CONNECT
YOUR DIABETES UK SOUTH WEST REGIONAL NEWSLETTER
SUMMER 2016

FOCUS ON LOCAL GROUPS

PLUS
• INSPIRE AWARDS
• RESEARCH & INNOVATION IN SOUTH WEST
• REGIONAL ROUND-UP

DiABETES UK
CARE. CONNECT. CAMPAIGN.
DEAR DIABETES UK SUPPORTER

As we head into summer I wanted to take the opportunity of introducing myself. I had the pleasure of meeting many Diabetes UK South West volunteers at the Taunton Inspire Conference in March. I wanted to say thank you for your support, it was great to meet so many dedicated volunteers and members of South West groups.

I joined Diabetes UK in September of last year which was a time of major change for the charity and in each area of our work, we can cite major successes as well as major challenges faced. Through 2015 and this year there has been a huge amount of hard work and commitment and on behalf of the Trustees and the Executive Team, I want say a big ‘thank you’ to each of you for the part you’ve played.

The South West is leading the world in testing new technologies (see page 7). We have been working with partners to test innovations such as wearable sensors or apps which can help measure insulin levels. This exciting innovation was supported by the Bristol and Swindon groups, and members were involved in the development and design. Watch this space!

Local groups form an important part of Diabetes UK. Through your work in your communities we can support people and their families. We value all our groups and this issue of Connect features just a small selection of your achievements.

This year will bring many opportunities and much to be excited about. I would like to say thanks to Claire Gordon for her outstanding work as Regional Manager maternity cover for Phaedra Perry, whom we were delighted to welcome back in May.

Your fundraising supports breakthrough innovations and through service champion roles and roadshows you help influence improvements in care and prevention. At the volunteer conference I heard of the West Dorset group and their awareness raising events, and Spencer Wimbleton’s new group in Cornwall.

There is much to celebrate in the South West and I look forward to meeting you and learning more about your amazing work to support people affected by diabetes.

Chris Askew
Chief Executive, Diabetes UK
INSPIRATIONAL LOCAL GROUPS SCOOP UP DIABETES UK AWARD FOR COMMUNITY AND FUNDRAISING

Two of the South West’s Diabetes UK groups were presented with awards to recognise their dedication at the charity’s regional Inspire Conference, held in Taunton on Saturday 19 March. Many other volunteers were recognised for their longstanding support for the charity.

Chief Executive Chris Askew was there to present the awards and meet volunteers who travelled from around the region to meet him, network with each other, hear about the research in the region and attend workshops on media, fundraising and running a local group.

Plymouth group won the Local Group and Community Award for their community work for the people of Plymouth. They set up and paid for a very successful, well attended foot care event which provided delegates with important information about looking after their feet, raised awareness of the importance of footcare and the potentially devastating complications of diabetes such as amputations.

The Weston-super-Mare group won the Fundraising for Local Groups award by holding a series of events during 2015 and raising a substantial sum for Diabetes UK. The group is well-organised and are great ambassadors for the charity in North Somerset.

Nikki Boyd who works at Honda in Swindon won the fundraising award, and Phoebe Maddison, also from Swindon won the Young Person’s Outstanding Contribution award due to her amazing videos aimed at ‘showing what life is like’ for a young person with Type 1.

“We are really grateful to all our Local Groups and volunteers. Our South West supporters are incredibly committed and provide essential support for people in their communities. Through our Inspire Awards we thank them. They work hard in the community day in and day out. Our much-needed work wouldn’t be possible without their support and I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all of our volunteers who make an enormous difference.”

Annika Palmer, Influencing Officer
WEST BRISTOL
The West Bristol group, run regular walks around Bristol. These healthy walks are usually followed by a cuppa in a cafe and allow members the chance to get together and stretch their legs with some activity. This walk on Bristol Downs by Avon Gorge was on a beautiful but cold spring morning.

WILTSHIRE
Dr Liz Christie and Graham Cooper, Local Group Development Officer have set up three new local groups in Wiltshire.
Susi Calder, Volunteer Development Manager said: “Following the series of Wiltshire roadshows in 2015 it was clear that there was a demand for more information about diabetes and how to manage the condition. We have had huge interest from Trowbridge, Amesbury and Warminster and I’m pleased that three new groups has been set up to support people in the area.”

PLYMOUTH SUGARZAPPERS
Plymouth Sugarzappers is a new group supporting the children (who came up with the great name!) and families living with diabetes in the Plymouth, Devon and Cornwall area. With so many new cases of diabetes being diagnosed, it is really positive to have such a friendly, supportive group in place.
Led by a small team of parents and grandparents of young children with Type 1 diabetes, with the support of their local specialist health care team, the group have organised a range of activities to get the local diabetes community together.
Becky Moore, secretary of the group said, “It has been great to get the children and families together at a range of both fun and educational events. It is reassuring to know we are not alone in dealing with this lifelong and challenging condition.”
Following the successful launch in September 2015, events have included a Carb Counting Day, Halloween party, Ice Skating evening and Easter Egg Hunt, with plans underway for a different get together every month.
For more details find Plymouth Sugar Zappers on Facebook, www.plymouth-sugar-zappers.diabetesuk-group.org or e-mail: diabetesuk.plymouth@gmail.com

