Sixteen Diabetes Voices travelled to Westminster on Wednesday, 15 July to highlight the issue of diabetes-related amputations. 135 shoes were displayed outside Parliament to represent the number of diabetes-related amputations being carried out each week in England.

The rising number of amputations is a huge concern. Diabetes Voices who have had an amputation met with their MPs to discuss how it has impacted their lives and what needs to be done. Following on from the event, several MPs have supported the campaign by asking questions in Parliament and calling on Jeremy Hunt, Secretary of State for Health, to take urgent action.

There was also a lot of media coverage about the shocking rise in amputations in England. Stories from Diabetes Voices were featured on Channel 4 News, Good Morning Britain and Radio 5 Live. The story even made the front page of The Daily Mirror, and featured in many other national and regional papers.

Janet Richards from Croydon had her right leg amputated below the knee in January 2006. She came to help get the message across to healthcare professionals about foot complications related to diabetes: “I was so glad that I could articulate exactly what I have felt so passionately about over the last ten years. My heart feels a lot lighter because I know that doctors and podiatrists will now have heard the message we were trying to get across.”
people with diabetes will now understand their risk of amputation, how to look after their feet and the urgency of getting help if their foot deteriorates. More healthcare professionals will be aware of the risk of foot complications and ensure all people with diabetes receive their annual checks.

Update on Diabetes Voices activity

Following on from the 135 shoes display, Diabetes Voices have been busy sharing copies of our footcare leaflets with contacts in their local area. Can you help support our campaign to reduce amputations? To request leaflets, please email diabetesvoices@diabetes.org.uk

Jenny Jennings, a Diabetes UK Service Champion from Worcester, has been working with her local Clinical Commissioning Group to develop a more efficient method of paramedics reporting to surgeries, leading to better communication and medication regulation during hypos.

Thanks to the hard work and persistence of Diabetes Voices, several Members of Parliament have recently shown their support for people living with diabetes. MPs Nigel Evans and Suella Fernandes both asked questions about diabetes care in Parliament after speaking to their constituents. Nine MPs have asked written questions about diabetes. MP Alan Meale has discussed introducing an Early Day Motion linking Type 2 diabetes with the campaign to cut sugar, and MP Chris Skidmore arranged a meeting with Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt to discuss diabetes issues.

Diabetes Voices take action with new MPs

All Party Parliamentary Group for Diabetes

Just weeks before the 135 shoes event, Diabetes Voices were in Parliament to take part in the first meeting of the All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Diabetes since the election.

At the meeting, Labour MP Keith Vaz replaced Adrian Sanders as Chairperson of the group, after Mr Sanders lost his seat at the general election.

The meeting gave Diabetes Voices and group members the opportunity to work together to set the group’s new priorities for the coming year. This builds on the work done in the last year to produce a highly influential report on diabetes education, and will continue to work to shape diabetes policy.

Group members have reported that getting the direct perspective of Diabetes Voices has been highly valuable as they plan their work. Watch this space for more opportunities to engage with the APPG later this year.

Why not ask your MP to join the APPG for Diabetes and help work towards better diabetes care and prevention? To contact your MP, go to www.theyworkforyou.com

MPs learn about diabetes research with their constituents

As part of a laboratory tour of London’s Guy’s Hospital in July, a selection of MPs spent the day learning about the potentially life-changing research into diabetes currently being funded by Diabetes UK.

Several of the MPs even took the tour with Diabetes Voices from their constituency, who explained the specific challenges faced locally by people living with diabetes. MPs who attended included Liz McInnes, Kate Osamor and Kevin Foster.

Ongoing diabetes research projects range from the effects of particular diets to developing an artificial
pancreas. Many of these projects could directly help people living with diabetes in the near future.

You can find out more about the research funded by Diabetes UK at www.diabetes.org.uk/research/research-round-up.

15 Healthcare Essentials update: Kidney checks success

In October last year, we asked Diabetes Voices involved with GP Patient Participation Groups (PPGs) to help make sure that people with diabetes were getting an annual urine test to check their kidney function.

The 15 Healthcare Essentials include two tests to check the kidneys: a blood test (to check kidney function) and a urine test (to check for protein – a sign of kidney damage). Both tests must be done yearly to identify kidney problems early.

The urine test is important because people with diabetes are at increased risk of kidney problems, with up to 40 per cent of people developing kidney disease at some point in their lives. In the very early stages there are usually no symptoms, so the test is really important as it will pick up any problems before they develop.

We’d heard anecdotally that some GP surgeries were not sending urine samples for laboratory testing, and wanted to make sure that the NICE guidelines were being followed.

