



Diabetes Workplace *Wellbeing*

A support resource
for employers



Public Health



This resource sets out suggested actions that businesses and organisations can take to support their employees around diabetes wellbeing.

There are local links, what employers can do to help and examples of recommendations in action.



Why is diabetes important for employers to consider?

Most people living with diabetes are of working age (aged 16–64), with around 60% of people in the UK diagnosed between the ages of 20 and 69 years old¹. In Wandsworth, 8,000 people of working age have diabetes, and around 2 in 5 people with diabetes are aged 40–64².

The number of people living with diabetes has been rising in the UK and it is estimated that **one in ten people could have diabetes by 2030³**.

Type 2 diabetes can be caused by risk factors such as obesity and inactivity and is more common among older individuals than younger⁴. Employers can have a role to play in preventing diabetes as well as supporting employees who are living with the condition.

You can find more information on what diabetes is at [NHS Diabetes](#) and what the differences are between type 1 and type 2 diabetes at [Diabetes UK](#).

Most people living with diabetes are aged **16–64**

60% of people in the UK with diabetes are aged between **20 and 69**

In Wandsworth **8,000** people of working age have diabetes

40% of people with diabetes in Wandsworth are aged **40 and 64**

By **2030** it is estimated that **1 in 10** people could have diabetes

What areas of diabetes workplace wellbeing can employers consider?

Preventing Diabetes

Around 13 million people are at increased risk of developing type 2 diabetes in the UK. However, many cases of type 2 diabetes can be delayed or prevented with lifestyle changes – including diet, physical activity, and sustained weight loss.

Certain occupational factors that are associated with the development of type 2 diabetes include:

- Sedentary work
- Schedules that include shift work or inadequate time to rest between shifts
- Schedules that limit a person's time to participate in physical activities
- Difficulty taking medications or eating regularly in the workplace
- In-availability of healthy food choices in the workplace

Living with Diabetes

Those living with diabetes can manage their condition, so it doesn't affect their work. This takes careful planning and resourcefulness. Diabetes is a long-term condition that is always present, which can be exhausting, particularly with all the extra decisions people have to make on top of everyday life. Employers should be aware of any challenges staff are facing and can offer support.

Diabetes and mental wellbeing

Although diabetes is predominantly a physical health condition, there may be mental health consequences from a diabetes diagnosis or the impact of living with the condition⁵.

Three in five people living with diabetes experience emotional or mental health problems as a result of their condition. Some of the mental health concerns someone with diabetes might have include:

- Depression (twice as likely among people with diabetes)
- Fear and anxiety
- Potentially a sense of shame or stigma
- Stress due to their concerns on their ability to stay in work

What can employers do to help?

Employers can support prevention of diabetes within the workplace, as well as support those who are living with diabetes by:

[Raising awareness of diabetes throughout the workplace](#)

[Providing healthier food and drink options, and opportunities to be physically active](#)

[Sharing information about lifestyle programmes](#)

[Providing a supportive environment for employees](#)

[Helping staff access appropriate training, education and support](#)

[Organisational changes](#)

Actions organisations can take

Raising awareness of diabetes throughout the workplace

- **Participate** in national awareness weeks and campaigns – [Diabetes Prevention Week](#) in May, [Diabetes Week](#) in June; [World Diabetes Day](#) every year on the 14th of November; utilise campaign toolkits for resources and key messages.
- **Encourage** staff to check their diabetes risk by using the [Diabetes Risk Score](#) tool or by having an [NHS Health Check](#) (if over age 40 and eligible).
- **Use the intranet**, staff newsletters and other internal communications channels to raise awareness of the importance of a healthy lifestyle in preventing conditions like Type 2 diabetes, and highlight resources and support services.



Providing healthier food and drink options, and opportunities to be physically active

- **Where catering** or vending machines with food and snacks are provided at work they should comply with [catering standards](#) and be provided by caterers and suppliers that are part of the [healthier catering commitment](#).
- **Provide** and actively promote appropriate, acceptable and accessible information about the benefits of physical activity and healthy eating.
- **Provide** tools and opportunities for staff to be physically active. These could include for example providing standing desks, exercise facilities, providing [cycle to work](#) schemes, benefits including a gym pass, and creating lunchtime walking groups. Further information on cycling can be found here: [Wandsworth Business Cargo bikes and become a cycle confident workforce](#).

Sharing information about lifestyle programmes

- **Healthier You:** NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme for employees with pre-diabetes (high risk of Type 2 diabetes)
- **NHS Digital Weight Management Programme** – for people with diabetes and/or hypertension.



