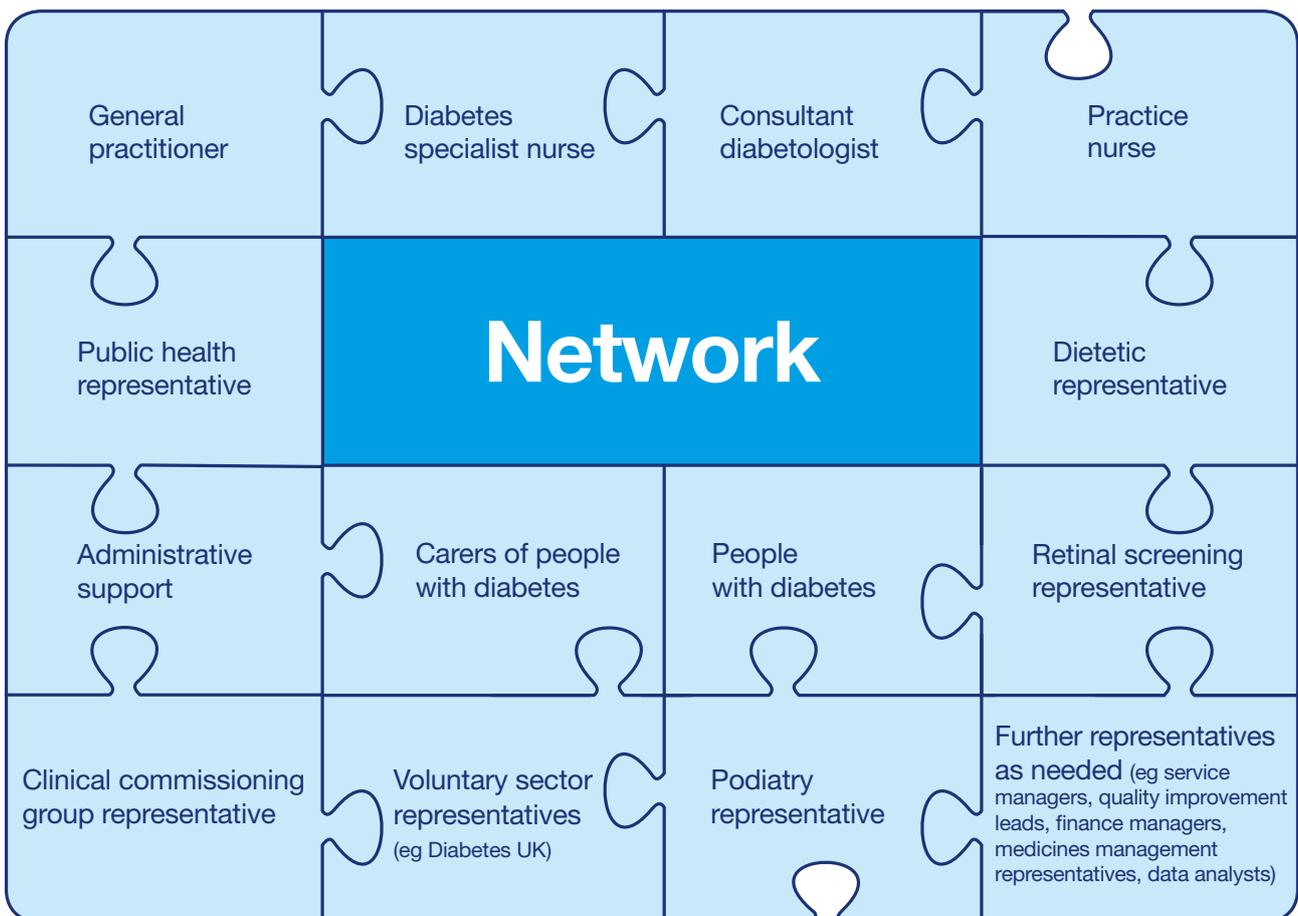
- Start by having initial conversations with colleagues to gauge interest and build a core group of members. Then send out a wider email invite to the first meeting. Don't forget to include the purpose and aim of your network as well as the benefits of becoming a member.
- Target those most dedicated to driving improvement and those with existing networks that you can tap in to.
- Look for members who can bring a broad range of skills and experience to the network.



### Top tip

You can get a range of views and experiences from people with diabetes by inviting two or three of them to be network members. Your local Diabetes UK office<sup>1</sup> or our Campaigns and Mobilisation team will be able to help you find members<sup>2</sup>.

## Who should be involved in a network?



1 More information available at: [www.diabetes.org.uk/In\\_Your\\_Area/](http://www.diabetes.org.uk/In_Your_Area/)

2 More information available at: [www.diabetes.org.uk/Get\\_involved/Campaigning/Diabetes-Voices/](http://www.diabetes.org.uk/Get_involved/Campaigning/Diabetes-Voices/)

## How can I involve members and keep them interested?

- Face-to-face meetings are important but not all that a network is about. It's essential for members to keep in touch and work together outside of meetings. Encourage the formation of subgroups that focus on taking action on specific areas. Subgroups can be formed by existing network members and often involve others from outside the network with relevant skills and experience.
- At each meeting, identify a clear set of next steps and who is responsible for each action. Members should have ownership over their role in, and feel accountable for, achieving the network's objectives.
- Good networks create opportunities for collaboration that may not otherwise exist. Encourage members to work together and recognise the strengths and expertise that each person brings to the group.
- Know from the start membership will ebb and flow, and that's fine. Involvement from members will depend on their availability, interests and the network's priorities at a given time.



