Connect

Your DIABETES UK NORTHERN IRELAND newsletter SUMMER 2019

www.diabetes.org.uk/NorthernIreland

#DiabetesUKNI

KnowDiabetesFightDiabetes Balmoral Show '19.
Hello

Dr David Chaney is the Assistant Director for Local Impact for Diabetes UK and oversees all the offices across the four nations. David tells us what a PIA is and what lies ahead for Diabetes UK Northern Ireland...

'It has been a while since I last appeared in Connect magazine and I am delighted to be given the opportunity to share with you the plans for the year ahead and the changes that come with our ever evolving work.

We are working on our new strategy which we are due to launch in 2020. This has given us an opportunity to reflect on our work to date and explore how we work going forward to achieve our vision of a world where diabetes can do no harm. Since the development of our last strategy there has been significant change in diabetes care across the UK, with new treatments and new technologies offering lots of hope for the future. Most importantly we have seen the launch of both the Diabetes Strategic Framework and Diabetes Network in Northern Ireland. These new initiatives along with many others in the other three nations has allowed us to think big and work towards a strategy that will encompass hope for the future along with support for those who are affected by diabetes presently. I look forward to sharing the strategy with you once it has been developed fully.

In 2019 Diabetes UK introduced a new way of working that has allowed us to focus on specific areas that are likely to make a difference for people living with diabetes. These are called Priority Impact Areas. These are areas in which we believe we can make a substantial impact for those living with or at risk of diabetes in 2019.

The Priority Impact Areas are:
- Prevention
- Remission
- Digital technology
- Emotional & Psychological Support

We have updates in this edition about key areas of work going on and we are really excited about the opportunities that lie ahead. We are especially pleased to welcome Trudy Brown as a guest contributor as she tells us all about the launch of the Diabetes Prevention Programme in Northern Ireland.

There is change afoot for the Northern Ireland office as we say goodbye to the Newforge Lane office and move premises to Lisburn Square. This has been part of a UK-wide strategy to make our offices fit for purpose, save money where possible and be as accessible to as many people as possible. We also have new faces to the team which you can read about on pages 6 and 8 and we look forward to the team continuing to expand.

This year also marks 80 years since Diabetes UK launched it’s first support group. What an amazing achievement and gives me an opportunity to thank everyone who has ever given their time to support us whether it has been in a group setting or at one of our many events over the years. The impact you make in your local communities is trusted and vital in helping more and more people living with diabetes.

We are also delighted to announce the Family Weekender will be making a welcome return to Northern Ireland in October, check out page 6 for more information. We are also going through the final process to reintroduce the Type 1 events for our children and young people, expecting to be operational from 2020. I am sure you have been as impatient and at times, as frustrated, as we have been in waiting for their return! We are proud of the work that has gone into making our events the best that they can be and will look forward to you joining us. It will be worth the wait!

I never tire of hearing about the amazing achievements of our Northern Ireland volunteers, campaigners and fundraisers. Your work and commitment helps us to do the work we do, reach and supersede the goals we set and ultimately, helps us reach more people who are living with diabetes in Northern Ireland. Thank you for helping us on our journey to a world where diabetes can do no harm and thank you for your continued support to the team in Northern Ireland.'

Dr David Chaney
Assistant Director for Local Impact, Diabetes UK
Right across the UK, Diabetes UK teams, supporters, volunteers and campaigners met with public representatives and decision makers to talk about the emotional impact that diabetes has and that it is often overlooked from diabetes care.

At Stormont, we were joined by MLAs from the DUP, Sinn Fein, UUP, SDLP and Alliance Party as well as the newly appointed Diabetes Network Chair, Dr Tony Stevens. We heard two personal experiences from our campaigners who shared their stories and the relentless nature of living with a serious condition like diabetes. We also had Dr Mark Davies, Consultant Clinical Psychologist, share his professional insight into the important role that emotional support plays in good management of diabetes.

