

**PRESS RELEASE – 16<sup>th</sup> October 2017**



### **Using technology to improve South Tyneside children's diabetes care**

The children and young people's diabetes service at South Tyneside District Hospital has been hailed as a shining example of best practice for improvement in control of the condition.

Two years ago, the children's diabetes team, who care for 60 children aged 0 to 17 with Type 1 diabetes, introduced families to technology which they can use to upload data at home that can be remotely monitored by the team at the hospital. Now South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust is one of the top in the North East and Cumbria, and in the top 10% nationally, based on the established blood test ((HbA1c) that shows how well the condition is being controlled.

Previously, the children were reviewed in clinic at the hospital every two to three months. Now the families - sometimes even the young people themselves – are able to send readings, such as blood glucose level, amount of carbohydrates eaten and amount of insulin administered, as often as they like. Paediatric diabetes nurses Val Campbell and Joanne Henderson check the readings and, with Consultant Paediatrician with a special interest in diabetes Dr Gabriel Okugbeni, make

suggestions for self-management if they feel changes are necessary, which can prevent the need for a visit to hospital. They are also able to nip potentially serious problems in the bud.

Dr Okugbeni said: “We are delighted with the results we have been able to achieve through the home uploading of data, which gives reassurance to parents and carers who can feel overwhelmed and anxious. Our success is due to engagement with the families, more than 90% of whom have embraced the new technology, plus the hard work of the team and investment of our specialist nurses’ time in the project.

“Living with diabetes can be difficult and children and young people grow and change so quickly that it is particularly important to closely monitor their condition. Better management of the condition means a massive improvement in quality of life for our patients and their families and, by getting it right now, they are laying the foundations for long-term control and a better life.”

Melanie Johnson, South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust’s Director of Nursing and Patient Experience, said: “Our children’s diabetes team have invested a lot of time and effort in this project and their commitment has paid dividends, which is fantastic news for our young patients and their families and carers. It has given them reassurance and also, very importantly, the confidence to make changes themselves in between clinics, which puts them more in control.”

Dr Neil Hopper, Chair, Children and Young People's Diabetes Network, North East England and North Cumbria, said: “The team at South Tyneside have demonstrated remarkable improvements in outcomes for children and young people with diabetes over the last few years.

“Diabetes is a long-term condition which needs to be managed by the family of younger children, and the young person themselves as a teenager. This presents numerous challenges to patients. The role of the diabetes team is to educate and support patients and families in looking after their diabetes. How well controlled the patient’s diabetes is significantly reduces the risk of long-term complications and increases long-term survival. The team at South Tyneside have produced the most

dramatic improvement in outcomes (HbA1c) in the northern region and now have some of the best outcomes in the region. This is due to the hard work, dedication and innovation of the team.

“They should be extremely proud of the improvements they have made for their patients. Other teams have been interested in replicating some of the approaches they have used in order to try to improve outcomes across our region.”

**ends**

*Photo caption: Paediatric diabetes nurses Joanne Henderson, left, and Val Campbell, seated right, with Consultant Paediatrician with a special interest in diabetes Dr Gabriel Okugbeni and Paediatric Speciality Doctor Faye McCorry*

### **Notes to editors**

Diabetes is a lifelong condition that causes a person's blood sugar (glucose) level to become too high. There are two main types:

- **Type 1** – where the pancreas doesn't produce any insulin
- **Type 2** – where the pancreas doesn't produce enough insulin or the body's cells don't react to insulin

Typical symptoms of Type 1 diabetes are: feeling very thirsty; passing urine more often than usual, particularly at night; feeling very tired, and weight loss and loss of muscle bulk. The symptoms occur because the lack of insulin means that glucose stays in the blood and isn't used as fuel for energy. Your body tries to reduce blood glucose levels by getting rid of the excess glucose in your urine. It is very important for diabetes to be diagnosed as soon as possible, because it will get progressively worse if left untreated.

For press enquiries on this release, contact **0191 404 1128** or email

[kay.jordan@stft.nhs.uk](mailto:kay.jordan@stft.nhs.uk)