In Northern Ireland more than 96,000 people are diagnosed with diabetes\(^1\). 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.

“I think the emotional impact diabetes has is often overlooked.”

Person with Type 1 diabetes

Healthcare professionals echoed this call. But they need more backing to be able to offer this support for everyone affected by diabetes in Northern Ireland.

Things have to change. 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.

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Diabetes UK Northern Ireland 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 Northern Ireland Diabetes Network to ensure further prioritisation of emotional and psychological support across its workstreams, and support growth of the workforce of diabetes-specialist psychologists.
- Local decision makers to ensure healthcare professionals working with people affected by diabetes are supported to care for their emotional and psychological wellbeing through the implementation of systematic care and support planning.
- 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 and the Diabetes UK and partners guide Diabetes and Emotional Health should be used within care and support planning conversations.
- The Health and Social Care Board to explore implementation of person-centred outcomes, which encompass the emotional and psychological aspects of living with diabetes, into quality improvement programmes.

Health and Social Care Services and the third sector at a national and local level to work together 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:

- The Health and Social Care Board and local policy makers to increase access to social prescribing, including commissioning peer support services, and referring to Diabetes UK services.
- The third sector and local organisations to connect with national and local Health and Social Care Services, ensuring healthcare professionals are aware of the services and support they offer for referral and signposting.

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

- The Health and Social Care Board, the Public Health Agency, academic institutions, and local training providers to further develop and fund training for diabetes staff to include management of emotional and psychological care, and implementation of care and support planning.
- Healthcare professionals providing diabetes care to refer to the guide on providing emotional and psychological support Diabetes and Emotional Health, and complete available training courses on diabetes.
- Mental health professionals who are integrated into diabetes services to support staff by sharing their expertise.

NICE, CG91 Type 1 diabetes in adults: diagnosis and management, NG28 Type 2 diabetes in adults: management.
Mental health professionals providing care for people affected by diabetes should 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:

- Community Adult Mental Health Teams, and other mental health professionals working with people affected by diabetes to receive diabetes-specific training. To 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, or diabulimia.

- Commissioners to ensure Community Mental Health Teams, and other mental health professionals working mainly with people with severe mental illness to have training to 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, anorexia nervosa, or diabulimia.

- 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*®, and complete available training courses on diabetes.

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](http://www.diabetes.org.uk/emotional-wellbeing)