On average, a person living with diabetes spends 3 hours with a healthcare professional. For the remaining, 8,757 hours, they manage their diabetes themselves. We know that people living with diabetes are twice as likely to suffer from depression. We know that ¾ of people who wanted specialist mental health support couldn’t access it. We know this campaign is important.

So, what needs to happen?

People with diabetes need support and care that sees the whole person, not just their condition.

We’re calling on each of the nation’s health services to create national standards for diabetes emotional and mental health services to make sure:

1. Everyone is asked how they are feeling as part of every diabetes appointment.
2. A mental health professional with knowledge of diabetes is part of every diabetes care team.

Dr David Chaney, Assistant Director for Local Impact at Diabetes UK, said: “The day-to-day demands of managing diabetes can be a constant struggle affecting people’s emotional wellbeing and mental health. In turn, people tell us that struggling emotionally can make it even more difficult to keep on top of self-management. And when diabetes cannot be well managed, the risk of dangerous complications, such as amputations, kidney failure and stroke increases.

We look forward to working with the Diabetes Network to further prioritise emotional and psychological support in diabetes care in Northern Ireland."

We have identified six key areas for decision makers to take action on:

» The emotional and psychological impact of diabetes to be recognised in all diabetes care, through systematic care and support planning and better conversations

» 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

» Services providing diabetes care to be supported by specialist mental health professionals, including psychologists and liaison psychiatrists, to ensure effective provision across all levels of need

» An integrated care pathway for diabetes and emotional and psychological wellbeing to be developed and implemented in Northern Ireland

» 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

We look forward to building on the momentum started at the Stormont launch and would like to thank everyone who contributed to the discussion and commitment to keep talking about what is too often missing from diabetes care.

Dr Tony Stevens, Sophie Lusby and Dr David Chaney
Digital Learning: How can we help you?

Digital information and services are having such a profound effect on our lives, the lives of our family and loved ones so it is perhaps unsurprising that it is also revolutionising the way Diabetes UK is able to reach out and support people living with diabetes.

Providing information and advice directly to your computer, tablet or phone means you can access a huge range of support to help you learn more about your diabetes, when it’s convenient for you. It could be through an online course produced and checked by our clinical team, through to everyday advice and tips we have collected from people living with diabetes. The opportunities provided by digital learning and education are exciting and quickly changing. Below gives a bit of a flavour if you are interested to find out more:

**LEARNING ZONE**
Simple advice and information you can trust

Learning Zone is Diabetes UK’s free online education service for adults with Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes. It is a website with videos, quizzes and information designed to help you learn more about your diabetes and manage the condition more effectively. We ask you a few questions about your diabetes when you register in order to show you diabetes information that is right for you.

If you’d like to find out more about the checks you should be getting each year, how to prepare for your next appointment, how to make some easy and sensible food swaps to start eating more healthily, or how to cope with your diabetes when things get a bit difficult, Learning Zone may have everything you need. [https://learningzone.diabetes.org.uk/](https://learningzone.diabetes.org.uk/)

**DIABETES & ME**
Your personal library of diabetes information

How often have you gone online to find some information on diabetes and been bewildered by the amount of information? What can you trust and how can you avoid looking for the same type of information over and over again? We have the answer. Diabetes UK’s website has the biggest source of information in the UK and everything is regularly checked by our clinical team. You know if it’s on our site, you can trust it.

