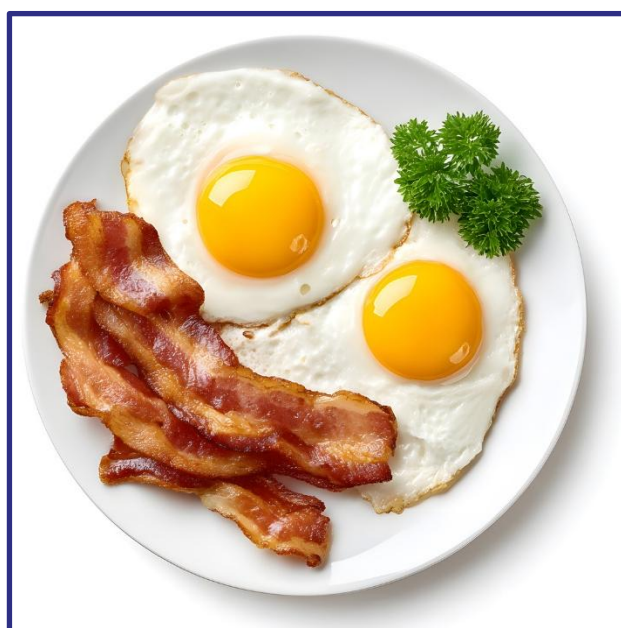




Real Food Lifestyle Courses



**Delivered by PHC
Ambassadors**

*A Proven Solution for
Primary Care*



Dr David Unwin FRCGP works at Norwood NHS Surgery in Southport where he has been a family doctor since 1986.

To date over 150 of his patients with T2 diabetes have achieved drug-free remission. More details can be found in his latest BMJ paper: [BMJ Nutrition](#).

He is the RCGP National Champion for Collaborative Care and Support Planning in Obesity & Diabetes.

In 2016 he won the NHS Innovator Of The Year Award for his work with lifestyle changes, as an alternative to drug therapy, in T2 diabetes.

IMPROVING PATIENT HEALTH

The Public Health Collaboration (PHC) is a UK registered charity that is dedicated to improving the health of the public, saving the NHS money at the same time. We are on a mission to empower, inspire and educate people to achieve good metabolic health through sustainable lifestyle changes.

Our Ambassadors Programme was set up to represent the PHC at a local level and show every NHS GP practice in the country what is possible with Real Food Lifestyle Courses.

This booklet explains more about the programme, its benefits to GP practices and patients, and how to get in touch to get a PHC lifestyle programme started in your practice.

All over the world type 2 diabetes and poor metabolic health is affecting more lives than ever before. It is estimated that only one in eight people in the developed world enjoy good metabolic health.

We have shown in my own NHS practice that reducing dietary carbs can often achieve drug free type 2 diabetes remission and significantly improve diabetic control.

But that is not all, we also see significant improvements in all markers for cardiovascular risk, alongside improvements in kidney and liver health.

The PHC and the Ambassadors Programme is all about rolling these improvements out whilst factoring in prevention.

Helping people all over the country adopt the simple, but powerful, approach of eating nutrient dense food that doesn't increase blood sugar.

Dr David Unwin

Chair of the PHC Scientific Advisory Committee



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INTRODUCING THE PHC

The Public Health Collaboration (PHC) is a registered UK charity dedicated to improving public health through evidence-based nutrition and lifestyle strategies.

At the heart of PHC's work is the **Ambassadors Programme**: a network of trained volunteers offering real food, lower carbohydrate, lifestyle support directly within communities.

These ambassadors work alongside GP surgeries to empower patients, particularly those with **type 2 diabetes, prediabetes, and metabolic syndrome**, to take control of their health through sustainable dietary changes.

The objectives of this booklet are to:

- Explain the PHC Ambassadors Programme.
- Demonstrate the programme's benefits to patients and GP practices.
- Share patient and GP practice success stories.
- Explain how interested practices can get involved and stakeholder roles (patients, Ambassadors, GP surgeries, healthcare professionals).
- Provide reassurance of NHS compatibility.

The PHC is funded by individual members of the public who want to help the UK become healthier and save the NHS money. The PHC Ambassador Real Food Lifestyle Courses are a free service for GP Practices.



THE PHC AMBASSADORS PROGRAMME

The PHC Ambassadors Programme is a volunteer-led initiative that offers patients structured lifestyle courses to help people improve their health through a real food, lower carbohydrate approach.

It's designed for patients with type 2 diabetes, prediabetes, and related metabolic issues.

Ambassadors are supported by the Public Health Collaboration and deliver an 8-week course either in GP surgeries or community settings.

Each session includes education, group discussion, and practical strategies. Sessions are informal, supportive, and non-judgmental. The focus is on:

- Minimising ultra-processed foods.
- Encouraging nutrient-dense meals.
- Supporting carbohydrate reduction where appropriate.

The programme is evidence-based, accessible, and aligned with NHS prevention and self-management strategies.

The ambassador-led model is designed to run independently alongside GP practices, requiring **minimal additional investment of time or resources from healthcare professionals (HCPs).**

Stakeholder Roles

Stakeholder	Role & Responsibilities
GP Surgeries / HCPs	Identify eligible patients, refer them to PHC Ambassador services, provide clinical oversight where necessary.
PHC Ambassadors	Volunteer-led support; provide resources, run groups, answer questions, signpost evidence.
Patients	Engage actively; make sustainable dietary and lifestyle changes with Ambassador guidance.
PHC	Provide the framework, training materials, and ongoing support to Ambassadors. Ensures the programme remains evidence-based, aligned with current scientific understanding, and compatible with NHS service structures.

