Living with diabetes
your future health and wellbeing
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There are 1.3 million people with diabetes in England, and every year the number of people living with diabetes goes up. Diabetes can affect anyone from any background at any age. But it is more common as you get older, and it is up to six times more common in people from South Asian communities, and up to three times more common among people from African and African-Caribbean communities.

If diabetes is not found, treated or managed, it can have a major effect on a person’s quality of life. There is much that can be done to improve the health of people with diabetes and to reduce their risk of complications.

This booklet explains how the NHS, through a National Service Framework, will improve standards of care for people with diabetes. The National Service Framework sets out the Government's vision for better services for everyone. It sets targets for improvement that local NHS performance can be judged against. And it also expects local health services to set themselves challenging targets that will result in real improvements.

Your local NHS will already be thinking about the best way to achieve the improvements. From 2003, if you or a member of your family have diabetes, you will quickly begin to notice some changes. And, over the next 10 years, you will get better care and more support to help you decide the best way of managing your diabetes to fit in with your lifestyle.
Good diabetes care is vital for everyone. The purpose of the National Service Framework is to improve the standards of care for everyone with diabetes, including people from minority ethnic communities, older people, children, people who have recently been diagnosed with diabetes, and people who are struggling to control their diabetes. There are 12 standards of care, and the NHS throughout England will reach all these standards by 2013.

Because diabetes is a complicated condition, people with diabetes need to use almost every part of the NHS at some point in their lives. Good communication between people with diabetes and the staff providing support and advice is important, and will make sure that people receive high-quality care, whether in hospital, at home, or in residential or nursing homes. Specialist services will continue to take the lead for children and young people, women during pregnancy, and people with the most complicated needs.

What will happen next?
Diabetes care is already excellent in some places, but not as good in others. If you are receiving good care now and are managing your diabetes well, you may notice fewer changes immediately, although there will be much going on behind the scenes that will help to make sure your care continues to improve.
The first step for your local NHS is to look for ways to improve services for people who have recently been diagnosed with diabetes, and people who are struggling to control their diabetes.

Local services, through primary care trusts, will decide on the best way to achieve local improvements in your diabetes service, based on the needs of local people. They will make sure that resources are available over time to make progress across all 12 standards.

While it may take up to 10 years to reach all the standards in full, from 2003 you should quickly notice a difference. For example, people with diabetes will be offered the opportunity to have their eyes checked for diabetic eye disease, and to have treatment if necessary, with everyone being tested by 2007.

To make sure improvements happen, your local service may decide to set up a diabetes network or another process for planning diabetes care and making sure that improvements are made. This will bring together staff involved in diabetes care and people with diabetes to plan local improvements.
What I can expect from diabetes services?

Diabetes can affect many areas of your life and is affected by decisions and actions that you take every day. Taking good care of yourself will help you to manage your diabetes well.

Whether you have just been diagnosed with diabetes or have had diabetes for a number of years, as the standards take effect, you will want to be confident that the healthcare team you see is properly trained to be able to provide you with:

- regular health checks and a review of your diabetes;
- information and education about diabetes to help you care for yourself better;
- support to help you to manage your diet, weight, level of activity, and medication;
- regular screening for diabetes eye disease;
- a copy of your diabetes record, including your test results;
- an agreed plan of care including your personal goals for improving your health;
- a named healthcare professional to contact if you need more information, advice and support; and
- access to specialist services if you develop signs of any complications of diabetes.
How to influence your diabetes service

The National Standards for Diabetes recognise how important it is for people with diabetes to have a say in the way diabetes services are planned and organised. To do this, people with diabetes need to know what is going on in their area and how they can make their voice heard.

How do I find out about local NHS diabetes services?
Each primary care trust will have a person responsible for involving the public. That person will be able to give you more information. You can get the phone number for your local primary care trust from NHS Direct, on 0845 46 47.

Who makes the decisions about diabetes services in my local NHS?
Healthcare professionals and managers involved in providing diabetes services will be responsible for identifying ways to improve diabetes care. The primary care trusts will be responsible for planning improvements and making sure resources are available to support improvements. They will answer to strategic health authorities, who will oversee the plans and monitor progress on reaching the standards.

How can I get involved in decisions about diabetes services?
There are new groups that have been set up within the NHS where you can get involved in influencing health services. These include:

- patient advice and liaison services;
- patient forums; and
- your local diabetes planning group.