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Service Need

We know that more than 200,000 people in Wales now live with diabetes and 9 out of 10 of those have got type 2 diabetes. And we know that from all the research that type 2 diabetes is preventable and that actually up to 50% of cases supporting people helping to improve their lifestyle, their eating habits and their food choices and physical activity, we could reduce that

risk of developing type 2 diabetes. So the All-Wales Diabetes Prevention Program has brought different organisations together. The Public Health Wales, Diabetes UK and people living with diabetes have all come together to help develop this program. So the program builds on great work that's been carried out within pilot areas, the main one being Afan Valley and North Ceredigion, where we’re offering people with pre-diabetes identified at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes through a blood test called a HbA1c. And during this time they were offered some support and help to improve their eating habits and their levels of physical activity.

Description of the service

We know that even small lifestyle changes can really help to reduce somebody's risk of developing type 2 diabetes. And the work off the back of these pilots has then enabled us to roll out the program across all areas in Wales. So people gain access to their All-Wales Diabetes Prevention Program by first of all being offered a blood test which is called a HbA1c.

This lets us know whether somebody's average blood glucose levels or blood sugar levels are higher than normal but not high enough to have type 2 diabetes. They then offered a conversation with a trained healthcare support worker. They are trained in food and nutrition through the level 2 Agored food and nutrition course, and they're supervised by dieticians. So the person's offered a 30-minute conversation, person-centred around what matters to them,

looking at their individual risk factors and helping them to talk through different changes they could make to food choices, the amount of physical activity they do. And then from there they're enabled to offer support for any additional support maybe with becoming more active, helping them to manage their weight or give up smoking. So whatever is one of the most meaningful risk factors for them that they'd like to tackle at that point.

Benefits of the programme

Following the pilot projects in Afan Valley there were some promising results. So they found that much fewer people went on to develop type 2 diabetes after they had the intervention and actually helped to lower that HbA1c level. So these results is what enabled the All Wales Diabetes Prevention Program to be funded in the first place. And we're now just at the point after a year of the program being up and running across Wales, being able to offer people that 12-month follow-up to be able to see what changes happened in their HbA1c levels. The wider outcome data, we're looking forward to finding this out later this year and early 2025 from our research and development colleagues in public health Wales.

For the last couple of years both England and Scotland have had a diabetes prevention program whereas Wales didn’t. So off the back of the pilot projects, a health economics paper was written to really show that impact for the individual but that wider impact of reducing the prevalence of typev2 diabetes. And their kind of outcome of that was it was no-brainer for us having a diabetes prevention programme and utilising this approach of this person-centred consultation with that individual. So if you can imagine for somebody, for them, the impact is reducing their risk of developing type 2 diabetes in coming years and improving their quality of life.

For the wider NHS and like you said, community care, it’s about reducing the prevalence of type 2 diabetes across Wales as a whole and hopefully supporting the population of Wales to live healthier, longer lives and obviously reducing the cost on the NHS. We know diabetes is roughly 10%, costs 10% of the whole NHS budget. So it's a huge cost implication but as well as an implication on that individual is helping them to have longer, healthier lives and yeah, reducing their risk of actually ever developing type 2 diabetes.

Lessons learned

So the learning from this first phase of the rollout is going to be used to optimise the program for the coming years. We’re still in infancy, we started in 2022 and it’s going from strength to strength. So we officially launched in June, July 2022 during Diabetes Week and the original work was supported through funding through Welsh Government and this supported initially 14 clusters and utilising partner working with Primary Care, we've actually been able to uplift this to approximately 50% of the clusters across Wales, enabling people in every health board in Wales to be able to access this diabetes prevention support for them.

The aim over the coming years is that this just, this does become available for everybody that lives in Wales, irrespective of where you live. Type 2 diabetes unfortunately can have some real possible major complications such as sight loss and kidney damage. The ability to support people early on in their health journey to prevent type 2 diabetes developing in the first place and therefore preventing the development of any of these real life changing health consequences is to really support people early on, give them the tools, the information and the support that they need to keep them as healthy and well for as long as possible.

The feedback that we've had so far from people coming through the programme is how thankful they are to have had that opportunity to have the conversation about something about which they didn’t know. When somebody's got slightly raised blood glucose levels, we don't get any symptoms you don't know that they're there and you could be living with them. It’s only when we have a blood test done that it actually illustrates those blood glucose levels are higher than normal. So the ability to come into this appointment, have concentrated what matters to you conversation and then really empower people to be able to take forward what they feel that they are able to do at that moment in time to reduce their risk of developing type 2 diabetes.