Local Government and Communities Committee
Planning (Scotland) Bill
Submission from Diabetes Scotland

Overview

Diabetes Scotland welcomes the Local Government and Communities Committee call for evidence for the Planning (Scotland) Bill.

Type 2 diabetes is a serious condition of increasing prevalence across Scotland. Over 258,000\(^1\) people have been diagnosed and around one million are at increased risk of developing the condition\(^2\). Including people with Type 1 diabetes there are nearly 300,000 people in Scotland with diabetes.

One in five people in Scotland have diabetes or at risk of developing the condition. There are more people living with diabetes than with coronary heart disease and cancer\(^3\).

Diabetes has an enormous impact on the wellbeing of individuals living with condition and their families. It affects people’s physical, mental and emotional health. Depression is at least twice as common in people with diabetes as in the general population, but this common comorbidity is frequently underdiagnosed and undertreated. If not supported to manage their condition well, people with diabetes are at risk of serious complications including sight loss, lower limb amputation, kidney disease, cardiovascular disease and stroke. It is not surprising, therefore, that diabetes costs NHS Scotland around £1 billion each year, of which 80 per cent is spent treating potentially avoidable complications\(^4\). Furthermore, 12 per cent of the total inpatient budget in Scotland is spent on treating diabetes and its complications.

Diabetes Scotland is responding to this to highlight the recent consultation “A Healthier Future – Actions and Ambitions on Diet, Activity and Healthy Weight” which is looking at addressing one of the biggest health problems facing Scotland; obesity due to poor diet and lack of physical activity.

The proposals are taking a necessary broad approach to the policy context and not just looking at the problem from a public health approach but including planning, leading by example in the public sector, and health inequalities.

The consultation specifically proposes to:

“Use the improvements to our planning system to ensure that the places and spaces we live in enable active travel and healthy choices. This will build on the work we

\(^1\) NHS Scotland Scottish Diabetes Survey 2016

\(^2\) Diabetes Scotland State of the Nation 2015 https://www.diabetes.org.uk/resources-s3/2017-09/SOTN%20Diabetes_0.pdf

\(^3\) Ibid

\(^4\) Ibid
have done with the Place Standard to support the development of healthy, sustainable communities and ensure everyone has the opportunity to shape and influence the places in which we live.”

We know that many adults are not meeting the recommendations for physical activity, and that 77 per cent of children are not meeting them either. Setting ambitious targets for delivering active travel routes in local communities and sustained investment to support changes in the environment will make being physically active more attractive and safer, the Planning (Scotland) Bill must enable this. This may include more well-lit footpaths and cycling tracks, increased green spaces for recreational outdoor activities, and leisure centres. The objective of the above-mentioned policy proposals is to increase the number of people who meet the Chief Medical Officer’s adult physical activity guidelines, and to support weight loss management. The recent Health and Sport Committee report, “Sport for Everyone”, highlighted the need for the community to be involved in the planning, development and implementation of such programmes and initiatives, if they are to be successful.

Public Health England published in January “Healthy High Streets – Good placemaking in an urban setting” which showed that the high street is a determinant of health. “Poor design and a lack of diversity on high streets can have a direct influence on physical and mental health outcomes. High levels of traffic, crime and fear of crime, lack of access to health-promoting food and services, and inaccessible design can directly impact on health. Increased exposure to air pollutants, risk of trips and falls, injury and poor diet, also have a direct impact on health, leading to poorer health outcomes and higher mortality rates.”

High street design can also affect health outcomes indirectly. Rundown or inadequate communal areas, shelters, seating and focal points, can deter people from visiting or spending time in high streets and prevent community activities that enable people to integrate socially. This can increase the risk of social isolation and reduce the likelihood of community cohesion. Social isolation and loneliness can impact negatively on mental health, increasing the risk of depression, anxiety, cognitive decline and dementia. Neighbourhoods that are perceived to be less safe have lower levels of volunteering, socialising and trust in others. Communities with high levels of trust, social engagement and support are positively associated with health. This relationship appears to be interrelated: good health promotes trust and trust promotes good health.

Scottish Government must ensure that the planning process recognises this and uses all the tools across government and local government responsibility to make a living space that addresses health inequalities and helps people live healthier lives. In particular, ensuring that regeneration and development of areas focuses on inclusive design for all, and that opportunities to reduce health inequalities are maximised.

To improve our environments and make being physically active a more attractive and easy choice, the Governments and administrations across Scotland should explore introducing Active Transport Acts, learning lessons from the Active Wales Act.
Physical activity and moving more can support weight loss and weight management. An estimated 64 per cent of adults (aged 16 years and over) met the guideline to do at least 150 minutes moderate or 75 minutes vigorous activity (or an equivalent combination of these) over a week in 2016. An estimated 76 per cent of children (aged 2-15 years) in Scotland met the physical activity guideline for children in 2016 when including activity done at school. Boys (79 per cent) were more likely than girls (72 per cent) to meet the guideline. However adults in the most deprived areas of Scotland were least likely to meet physical activity guidelines and the data shows little evidence that progress is being made towards meeting national targets for increasing walking, cycling and overall physical activity levels.

Setting ambitious targets for delivering active travel routes in local communities and sustained investment to support changes in the environment will make it more favourable for individuals to be physically active. This may include more well-lit and safe footpaths and cycling tracks, increased green spaces for recreational outdoor activities, and leisure centres. Increased and sustained investment in active transport provides better opportunities for all individuals, no matter their age, to be more physically active and may also have beneficial flow-on effects for local communities.

Up to three in five cases of Type 2 diabetes can be prevented or delayed through healthy lifestyle interventions including eating a nutritious, balanced diet and getting more active. There needs to be a holistic population-wide approach which adequately addresses social inequalities and effectively working within the health and social care agenda. The Planning (Scotland) Bill must reflect this.

Community engagement is welcome and essential in promoting healthy eating, physical activity and healthy weight activities. A recent study found as part of a single coherent programme evidence that a localised approach was effective. It is crucial that places and spaces are designed to facilitate cycling and active travel, which creates positive health, economic and environmental outcomes, rather than the emphasis relying on cars and motorised transport.

**About Diabetes Scotland**

Our vision is of a world where diabetes can do no harm. As the Scotland’s leading diabetes charity, our mission is that by bringing people together to work in partnership, we will support those living with diabetes, prevent Type 2 diabetes, make research breakthroughs, and ultimately find a cure.

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5 Healthy Weight Communities Programme Evaluation