Your relationship with diabetes is personal, so your experience on our website should be too. Diabetes & Me is a new service that means you can take all of this information and make it personal for you. You can save useful information, your favourite recipes and anything else that you’re interested in, all in one place and it’s always there and easy to access. Even better, Diabetes & Me learns what you like or what you think is important and it provides you with new suggestions that might be of interest to you. [www.diabetes.org.uk/diabetes-and-me](http://www.diabetes.org.uk/diabetes-and-me)

**DIABETES SUPPORT FORUM**
Advice and support from people like you

Sometimes, the best advice and support can only come from someone who knows exactly what you are going through.Nearly 20,000 people have used the charity’s Diabetes Support Forum to meet other people living with the condition online, to share experiences, to offer advice and answers when people have questions, and to provide support and friendship when living and managing diabetes can feel too much. It’s a vibrant community with discussions on a wide range of issues and you can guarantee that whatever you want to talk about, there will be other members of the Forum who want to listen and reply. [https://forum.diabetes.org.uk](https://forum.diabetes.org.uk)

Understanding and learning more about your diabetes are the first steps to managing the condition well, reducing fears and anxieties and protecting yourself for the future. We all rely on help from our family and friends or your local healthcare team but increasingly now, information and advice is just a click away, whenever you need it. If you haven’t tried some of Diabetes UK’s new digital services, why not give them a try.

Jason Harding
Diabetes UK Digital Learning Lead
To truly fight Type 2 diabetes, we need to work towards stopping it from developing in the first place. The number of people with Type 2 diabetes in the UK has doubled over the past 20 years, with devastating effects to people, their families and wider society. But, for most cases, Type 2 diabetes can be prevented or delayed through behaviour change. It is important to note, however, that there are also cases where Type 2 diabetes comes about as a result of genetics or other health conditions which can trigger Type 2 diabetes. The time to take action is now. There is momentum in Government policy, the media and research, and we have a strong voice in helping to build a healthier environment. Continuing from our existing efforts in policy, campaigns and partnerships, we will drive change in all 4 UK nations by influencing governments, health services and industry to make the healthy choice the easy choice. We will reach and engage more people to help them Know their Risk, with focus on learning more about and reaching BAME and deprived communities.

What do we plan to achieve in 2019?

1. To promote our Know Your Risk tool and seek to reach and engage with 2 million people focusing on BAME and disadvantaged communities.
2. To gain insight and learn how best to reach more people at high risk of Type 2 diabetes (Specifically BAME and deprived communities).
3. Work with health care and political decision makers to ensure prevention of Type 2 diabetes remains a priority across the 4 Nations.
4. Work with and through corporate partnerships, staff and colleagues to develop a workplace health model which can be used to promote behaviour change.

What difference will it make to people with and at risk of Type 2 with diabetes?

Overall, it will result in less people developing Type 2 diabetes, more people delaying the onset of Type 2 diabetes and more people receiving an early diagnosis of Type 2 diabetes.

More specifically, it will result in:

1. Diabetes UK being able to continue to build an environment supportive of healthier behaviours through policy change and influencing industry.
2. People becoming more aware of the seriousness of diabetes, how they can take action to reduce their risk of Type 2 diabetes.
Family Weekender
Type 1 Events
are back!

Friday 4th October
– Sunday 6th October,
Crown Plaza Belfast and Belfast
Activity Centre

A Family Weekender can be a life-changing experience for children and young people living with Type 1 diabetes and their families.

Our weekends are for the whole family; parents, careers, siblings or grandparents - we encourage everyone to come along.

For most of the weekend your child (and any siblings), will be looked after by our trained volunteers, including healthcare professionals and people living with Type 1 diabetes. They’ll meet their peers and take part in a range of fun-filled activities.

There’ll also be some informal time spent learning a little more about diabetes and a session especially for siblings without diabetes. We have a crèche for zero to four year olds, with or without Type 1.

Adults will have time to relax and meet other parents and our volunteers who understand exactly what you’re going through. You’ll also have the opportunity to quiz our experts on all things diabetes. And you can let us know if there’s anything you particularly want to cover.

1. Olivia, you are the new Volunteer Support Officer. What attracted you to this role?

As a Type 1 diabetic myself, diabetes and the care and support for diabetics has always been a passion of mine. I live with the condition every day and can empathise with other people in the same position. I have always wanted to work with Diabetes UK and to raise awareness for diabetes so when the job opportunity came up I applied straight away.