### Top tip

If the network is finding it difficult to solve a particular issue or problem, bring in a colleague from another organisation who has found a solution and can share their insights and learning.

## How do I make a network sustainable?

- Assign administrative roles when setting up the network and be clear about the time and effort required to fulfil the role. These responsibilities are often overlooked but are essential to the success of the network.
- Keep the group moving towards the aim and objectives of the network. Stay focused on taking action and producing results, using meetings to drive actions.
- Maintain momentum by highlighting the network's short-term successes at meetings and in a monthly newsletter. Positive feedback from colleagues outside of the network and comments from people with diabetes are great ways to show how the hard work of members is paying off.



### Top tip

Networks meet in all sorts of different venues, from local GP surgeries to community centres. You can host all meetings in the same place or move around your patch. Be creative and find space wherever you can as long as it's accessible to all members. The most important thing is that you meet.

# The dos and don'ts of delivering a network

-  **Do** recognise that leadership should be shared in a network and all members should feel they have a voice. Make sure that members have real and meaningful responsibilities, like asking members to setup and lead a subgroup that takes action on a specific area.
-  **Do** allow for challenging discussions and evolving aims and objectives. Try not to over structure or control the network.
-  **Do** keep in mind how much time and effort members are able to dedicate to the group when setting objectives. Think about the most efficient ways to use their time and energy.
-  **Do** celebrate success. Acknowledge individual and group achievements, no matter how small.
-  **Don't** be deterred by a lack of funding. A good network can function on a limited budget where the main costs are simply members' time and a meeting space. If you can show how your network aligns with an existing project or fills a specific need, consider engaging your local CCG or trust to provide resources.
-  **Don't** hold too many meetings or you risk burn out. Ask members for their input on what a suitable number of meetings should be.



You can download this guide at [www.diabetes.org.uk/shared-practice-networks](http://www.diabetes.org.uk/shared-practice-networks)

You can download our other guides at [www.diabetes.org.uk/how-to-guides](http://www.diabetes.org.uk/how-to-guides)



You can get more information about delivering successful local networks for improving diabetes care by emailing [sharedpractice@diabetes.org.uk](mailto:sharedpractice@diabetes.org.uk)

**[www.diabetes.org.uk](http://www.diabetes.org.uk)**

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# Network effectiveness scorecard

This scorecard is an easy to use tool for assessing the overall health of a network. Use it every six months to identify what is working well and where improvements can be made.

## How to use the scorecard:

- 1 Give each member a scorecard to complete anonymously.
- 2 Ask members to rate the measures below and answer the two questions at the end.
- 3 Gather the scorecards. Calculate the average for each measure and summarise the responses to the questions.
- 4 Present and discuss the results at the next network meeting. What's working well? What can be improved? Were there any unexpected results? How have the measures and responses changed over time?
- 5 As a group decide what needs to change, how and when it needs to happen and who will take it forward.

Select a rating from 1–5 for each of the following measures:	1 = Strongly disagree 5 = Strongly agree				
1 The network has a diverse membership and is well represented	1	2	3	4	5
2 Members share a common purpose and vision	1	2	3	4	5
3 The network has a set of clear and measurable objectives	1	2	3	4	5
4 The network has a clear action plan for achieving its objectives	1	2	3	4	5
5 The network is making good progress in achieving its objectives	1	2	3	4	5
6 Members support each other and are easy to work with	1	2	3	4	5
7 The network has processes in place for monitoring and evaluating its impact	1	2	3	4	5
8 The network uses data to guide, monitor and evaluate its work	1	2	3	4	5
9 The network communicates effectively with its members and wider stakeholders	1	2	3	4	5
10 The network meaningfully involves people with diabetes and considers their needs	1	2	3	4	5
11 The network is able to adapt its priorities to meet emerging needs	1	2	3	4	5
12 The network is making measurable improvements to local diabetes services	1	2	3	4	5
13 The network is improving outcomes for people with diabetes	1	2	3	4	5
14 Meetings have well led discussions and clearly defined next steps	1	2	3	4	5
15 The number of meetings is appropriate to the needs of the network	1	2	3	4	5
16 I feel connected to the network and other members outside of meetings	1	2	3	4	5
17 The network is adding value to my work	1	2	3	4	5
18 The network provides me with a sense of ownership and an equal voice	1	2	3	4	5
19 Members are achieving more together than they could alone	1	2	3	4	5
20 The network addresses conflict amongst membership if or when it arises	1	2	3	4	5

What I'm most proud of: .....

What the network can be better at: .....

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