Helping staff access appropriate training, education and support

- **Signpost** webinar and training opportunities for everyone e.g. [Diabetes UK Virtual Events](#).
- **Encourage** attendance at diabetes structured education courses for self-management support - [Health Innovation Network - Think Diabetes Toolkit \(supporting attendance at structured education\)](#).

Providing a supportive environment for employees

- **Hold** webinars and workshops with external or internal speakers to increase awareness.
- **Develop** case stories from employees who would like to share their experiences.
- **Supporting** someone with [diabetes at work | Diabetes UK](#) includes information on emotional wellbeing and diabetes.



Organisational policy and strategy changes

- **Hold surveys** to find out what support employees are looking for and need.
- **Consider the Health Innovation Network - [Think Diabetes Toolkit](#)** which has a section on organisational policy.
- **Offer flexible** approaches to working such as with break times, and time to attend healthcare appointments.
- **Encourage** uptake of flu vaccine; support with time off, vouchers, or offer onsite vaccinations.
- **Consider** reasonable adjustments, so people with diabetes can manage their condition well while at work. People with diabetes will be covered by the definition of disability. The [Health and safety for disabled people at work](#) have guidance on reasonable adjustments.

Further relevant links and resources

[Diabetes.co.uk](https://www.diabetes.co.uk)

[Diabetes For Men by Men's Health Forum](#)

[NHS Healthy Living for People with Type 2 Diabetes - NHS support service](#)

[My Type 1 Diabetes - NHS support service](#)

[South London Diabetes Book & Learn - Structured education booking hub for people with type 2 diabetes](#)

[Diabetes UK Local support groups for people living with diabetes](#)



Actions in practice

Richmond and Wandsworth Councils

Richmond and Wandsworth councils support employees with diabetes and the prevention of diabetes by:

- **Developed** a staff questionnaire to find out staff interests and needs around diabetes.
- **Encouraged** staff to take the Diabetes UK [Know Your Risk](#) test to check their diabetes risk.
- **Held a workshop** on Supporting Diabetes in the Workplace with an external guest speaker.
- **Interactive** engagement with employees – staff collaboration of “Healthier Hack” ideas using [Padlet](#).
- **Shared videos** to understand and be aware of the symptoms of diabetes, including, [What is Diabetes?](#), [Signs of all types of Diabetes](#).
- **Signposted staff** to online training opportunities such as [Understanding Diabetes](#) courses.
- **Highlighted** online events staff could attend such as [Diabetes UK Virtual Events](#).
- **Developed** diabetes information and support pages on internal “Wellbeing Hub” site.
- **Trained staff** as Diabetes UK Workplace Ambassadors for the organisation

Results from the staff questionnaire continue to be used to develop further support for employees. These include assessing organisational policy against needs raised by staff during the engagement through staff questionnaire.

Think Diabetes

Below is a list of activities which were delivered by organisations as part of the Think Diabetes project.

London Borough of Bexley

- Change to council HR Policy
- Healthy lifestyles awareness raising session

London Borough of Southwark

- Diabetes education included in Health & Wellbeing Strategy

Kingston Hospital NHS Trust

- Diabetes education included on organisations HR app
- Delivered Type 2 Diabetes structured education session (DESMOND) on site

London South Bank University

- Diabetes education included in Health & Wellbeing Strategy
- Healthy lifestyles awareness raising session

Source [Think Diabetes, Supporting a cultural shift in the workplace, Health Innovation Network, 2019](#)

Workplace wellbeing frameworks

While working on diabetes in the workplace, it is a good opportunity to look at workplace wellbeing frameworks.

The Local Healthy Workplace Award, and the Good Work Standard provide clear and easy steps for employers to make their workplaces healthier and happier.

For more information, please visit the council's website [Healthy Workplaces - London Borough of Wandsworth](#).

Please share any good practice and innovative actions your organisation has taken to support diabetes workplace well-being using the email below.

Find out more

If you need further information or support about any of the contents of this document email:

publichealth@wandsworth.gov.uk



Endnotes

- 1 Diabetes UK, Diabetes and Employment Position Statement, June 2018.
- 2 South West London, Health Insights, Long Term Conditions Monitoring Dashboard, 09 May 2023.
- 3 Diabetes UK, News: [1-in-10 adults living with diabetes by 2030](#), 06 October 2021.
- 4 Public Health England, Adult Obesity and Type 2 Diabetes, July 2014.
- 5 Diabetes UK, News: [Three in five people with diabetes experience emotional or mental health problems](#), 14 November 2017.