2. Have you ever volunteered for Diabetes UK before?

I have indeed. Family, friends and I ran the Belfast Marathon for Diabetes UK on several occasions and I have done an abseil for the charity as well as other fundraising events. Every little helps and I love to contribute in any way I can.

3. Why is volunteering so important to you?

Volunteering is what keeps the charity going. I believe that any donations and money raised should be put back in to the charity, funding research and development for finding a cure for diabetes and helping those who live with the condition. Without fundraising and volunteers along with all their help, support and time we simply wouldn’t have the ability to do the work we do.

4. What are you most looking forward to in this role?

I love meeting new people and speaking to others who have diabetes. I want to help encourage people and raise awareness about diabetes. I want to show people that living with diabetes doesn’t have to be a burden and that you can live a long and happy life living with the condition.

5. Tell us a little more about yourself

I’m 27 years old, from Belfast and I have Type 1 diabetes. I love to travel, keep active and learn new things to keep my brain active as well. I previously lived in Australia for two years and worked as an air hostess for British Airways. After that, for two years I travelled the world. I loved every minute and proved to myself that diabetes would never stop me from living my life. Now that I’m getting older, I started thinking what was out there for me to work at long term and allow me to settle down at home and give me a change of career in something I would enjoy. What better job for me than with Diabetes UK.

To book a place or to volunteer during this weekend, contact us at Type1Events@diabetes.org.uk
Making emotional wellbeing a routine part of diabetes care

Diabetes UK is calling on each of the nation’s health services in the UK to create national standards for diabetes emotional and mental health services.

Diabetes UK wants to make emotional health part of routine diabetes care to make sure; firstly, everyone is asked how they are feeling as part of every diabetes appointment, and secondly; a mental health professional with knowledge of diabetes is part of every diabetes care team.

What we’re asking for works and is what people living with diabetes want. These changes will create support and care that sees the whole person with diabetes, not just their condition. In 2017 more than 9,000 people living with differing kinds of diabetes shared their experiences with Diabetes UK to shape our Future of Diabetes report, which revealed that diabetes emotional and psychological wellbeing care needed significantly improving.

Three quarters of those needing specialist mental health support, such as from a counsellor or psychologist, to help manage the condition, could not access it. Seven out of ten people with diabetes also reported that they are not helped to talk about their emotional wellbeing by their diabetes teams.

Healthcare professionals surveyed also revealed that there was more to be done in this area. Specifically, 40 per cent of GPs are not likely to ask about emotional wellbeing and mental health in routine diabetes appointments, while only 30 per cent feel there is enough emotional and psychological support for people living with diabetes.

Diabetes UK are urgently calling on each of the four nations’ health services to create national standards for diabetes emotional and mental health services. These should ensure that everyone is asked how they are feeling as part of every diabetes appointment, and that a mental health professional with knowledge of diabetes is part of every diabetes care team.

Please keep supporting our campaign, we know how important this is to you. Share the petition with friends and family and help us raise awareness. We have seen when we work together we can make change happen so join with us!

Diabetes UK launched its new ‘Too Often Missing’ report which demonstrates diabetes is much more than a standalone physical condition. The demand to balance symptoms 24/7 – the constant decision making for instance by checking blood glucose levels, or managing diet – alongside the continual need to take actions, in order to reduce the likelihood of short and long-term complications, can affect every aspect of day-to-day life. You can read about the launch at Stormont on page 3.

The research revealed that the relentless nature of diabetes can impact people’s emotional, mental and psychological wellbeing and health – from day-to-day frustration and low mood, to specific psychological and mental health difficulties such as clinical depression and anxiety.

Diabetes UK is launching a petition to call for national standards for diabetes mental health support and services.

To find out more about the campaign and sign the petition go to www.diabetes.org.uk/missing

To read a copy of our new report please go to: www.diabetes.org.uk/missing

Clare Howarth,
Diabetes UK Head of North of England
Diabetes UK Northern Ireland has recently been awarded with funding from the National Lottery Community Fund – empowering young people to run the Our Lives, Our Voices project with and for young people living with T1D over the next four years.