CAMBORNE VOLUNTEER SETS UP NEW DIABETES UK GROUP
Spencer Wimbleton, who runs the West Cornwall Diabetes UK local group, has set up a series of free educational events. These events will launch a new group and provide expert advice and information for adults diagnosed with Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes in Cornwall.
Spencer said “We welcome anyone affected by diabetes to come along, meet others, and learn more about living with the condition.”
Annika Palmer, Influencing Officer said: “Thanks to Spencer and his team of volunteers for setting up a new group! We know that there are over 28,000 people living with diabetes in Cornwall. Attending a group can be crucial in learning more about the condition and knowing that you are not alone.”
NORTH DEVON GROUP
The North Devon Local Group, chaired by Lyn Hill, presented a cheque to Chris Askew at the South West Inspire Awards on 19 March. Members raised the substantial sum of £1000 from their monthly meetings and other fundraising activities.

Lyn said “We are a friendly group and we run events to promote awareness about diabetes. Through our meetings, social events and our resources such as our books we support local people who are affected by diabetes.”

“The project we adopted was ‘Racking our Brains on Energy Balance’ run by Dr Craig Beall at Exeter University. We chose to donate to this study as it is locally based in Exeter and researching the connection between the brain and hypos, an ongoing problem in Type 1 diabetes.”

This active group, based at St John Garden Centre and Roundswell Community Centre in Barnstaple meet frequently throughout the year and members travel from all over North Devon, including Ilfracombe, Holsworthy, Braunton and Bideford. Rose Lester has run some of the meetings for eleven years, she sources interesting and informative speakers for the Monday meetings.

North Devon Local Group meet twice a month, once for a relaxed chat and coffee morning then the second meeting is usually more formal and focuses on a diabetes-related topic such as diet. Members contribute towards a raffle to cover costs and raise funds.

The North Devon group also meets for a healthy walk and lunch each month and have various socials throughout the year. The group also goes on trips away, the last was a four day holiday to South Wales in February.

The group has just had their planning meeting. The members decided to hold a street party for the Queen’s birthday, a fundraising day at Atlantic village and support the Big Collection in September. Their annual outing will be to Totnes and they will sail down the river to Dartmouth.

Two of the group’s members - Frankie Blake and Dave Parkin (pictured) received Nabarro medals from Chris Askew at the Inspire conference. The award was given by Diabetes UK in recognition of the courage and perseverance in handling the condition.

The Alan Nabarro medal is awarded to people who have lived with diabetes for 50 years. Alan Nabarro waged a lifelong battle against discrimination against people with diabetes. In 1968 he was awarded the OBE for his work with young people in London.

Dave said: “The vast improvements made in technology have made it a great deal easier to manage diabetes. Blood glucose monitoring, along with a healthy diet has enabled me to lead a full and active life without complications. The receipt of this medal is an acknowledgement to all of those people who have helped me along the way.”

Frankie said: “Since 1966 the technology, treatment and diets have changed tremendously. I remember boiling my syringes, storing them in long thin cylinders with surgical spirit in the bottom. These needles were used countless times unlike pens and the pump I have now where I only have to inject once every two or three days. Thank goodness those days are over. Of course there were no blood testing machines then either, just wee tests plus the diet was very strict. I’ve no idea how I managed to ‘survive’ after all the ‘mistakes’ I made but here I am so thank you for awarding me the Alan Nabarro medal.”
CHILDHOOD DIABETES DISCOVERIES COULD LEAD TO NEW TREATMENTS.

Children who are diagnosed with diabetes before the age of seven develop a more aggressive form of the disease than that seen in teenagers, new research has revealed.

A team led by the University of Exeter Medical School has found for the first time that, while children aged six or under are left with very few insulin producing beta cells in their pancreas when diagnosed, those with onset of symptomatic type 1 diabetes as teenagers still retain large numbers of these cells.

This work provides the first clear evidence that children who are diagnosed with type 1 diabetes at the age of six years or under develop a more aggressive form of the disease. A condition known as insulitis, representing an inflammatory process, kills off nearly all the insulin-producing beta cells in the pancreas of the young children. However, the researchers found that progression of the disease is radically different in those diagnosed as teenagers or beyond, who retain unexpectedly large numbers of beta cells at diagnosis – although they are no longer working as they should.

Professor Noel Morgan, of the University of Exeter Medical School, explained his research to South West volunteers at the Inspire conference. He said: “This is incredibly exciting and could open the doors to new treatments for young people who develop diabetes. It was previously thought that teenagers with type 1 diabetes had lost around 90 per cent of their beta cells but we have discovered that this is not true. In fact, those diagnosed in their teens still have many beta cells left – this suggests that the cells are dormant, but not dead. If we can find a way to reactivate these cells so that they resume insulin release, we may be able to slow or even reverse progression of this disease.”

