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Diabetes care in Suffolk: Do you know your foot health risk?

Healthwatch Suffolk is putting feet in focus with the launch of its latest research report. It has worked closely with a leading clinician to explore the views of local patients about their experiences of accessing diabetic foot care in the county.

Figures from Diabetes UK indicate that over 100 diabetes-related foot amputations occur every week in England. Patients with diabetes should receive an annual foot examination to determine whether their foot sensation is intact and their blood supply to the feet is good but this does not always happen.

Key findings:

- 32% of the respondents stated that they were not told about their risk of developing a diabetic foot problem in the future during their last appointment.
- 43% of respondents were not told what they should do if a new foot problem had developed.
- 28% of respondents said they were not given advice about how to look after their feet.

Three things that people said could be improved about their care:

1. Ensuring people are informed about the importance of maintaining foot health and their risk of developing complications.
2. Improving the availability of information regarding foot health.
3. Offer more regular foot health checks.

An early outcome from the project will see patients across the East of England receiving a new information card following their annual health check. The passport, which will be roughly the size of a bank card, will be carried by patients at all times and include information about what to look for in terms of their foot health and who they should contact if they have concerns.

Andy Yacoub (Chief Executive of Healthwatch Suffolk) said:

“It is clear that people are receiving good care in the county but there is room to improve, particularly with regard to keeping people involved in their care and informed of their foot health risk. It is also important to help people to understand how they can best manage and look after their health as early intervention is linked to the best possible outcomes.

“It is our hope that the findings will be used to improve services in Suffolk and to build on continued developments within local services. Our report includes a number of recommendations and we will ask health leaders to respond formally in due course.”

For more information about this work and how you can make a difference to local NHS and social care services in the county, please visit www.healthwatchesuffolk.co.uk, call 01449 703949 or email info@healthwatchesuffolk.co.uk.