We would like to introduce Carl McKeating who is the Youth Co-Ordinator of the project.

Q&A WITH CARL

1. **Tell us a bit more about the Our Lives, Our Voices project**

   Well, the Our Lives Our Voices Project has been designed to work with young people aged 13-25 years across four themes; health and wellbeing, education and empowerment, partnership working, developing relationships and support networks.

   The plan for the next year is to recruit 20-25 Volunteer Youth Leaders (aged 18-25 years) from across NI who will identify their own specific training and development needs to be able to support their peers. The project will also involve partnership working with other mental health support organisations to develop relationships with health care professionals to improve the levels of care for those who live with Type 1 diabetes.

2. **Who is going to benefit from this project?**

   Looking at the project there are many beneficiaries throughout the four years.

   The Youth Leaders will benefit in gaining the knowledge and skills to support their own development, experience in programme development, peer support and interpersonal skills and public speaking.

   We hope to reach hundreds of young people living with Type 1 diabetes from across NI. Benefits will range from having links to a greater support network across the Diabetes Community, access to trained Peer Mentors & Listeners, increased knowledge and most importantly the self-confidence to manage their condition in a way that is relevant to them.

3. **How can people get involved?**

   The most powerful resource we have is you…if you know anyone who lives with Type 1 Diabetes and is aged between 18 and 25 years then ask them to get in touch by phoning 02890666646 or email carl.mckeating@diabetes.org.uk.

4. **What happens next**

   Once our first youth leaders have been recruited, they will take part in a few team-building activities and a residential to start planning and mapping out what their project will look like. We will then work with our partnership organisations to develop the wellbeing programme not only for themselves but for every other young person who lives with T1D.

5. **Tell us a bit about yourself and why you decided to take on this exciting new role**

   I’m a 43 year old father of two (young men going through their GCSEs – the stress!!). Been with my wife for almost 27 years. I love to keep active, and enjoy a bit of everything from Circuits to Kettlebells & Free-weights, Ju-Jitsu and a spot of golf.

   One of my greatest passions is helping people be better. I’m currently working towards my ICF Coaching accreditation with a focus on working with young men and on a Saturday, when after an early morning sparring session, I’m a motivational & life coach for a female only keep fit class.

   As a youth worker I have run group work projects aimed at young people and adults, managed a large community youth centre with up to 150 young people a week, and have a particular interest in working with people during residentials, we get to learn so much about each other around a campfire. For the last two and half years I worked with young people and adults in custody, who lived with alcohol and substance dependency issues to improve their physical and emotional wellbeing.

   I love my work. I believe every young person has the power to achieve what they want, not only for themselves but for those who follow them, and the Our Lives, Our Voices Project is an amazing opportunity for young people to do that.

   If you would like any further information then please contact carl.mckeating@diabetes.org.uk.
Remission of Type 2 diabetes means maintaining blood glucose levels below the diabetes range without needing glucose lowering medications. Scientists hope that by doing so, people could have a lower risk of diabetes-related complications in the future.

Excitement about the potential of remission has been increasing as the results from the Diabetes UK funded DiRECT (Diabetes Remission Clinical Trial) research have been published.

DiRECT is a clinical trial testing whether a low-calorie weight management programme can put Type 2 diabetes into remission for the long term. The programme consisted of a meal replacement phase where people consumed about 850 calories per day using nutritionally balanced meal replacement soups and shakes. People were supported by specially trained healthcare professionals throughout the programme, including to gradually reintroduce healthy food and to maintain a healthy weight after their initial weight loss.

The results have been really positive. After two years, 36 per cent of participants who had been through the low-calorie weight management programme were in remission of Type 2 diabetes.