HIT ACTIVITY FOR PEOPLE WITH TYPE 2

Dr Niels Vollard gave delegates at the Inspire Conference an update on his study at Bath University funded by Diabetes UK. His team is studying how intense, active short bursts of exercise (High-Intensity Training or HIT) compares to gentler exercise - and what benefits there are for people with Type 2 diabetes.

Twenty one men with Type 2 diabetes were recruited onto the study and the research is looking at impact of exercise on glucose management, insulin sensitivity and risk factors associated with diabetic complications such as cardiovascular disease. The team is also looking at the impact of HIT on fitness, which is a great predictor for health.

Preliminary findings show that short intense bursts of exercise provide the same or better health effects than gentler exercise that takes longer. People often say they don’t have time to exercise. Dr Vollard hopes that they can break down this barrier to lack of exercise, that will encourage more people to become physically active and improve management of Type 2 diabetes or even prevent the onset of Type 2 diabetes.

The findings from the current research study are to be published in summer 2016. However, preliminary findings indicate that HIT can improve insulin sensitivity and fitness levels in people without diabetes, and therefore, it is expected that insulin sensitivity, blood glucose control and fitness levels will also be improved in people with Type 2 diabetes.
People with diabetes in the West will be among the first to benefit from a major new drive to modernise how the NHS delivers care. The West of England Academic Health Science Network (AHSN) will be leading the way in NHS innovation, as part of a pioneering pilot project with partners including Diabetes UK.

As part of the ‘Diabetes Digital Coach’ pilot, people with diabetes and frontline health and care workers across the west will pioneer and evaluate opportunities using remote monitoring and coaching technology for better self-management.

Successful innovations will then be available for other parts of the country to adopt and adapt to the particular needs of their local populations.

The Diabetes Digital Coach programme will bring together mobile health self-management tools such as wearable sensors and supporting software with the latest developments in connecting monitoring devices.

Sandra Tweddell, chair of Bristol Local Group was involved in the development and said: “Technology can be used to enable true partnership between the GP, consultant or practice nurse and the person with diabetes. Diabetes Digital Coach is a really exciting initiative as, if successful, it will enable more people to better manage their diabetes, hopefully reducing the awful complications that go with the condition.”

Over the next two years, the project will be looking for up to 12,000 people with diabetes across the West to come forward and participate in the Test Bed.

Anyone with diabetes living in Bristol, Bath & North East Somerset, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Swindon or South Gloucestershire who would like to find out more or get involved in the Diabetes Digital Coach programme can get in touch with the team at enterprise@weahsn.net
As ever we have plenty going on this year you can get involved with to raise awareness and help others affected by diabetes in the South West.

If you are free to volunteer for any of these events the South West team would be very grateful for your help - we rely on supporters to run these awareness and education events - please email south.west@diabetes.org.uk or call 01823 448260. Thank you!

**EVENT DATES**

- **7 June**
  Living with Diabetes Day (Taunton) at The Holiday Inn

- **8 June**
  Make The Grade Event (Exeter)

- **12 - 18 June**
  Diabetes Week

- **22 - 23 June**
  Weston-super-Mare Roadshow

- **6 July**
  Living with Diabetes Day (Weston-Super-Mare) at Rookery Manor

- **19 - 20 July**
  Newquay Roadshow

- **22 - 23 August**
  Torquay and Paignton Roadshow

- **14 -15 September**
  Barnstaple and Bideford Roadshow

- **16 - 17 September**
  Big Collection Tesco

- **6 - 7 October**
  Cheltenham Roadshow

- **14 November**
  World Diabetes Day

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**GOOD CARE IN SCHOOLS**

So far six South West schools have won awards that celebrate good diabetes care.

Annika Palmer, Cornwall and Devon Influencing Manager said “The award will run until summer next year so it’s not too late for other parents, healthcare professionals and school staff to nominate schools who are providing outstanding care. We want all children and young with Type 1 diabetes to get the care and support they need to lead full and active lives.”

If your school would like to attend the Make the Grade school training for school staff on 8 June in Exeter they can book a place at:

https://diabetesinschoolexeter.eventbrite.co.uk

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**REGIONAL OFFICE**

We are pleased to welcome Gemma Jackson to the role of Volunteer Development Officer. Gemma started with us in March and met many of you at the Inspire conference. Sophia Beyer has been made permanent Regional Media Officer - we wish Erin Dean the former RMO all our very best wishes in pursuing her career as a freelance health writer. Phaedra Perry returned as Regional Head in May.

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**DIABETES WEEK**

**12-18 JUNE**

The theme for 2016 is myths and truths about diabetes. We’ll be setting the record straight, and looking at the positive side of what people with diabetes can achieve.

Could you talk about how things have changed over the years for people with diabetes? Could you share a truth or do you have a myth to bust? We need media volunteers to tell their story.

We will contact all the groups in May, but if you have a story to tell, an event, fundraiser or Patron’s Lunch in Diabetes Week please contact Sophia on 01823 448260 or sophia.beyer@diabetes.org.uk. Thank you