

# Highlights of the Annual Public Health Report 2019 – Tackling Diabetes in Merton

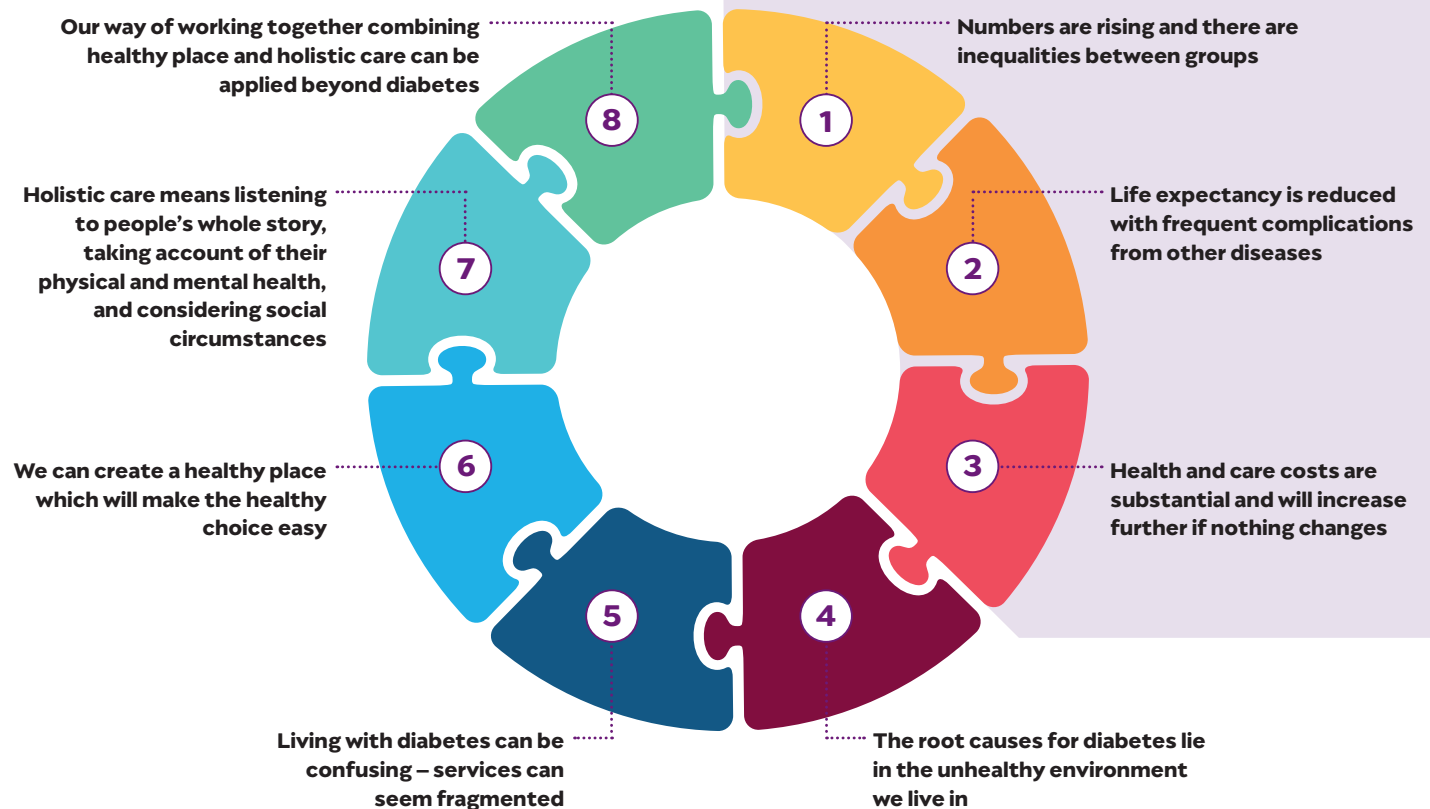
The report provides context for the Health and Wellbeing Board’s Diabetes Action Plan which is published alongside the Annual Public Health Report. It is a learning resource, to encourage the development of a whole system approach for all long-term health conditions.

Diabetes occurs when the amount of glucose (sugar) in the blood is too high because the body cannot use it properly. Type 1 diabetes tends to start at a younger age and diet and exercise are not contributory factors. Type 2 diabetes is strongly linked to obesity, poor diet and inactivity. People from South Asian, African and African-Caribbean origin are more at risk than average.