One of the current challenges we’re facing is that there isn’t yet an agreed definition of remission across the NHS, or anywhere else. So we’re working with experts across the world, including the American Diabetes Association (ADA) and the European Association for the Study of Diabetes (EASD), to agree an international definition. This definition can be used by healthcare professionals, so they can properly identify cases of remission and provide the right support.

Since the DiRECT results were published, we have seen some exciting developments. The NHS in Scotland are currently rolling out a low-calorie weight management programme, and NHS England has announced plans to pilot a similar programme. We will be working with them as they develop these services, and will continue to share emerging evidence with the Health Services in Northern Ireland and Wales.

But this isn’t the only potential route to remission; we now have significant evidence that bariatric surgery is another possible option. Research suggests that 30-60% of people with Type 2 diabetes who have bariatric surgery go into remission. So it was great to see Northern Ireland’s Health Department announce plans for the province’s first bariatric surgery centre.

Remission is still a very new field within Type 2 diabetes, and unanswered questions remain. To help us build on what we know so far, we will soon be bringing researchers, healthcare professionals and people with diabetes together to identify the key questions around remission that still need to be answered.

But we’re not done yet, and have already increased our investment for research in the remission field through Professor Taylor’s ReTUNE study. The ReTUNE trial is testing whether a low-calorie weight management programme can also help people with Type 2 diabetes who are already a healthy weight to put their condition into remission.

If you are interested in finding out more about the remission of Type 2 diabetes or hearing from people who have taken part in the DiRECT trial themselves, you can take a look at our website.

www.diabetes.org.uk

Matt Hopkins
Diabetes UK Senior Project Manager for Remission
Strategic Partnerships are greater than the sum of their parts

If a corporate business or an organisation selects a charity as their Charity of the Year (CoTY) and that charity benefits from a donation at the end of the partnership, it should be more than just a transactional relationship. They should both fit each other’s values and see a shared problem to fix through a variety of solutions. In our case it is about educating members of the business community about diabetes, its complications and their own individual risk as a company and their staff members. It’s about finding a solution to this through the Know Your Risk education tool and how you can prevent or delay Type 2 diabetes. In addition, we communicate the support and services to help people and families living with Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes locally, including research taking place at Queen’s University Belfast (QUB) and University of Ulster (UU).

Diabetes UK NI recently held a Lab Tour at QUB to find out about the research which Professor Tim Curtis and Professor Stitt are currently working on. The research team at QUB are experts in diabetes eye complications and Diabetes UK has funded them to carry out life changing research to test a drug that could be used to treat the early stages of retinopathy (eye damage) in the future. This is a strategic partnership between Diabetes UK and our supporters, and also the researchers at QUB. Diabetes UK wants to find a fix to diabetic retinopathy, and through the work of the researchers, they might just have the solution to this. From the support of our local communities who fundraise, we have the ability to fund this potentially ground breaking research taking place in Northern Ireland.

Prof Curtis explained the importance of this event and the need for fundraising “We were delighted to host a lab tour for some of Diabetes UK supporters and volunteers to raise awareness of diabetic retinopathy and the importance of the work that the charity are funding in this area. We thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to discuss our work with so many interested people. The feedback that we received will be immensely valuable in helping us to ensure that our research remains focused on the key issues that matter to people with diabetes.”

We are also delighted that EPOS Bureau in Irvinestown has chosen us as their Charity for the Year as diabetes is something close to their heart within their team. We look forward to working together over the course of 2019.

Lismore Comprehensive

Lismore Comprehensive College broke the Guinness World record for the largest human Pi symbol on the 14 March and also paid tribute to one of their Year 8 pupils who sadly passed away of undiagnosed Type 1 diabetes.

Staff and pupils of Lismore College far exceeded the previous record of 847 people which was achieved in Portugal and broke the record with 1,170 members of the school community who took part in the challenge. Not only are the school record breakers, they also raised a staggering £1700 in memory of a much loved pupil.

