

How to develop links with the NHS

What is this guide for?

To provide basic assistance and advice to enable Diabetes UK local groups to positively connect with local networks within the NHS. To recommend how to build partnerships and raise awareness of diabetes and to help make a difference to those living with diabetes.

Why create local links for your group?

Developing positive relationships with the NHS can provide long term benefits for your group. It offers the opportunity to reach out to a wider community. By raising awareness of your group and building local links you can improve your knowledge and increase your group's influence. Local NHS links can further support people living with diabetes and can act as a positive way of improving your group membership.

Top tips

- **Be proactive** and don't assume that people know that you are there!
- **Research your area** to find out if there are any local health initiatives that you might be able to approach (this is usually mentioned on Local Authority websites).
- **Contact NHS Choices or NHS Direct** to request that your group details be added to their directory.

Developing links with the NHS - Who to approach?

<p>NHS or local health boards (in Wales)</p>	<p>The NHS or Local Health Boards (in Wales) provide lists of hospitals, GP surgeries and pharmacies in your area. The following website allows you to search for these local services: http://www.nhs.uk/service-search http://www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/localservices/</p>
<p>Local Authority / Councils</p>	<p>Local Authority websites usually have a health and social care section. These may include links to local health initiatives and information on any partnerships entered into. They also include any current strategies in place to promote health at a local level. Existing services provide readymade local links for your group so take some time to research what is happening in your area. You can find information on your local authority by searching on the following website: https://www.gov.uk/find-your-local-council</p>
<p>Information sources</p>	<p>Research your local area and understand the diabetes statistics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Read State of the Nation report for your area (England/Wales/NI/Scotland). This is updated on an

	<p>annual basis and you can find the most recent report on the following link :</p> <p>http://www.diabetes.org.uk/About_us/What-we-say/Improving-services--standards/State-of-the-Nation-2013/</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Take a look at our online tool <i>Diabetes Watch</i>. It shows you the standard of local diabetes care against the 15 Healthcare Essentials and compares it to the UK –wide picture. <i>Diabetes Watch</i> can be accessed here: http://www.diabetes.org.uk/Guide-to-diabetes/Monitoring/Diabetes-Watch/ - Visit the Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF) database: http://www.gpcontract.co.uk/browse/UK/13 and find performance data on any GP surgery in the UK.
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Read up on how your areas healthcare policy is decided and influenced where you are. - Work with your Diabetes UK national/regional office. They can provide you with recommended reading to bring you up to speed with developments in your area.
Diabetes Specialist Nurse (DSN) and GPs	<p>It is good to build relationships with your Healthcare Professionals. Contact your local DSN, provide them with a flyer or a leaflet and ask them to promote in their surgeries and amongst their patients. They may also do this at the structured education courses which are delivered for patients with Type 1 and Type 2, DAFNE and DESMOND.</p> <p>Once you build a good relationship with DSN's, they can also be helpful in contacting GP Practices on behalf of the group and speaking to other health care professionals in the area.</p> <p>Newly Diagnosed Packs – Contact Consultant Diabetologists and they can put a flyer for your group in the packs which are sent out to newly diagnosed in the area.</p>

How to approach local NHS services

Services	Approach
GP Services and Diabetes Clinics	<p>Find your nearest surgery (lists of surgeries can be found on Local Health Board or NHS websites)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Write to the surgery using our <i>template letter</i> to introduce your group and explain the support that your group provides for local people affected by diabetes. - Visit the surgery in person to introduce yourself and explain that you are part of a local group for people living with, or affected by, diabetes. - Make the local link easy and do the work for them. Take along a card or letter with your group details on it and be

	<p>enthusiastic. They are more likely to remember your group if you have a positive attitude and give them the information in a way that is easy for them to find.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Ask if they would be willing to display a poster in the waiting area to advertise your group meetings. - Ask who, if anyone, at the surgery is responsible for diabetes care (usually a Diabetes Specialist Nurse or Practice Nurse, but this can vary). - Ask to hold a regular information stand at the surgery to signpost people to your group. Try and schedule it for a time that most diabetes patients will be there. - Ask nurses and doctors to include information about your group at appointments. Although emotional support is recognised as an important element of living with diabetes, it is frequently omitted from NHS services and monitoring.
Pharmacies	<p>Approach your pharmacy in person during a quiet period to introduce yourself and to ask if they would be willing to hand out your group information with diabetes-related medications. This could be a business card or a flyer with a programme of activities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If successful, write to the pharmacy thanking them for their support and offer to help them in return within your local community by supplying them with Diabetes UK material for them to display and distribute. - If unsuccessful, thank them for their time and invite them to speak at or attend your next meeting or event. - If any new people attend your meetings or events from the pharmacy, be sure to let the pharmacy know and to thank them again.
Opticians	<p>Contact your local opticians to ask if you could provide them with some <i>15 Healthcare Essentials</i> leaflets and at the same time, display the group programme. Their customers may have eye related diabetes complications and would appreciate knowing that they have a local support network, ready to welcome them.</p>
Podiatrists	<p>Get in touch with your local podiatrists to ask if you can provide them with some information on foot care to distribute to their patients. At the same time, mention your local group and ask them to hand out your programme alongside the foot care information.</p>

How can Diabetes UK support your group?

Information and support	<p>Sign up to Diabetes Voices. The following link explains what this is: http://www.diabetes.org.uk/Get_involved/Campaigning/Diabetes-Voices/</p> <p>We can help you to write to your Local Health Board or Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to ask for support in promoting your local group through their local channels. This is something they should be able to do quickly, with no cost involved.</p> <p>The National Director or Regional Manager of your National or Regional Office at Diabetes UK can raise details of your group at NHS meetings.</p>
Networking Opportunities	<p>A chance to come along to a networking event to meet other volunteers and healthcare professionals.</p> <p>There may be another group nearby who has support from their NHS services. Diabetes UK can put you in touch with this group to share good practice.</p>
Local Healthcare Professionals	<p>Diabetes UK have links with local healthcare professionals who can provide their patients with information about your group. Diabetes UK can help contact GP surgeries etc to support you to promote your group.</p>