Lots of people took up the issue, raising the importance of the check with healthcare professionals in their area. People like Sue Briggs from Somerset, who discovered her surgery was not sending urine samples for testing unless there were other indicators of kidney problems.

Concerned people were missing out on the vital test, Sue spoke to the Practice Diabetes Nurse, who followed it up with the GPs, and then with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG). As a result, Somerset CCG have now said that all GP practices in Somerset should do the urine test annually for all people with diabetes. A real success.

Children’s campaign update

Our 4 Ts campaign aims to raise awareness of the four key signs of Type 1 diabetes – Toilet, Tired, Thirsty and Thinner. Far too many children with Type 1 diabetes only have their condition diagnosed when they are seriously ill with Diabetic Ketoacidosis (DKA). Our 4 Ts campaign hopes to change this.
Margaret Church from Caerphilly in Wales has been involved in supporting the campaign in the last few years.

**Why did you join Diabetes Voices?**

In 2012, my 7-year-old granddaughter Elin became seriously ill and was admitted to hospital in Cardiff, where she was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes. Elin’s diagnosis came as a shock for us. We soon had a lot to learn about Type 1, such as carbohydrate counting, insulin injections and hypos. I really wanted to support other children with Type 1 diabetes, so I became involved with Diabetes Voices.

**How have you been involved in the children’s campaign?**

I have distributed 4 Ts leaflets and posters to health centres and the hospital in my local area. I also put up posters in shops, schools, offices, community centres, cafés and dentists – almost anywhere and everywhere! I campaigned to get Caerphilly Borough Council to put a link to the Diabetes UK Type 1 diabetes: Make the grade webpage on their website for professional staff to use. Staff at local schools will now have all the information they need to support a child with Type 1 diabetes.

**Why do you feel the campaign is important?**

I am passionate about raising the awareness of Type 1 in children and young people. It is vital that the diagnosis is not missed and that children with Type 1 are given all the best medical, emotional care and support they need. Parents also need to be supported both medically and emotionally from the time of diagnosis.

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Diabetes ‘One-Stop Shop’ opens in South Shields

Many years of tireless campaigning finally paid off for Diabetes Voice Clare Allom, as the doors of the diabetes One-Stop Shop in South Shields finally opened in April 2015.

“Making this happen was like nailing jelly to a tree, but this will save lives – as people are less likely to fall through the net.”

Clare Allom on her successful campaign to open an integrated diabetes care facility in her area.

The One-Stop Shop offers all nine annual diabetes checks under one roof. This should increase the number of people regularly having checks, and so
reduce potentially serious complications.

Clare began campaigning in 2006, following the closure of a previous diabetes One-Stop Shop in the area. Almost a decade later, Clare has convinced local authorities that the facility would offer “safer, more effective care” and support “better communication” between the full range of diabetes healthcare professionals and patients.

Inspired by Clare’s success? Diabetes Voices can support your local group to campaign for better care in your area. Email diabetesvoices@diabetes.org.uk with changes your group would like to see.

Inspire Awards

Diabetes Voices who campaign tirelessly for improvements to diabetes services and care are recognised each year with Diabetes UK’s National Campaigning and Raising Awareness award.

Diabetes Voice Dambar Gurung was this year’s winner. Dambar, a former Gurkha from Crookham, gives up his spare time to campaign for better diabetes services. Originally from Nepal, Dambar was diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes in 1997, a year after he moved to the UK. Since then he’s been invaluable in his support for Diabetes UK, getting involved in his local support group’s activities and the national campaigns to improve care for people living with diabetes.

Diabetes Voices meet Assembly Members in Cardiff

This year’s National Assembly Stakeholder Event took place on Wednesday, 17 June at the Senedd. Twenty Diabetes Voices had the opportunity to spend some time with their Assembly Members, to discuss diabetes services in their areas. We had representation from six of the seven Health Boards in Wales and 11 AMs attended the event, including the Minister for Health & Social Services, Mark Drakeford, and the Chair of the Cross Party Group on diabetes, Jenny Rathbone.

Since the meeting, Diabetes Voices have had individual meetings with their Assembly Members on how they can help. Diabetes education courses are a topical issue and several Assembly Members have agreed to write to Local Health Boards in Wales to query the latest statistics on course provision.

Elsewhere, Diabetes Voices have been helping us to raise awareness of diabetes and our campaigns in the media. In addition to several appearances in the local papers, two of our campaigners appeared on BBC Radio Wales to host a diabetes phone-in. We’d like to say a big thank you to both Rob Lee and Melanie Stephenson, who provided excellent advice and support to members of the public.