A huge thank you to all staff and pupils involved in making this a fitting tribute to a very sad situation.

If you would like to speak to someone about diabetes, to find out more or get some support, then please call our Helpline on 0345 123 2399.
The Titanic Building came alive on Saturday 18th May with sounds from brides, bridesmaids, mother of the brides, grooms and everyone in between!

This unique event showcased over 40 brides in their original wedding dresses including the organiser of the gala ball, Clare Mitchell who wore her pink wedding dress which she had worn 12½ years ago.

Stephen Clements and Cate Conway from Q Radio Breakfast were the compères for the evening, adding to the fun and entertainment.

The attention to detail on the night was incredible with the table numbers being a particular wedding anniversary; such as cotton or paper or ruby; cherry blossom table centres, a slideshow of guests on their own wedding day on the big screens, a little pot of jam as your wedding favour and a showcase of bridal dresses and accessories from over the decades.

Clare would like to thank all of the local companies which supplied fantastic raffle and auction prizes, and also to those who gave of their services in kind. She is very grateful to everyone who came on the night and helped to support her. We are finalising the total raised, and will let everyone know as soon as possible.

Diabetes UK NI would like to thank Clare for all her hard work and commitment to this event – It was an enormous task and she carried it off with such passion and grace. Clare has not only raised thousands of pounds for our work here in NI – directly from the Mothball and also indirectly from a large corporate donation - she has also raised a significant amount of awareness too.

Well done Clare!!

If you would like to join one of our many support groups please contact the office at nivolunteering@diabetes.org.uk to find a local group in your area.

Here’s to another 80 years of our wonderful, amazing and inspiring support groups!

Help us celebrate 80 years of our local Diabetes Support Groups

Many of our successes wouldn’t happen without the support of our local groups across Northern Ireland and we are proud of the work and support they continue to provide to people living with diabetes.

It was great to welcome the Chief Medical Officer, Dr Michael McBride, to our stand at the recent Balmoral Show. Thank you to all the amazing volunteers who made the Show such a success!
The programme has been developed as part of Northern Ireland’s approach to providing innovative services which have a focus on prevention and has been supported by investment from the transformation fund.

Approximately 96,000 people are living with diabetes in Northern Ireland, a startling 69.3% increase since 2007. Type 2 diabetes accounts for 90% of all cases of diabetes and is a serious and progressive condition. The condition can lead to early loss of life, cause preventable sight loss in working age people, and is a major contributor to kidney failure, heart attack, stroke and even amputation, yet the condition is often preventable by adopting healthier lifestyle changes.

The new Diabetes Prevention Programme NI (DPP NI) is aimed at people who have been identified as pre-diabetic – those who have been tested and have a blood sugar level slightly above the normal range. (Either an ‘HbA1c’ test result between 42-47 mmol/mol or a Fasting Blood Glucose (FBG) test result between 5.5-6.9 mmol/l).

DPP NI is a nine month behaviour change programme that helps those at risk of developing Type 2 diabetes significantly reduce their chances of getting the disease.²

Those attending the programme will receive help on healthy habits; in a group environment with up to 15 people. Participants are invited to bring along a friend or family member for support. In attending DPP participants’ should find the sessions welcoming and motivating. There is no charge to participants and they will receive resources to help them along the way.

The groups are facilitated by health coaches who have received specialist training that enables them to offer help to participants to change their lifestyle. Participants are encouraged to reduce their risk through diet, physical activity and weight management. Sessions are offered over the course of the nine month period with decreasing frequency. There are 18 sessions in total; six weekly, six bi-weekly and six monthly. All sessions are one hour except for the first two hourly session.

The DPP is currently up and running across all five Trust areas in Northern Ireland. People can be referred to the programme by primary care teams via an electronic referral system (CCG).

Anyone can take a first step in finding out if they are at risk by completing the simple on line test - Know Your Risk of Type 2 diabetes at: https://riskscore.diabetes.org.uk