## Key Messages – summary

**Working together to create a healthy place, providing holistic care and learning as we go is the way forward**

**Diabetes has a big impact on health & wellbeing as well as care costs in Merton**



## Key Messages – more detail

- 1 Numbers are rising and there are inequalities between groups**
  - Diabetes in Merton has been increasing year on year and if nothing changes will continue to do so. Over 8 in 100 people in Merton over the age of 16 are currently predicted to have diabetes (diagnosed or undiagnosed) and this is expected to rise to over 9 in 100 by 2035.
  - Rates of diabetes in Merton vary by locality. Several practices in East Merton record rates three times greater than most practices in the West.

- 2 Life expectancy is reduced with frequent complications from other diseases**
  - Life expectancy for both types of diabetes is reduced compared to people without diabetes. People diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes in their 50s on average lose 6 years of life compared to their peers.
  - Diabetes increases the risk of serious diseases such as blindness, kidney failure, heart attack, stroke, and amputations.



### Health and care costs are substantial and will increase further if nothing changes

- Diabetes consumes approximately 10% of the overall NHS budget or about £10 billion per year. In Merton in 2016, the cost of Type 2 diabetes alone was £ 20.9 million. If nothing changes, costs in Merton will increase by about 2% per year meaning an extra £2.4 million per year in 5 years' time.
- Besides the NHS cost, diabetes also means extra social care costs for the Council. The current total for Merton has been estimated to be approximately £1.3m per year.



### The root causes for diabetes lie in the unhealthy environment we live in

The environment in Merton has features which make it easy for children and adults to become overweight. It is not that people are becoming greedier or lazier. It is easier to travel by car than to walk or cycle and to eat fast food rather than healthier choices.



### Living with diabetes can be confusing – services can seem fragmented

Early in 2018 each member of the Health and Wellbeing Board 'buddied up' with an 'Expert Witness' – an individual living with diabetes, at risk of diabetes or caring for someone with diabetes. The conversations which followed formed the basis of the "Diabetes Truth Programme". Some of its key findings were:

- There is plenty of information out there about diabetes but advice is often confusing. We need to make better connection between those who produce the information and those who need to use it.
- Type 1 diabetes is different to Type 2 – when focussing on diabetes we need to be aware of, and do justice to, both types.
- Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes are not just physical illnesses – they require services which focus on emotional and mental health too.



### We can create a healthy place which will make the healthy choice easy

Creating a 'healthy place' means shaping the physical, social, cultural and economic factors in the places we live, learn, work and play.

Some of the features of healthy places will be:

- Promoting good mental health and emotional wellbeing
- Making the healthy life style choice easy
- Protection from harm, providing safety

Healthy choices are easy choices when:

- Healthy food is available easily and is affordable
- Streets are pleasant and safe to walk and cycle with clean air
- Advertising of unhealthy food and drink is restricted



### Holistic care means listening to people's whole story, taking account of their physical and mental health and considering their social circumstances

Holistic care means consideration of the complete person, physically, psychologically, socially and spiritually in the management and prevention of disease. It is underpinned by

the concept that there is a link between our physical health and our more general 'well-being'.

Social prescribing is a key part of delivering holistic care. This allows GPs and other health care professionals to refer to non-medical support, for example to help relieve loneliness.

Other components of holistic care for diabetes in particular are:

- Improving Access to Psychological Therapies, meaning access to a therapist to help develop positive thinking and skills in problem solving.
- Structured Education, meaning a series of classes with other people with diabetes to learn about living as well as possible and reducing complications.
- National Diabetes Prevention Programme, designed for people whose blood test shows they are at high risk of developing Type 2 diabetes and which provides intensive support to achieve a healthy weight.



### Our way of working together combining healthy place and holistic care can be applied beyond diabetes

When the Merton Health and Wellbeing Board made tackling diabetes a priority, members started by listening to the voices of Expert Witnesses from across the borough. This made the Board members more informed and aware of their potential for leading change.

The learning which followed was wide ranging; including the challenges people face as part of daily life, eating well and staying active; how carers and families can support people with diabetes; and how people can best use services.

This whole system approach to diabetes puts the patient and their family or carer in the centre. This alignment of a healthy place with holistic care can be applied to other long-term conditions.

## Resources:

For the full report please go to:

[www.merton.gov.uk/health-social-care/publichealth](http://www.merton.gov.uk/health-social-care/publichealth)

### Diabetes Truth Programme

<https://democracy.merton.gov.uk/documents/s22963/Item%205%20Appendix%201.pdf>

### Diabetes UK

A useful resource for patient and families education.

[www.diabetes.org.uk](http://www.diabetes.org.uk)

**NHS diabetes app** – online Low Carb Program can help anyone with type 2 diabetes take better control of their condition.

[www.nhs.uk/apps-library/low-carb-program](http://www.nhs.uk/apps-library/low-carb-program)

For a longer list of resources please see the full report.

**We welcome your feedback:**

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