Finally, we’d like to say a huge thank you to all Diabetes Voices who have made the effort to attend Local Health Board meetings to provide the patients’ perspective on diabetes services. It’s fantastic to see such an increase in attendance across all areas of Wales.

If you’d like to attend your next Health Board meeting, please get in touch by emailing Sara Moran: sara.moran@diabetes.org.uk

[Image of Diabetes Voices meeting with Welsh Assembly Members at the National Assembly Stakeholder Event in June 2015]
Shaping the future of diabetes care in Scotland

In August, Diabetes Scotland staff attended the Scottish Government’s Healthier Scotland ‘pop up café’, which launched a national conversation on the future of health and social care in Scotland. The event was an opportunity to discuss with the Cabinet Secretary for Health, Shona Robinson MSP, the experiences of people living with diabetes in Scotland.

The Cross Party Group on Diabetes and the Cross Party Group on Heart Disease and Stroke held a joint meeting on June 10 with Maureen Watt, the Minister for Public Health. The meeting discussed the World Health Organisation’s proposal of a 25 per cent reduction in non-communicable diseases by 2025.

Gavin Thomson has recently joined the team as Diabetes Voices Project Manager. He will be helping Diabetes Voices to get involved in upcoming campaigns, so please be on alert to hear from him soon.

For more information about Diabetes Voices in Scotland, please contact Gavin Thomson: gavin.thomson@diabetes.org.uk

New Diabetes Care in Schools guidance

The Education Minister, John O’Dowd MLA, launched the new ‘What Diabetes Care to Expect in Schools’ guidance during Diabetes Week, and commended Diabetes UK’s role in facilitating the partnership with parents, paediatric DSNs and the Education Authority, who all helped to create it.

The Minister, speaking at Loughview Integrated Primary School in East Belfast, said: “Diabetes is a lifelong condition and it needs to be managed. However, with the correct support, there is no reason why a child with diabetes cannot participate fully and enjoy the same opportunities as their peers. The publication of this booklet is very welcome and will assist in addressing the concerns experienced by many parents of children with diabetes.”

The Minister met pupils Lola McCall and Victoria Beacom with their learning assistants, who talked about their day in school and using their insulin pumps.

The 20-page booklet has been issued to all schools in Northern Ireland and is provided to newly diagnosed children and their families by paediatric DSNs in hospital clinics. It can also be downloaded from the Diabetes UK Northern Ireland website.

New Health Minister applauds Integrated Care Partnerships

The new Health Minister, Simon Hamilton MLA, has commended the service users who have contributed to the success of the 17 Integrated Care Partnerships (ICPs) to develop and implement improvements in patient care. The Minister said the ICPs’ work to review existing care pathways, including for diabetes, has been highly valuable, particularly because of the unique cross-disciplinary, cross-organisational and service user input, which ICPs have been able to draw on. Diabetes Voices and Service Champions currently sit on 12 of the 17 ICPs and had discussions during August with the ICP coordinator to fill the vacancies on the other five.

If you are interested in joining a local ICP where there is a vacancy, please contact Brendan Heaney: brendan.heaney@diabetes.org.uk

Have you taken action recently to improve diabetes care in your area? We would love to share your success to inspire others to get involved and make a difference. To get in touch please email diabetesvoices@diabetes.org.uk or call 0207 424 1008.
VIVIENNE RUDDOCK
Diabetes Voice

Why did you decide to join Diabetes Voices?
My diabetes diagnosis was a shock. I had a routine urine check at hospital, and I didn’t expect the result. When I found out I had diabetes, the hospital staff were brilliant. I wanted to give something back to the community, so I joined Diabetes Voices.

You visited our research laboratory at King’s College London with your MP in July. How did that go?
I wanted to highlight the groundbreaking research Diabetes UK is currently funding with my MP Kate Osamor. I’m very passionate about the research they’re doing there to help people with diabetes. I also really wanted to get the message across to my MP about why good diabetes care is important and to persuade her to become a diabetes champion in Parliament. The laboratory at King’s College is also carrying out new cancer research, which is a subject close to me, as my son had cancer at the age of 21.

What other things are you doing to support Diabetes UK?
I also volunteer at Age UK. I was able to put leaflets to raise awareness of diabetes and the Diabetes UK Careline in the Age UK office, as well as in a local estate agent office.

What is your focus/goal for the next year?
I am taking things one day at a time. No two days are the same. I want to become better trained in giving presentations, so that I can talk about diabetes care in schools and churches.

What advice would you give to other people who want to get involved?
It’s important to help people be more informed about diabetes and good diabetes care, so get out there and try to raise awareness where you can.

Look out for the next issue of the DIABETES VOICES newsletter in January 2016

www.diabetes.org.uk/diabetesvoices