PHC Ambassadors: A Nationwide Network

The PHC Ambassadors Programme has been implemented across the UK and is already established in **multiple GP surgeries nationwide**, demonstrating its scalability, effectiveness, and adaptability.

Below is a representation of the Ambassador network that spans urban and rural practices, from small surgeries to large primary care networks. There is growing interest and momentum, and the up-to-date distribution of Ambassadors can be found on the PHC website.



Case Study: Freshwell Health Centre

Championing Lower Carb, Patient-Centred Care

Freshwell Health Centre in Essex exemplifies the integration of PHC Ambassadors into NHS primary care. Their model demonstrates the power of partnership between GPs and PHC volunteers.

- **Patient group:** 500+ engaged.
- **Outcomes:** Significant reductions in HbA1c, weight, and medication use.
- **GP feedback:** Improved patient empowerment and reduced workload.
- **Ambassador contribution:** Weekly sessions, community support, educational resources.

"Our collaboration with PHC has transformed outcomes for patients with prediabetes and type 2 diabetes. It's practical, empowering, and complements NHS care beautifully."

— Dr David Oliver, GP Partner, Freshwell Health Centre

The Freshwell example embodies the ethos of the PHC Ambassador Programme: local, low-cost, clinically effective, and community-driven.

NHS Compatibility

The PHC Real Food Lifestyle Courses complement existing NHS services and patient pathways, aligning with:

- NHS 10 Year Health Plan on prevention and self-management.
- NHS guidance on social prescribing.
- NICE guidance on dietary management for type 2 diabetes.



BENEFITS TO PATIENTS

Patients who participate in PHC Real Food Lifestyle courses commonly experience improvements in weight, blood glucose, HbA1c, blood pressure, energy levels, and overall wellbeing. Many report reduced need for medications and a renewed sense of control over their health.

While individual outcomes vary, consistent attendance and implementation of course principles have been shown to deliver measurable, positive changes within just eight weeks.

Demonstrated Health Outcomes

Metric	Typical Improvement
Weight Loss	5-15kg over 6-12 months
HbA1c Reduction	10-30 mmol/mol
Fasting Glucose	Improved to non-diabetic range
Blood Pressure	Normalisation common
Medication	Reduction or discontinuation common

Broader Health Benefits

Patients also report significant improvements in:

- Energy levels.
- Mood and mental wellbeing.
- Relationship with food and ending cycles of binge-restrict.
- Food addiction recovery.
- Confidence and self-efficacy.
- Quality of life.

Patient Case Studies

Case Study 1:

“I was facing lifelong medication and feeling hopeless. With support from my PHC ambassador, I’ve lost 12kg, my HbA1c is normal, and I feel 20 years younger. I’m off all diabetes medication.”

— John, 57, Type 2 Diabetes Reversal

Case Study 2:

“My GP suggested the PHC group. I thought it wouldn’t work, but here I am 9 months later - blood sugar normal, 10kg down, and I’ve made friends. It’s been life-changing.”

— Susan, 62, Prediabetes Prevention

Case Study 3:

“I came for the diabetes advice but gained so much more - better sleep, less anxiety, and a better relationship with food.”

— Mike, 45, Improved Mental Health



BENEFITS TO GP PRACTICES

Reduced practice burden

- The PHC Ambassadors Programme supports the delivery of a structured, real food lifestyle course, helping to reduce the burden of lifestyle-related conditions on primary care services.
- Ambassadors handle the **time-intensive education and motivational support** patients need to make lifestyle changes, freeing GPs and nurses for clinical care.

Reduced workload

- By empowering patients to self-manage their metabolic health, the programme can reduce the number of routine appointments needed for diabetes and prediabetes management.

The course often leads to:

- Fewer medication reviews.
- Reduced frequency of appointments for poorly controlled diabetes.
- Improved adherence to care plans.

Improved patient outcomes

- Better blood sugar control for diabetes including remission.
- Better control and prevention of regression for prediabetes.
- Weight loss, improved blood pressure and other health improvements.
- Reduced medication.
- Overall less reactive care is needed.

Cost savings

- While the savings accrue to the NHS broadly, not individual surgeries, practices benefit from more improved patient outcomes.
- Many practices report fewer prescriptions for glucose-lowering medications, reduced polypharmacy, and better long-term outcomes. This supports NHS priorities for prevention, patient self-care, and medication optimisation.

Cost Savings Case Study

David Unwin's 2022 Integrated Care Board (ICB) report demonstrates **£68,000 per practice saved annually on diabetes medications alone**. Extrapolated to NHS England, this equates to potential **£441 million annual savings**.

Professional satisfaction

- GPs and Healthcare Professionals involved in the programme often report a renewed sense of purpose and satisfaction. Seeing patients improve their health, lose weight, reverse diabetes markers, and regain hope has a profound impact on morale and clinician wellbeing.

"It's rewarding to see patients thrive with this programme. They take ownership, and it lightens our load."

— Practice Nurse, North West

"Referring to our local PHC Ambassador means patients receive excellent support without us reinventing the wheel."

— GP Partner, Midlands

"It's an easy win. Better health outcomes, happier patients, and no cost to the practice."

— PCN Lead, South East

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

If you are not already in touch with your local PHC Ambassador directly then please contact the PHC to enquire about our Ambassadors programme.

Email: info@phcuk.org

Website: www.phcuk.org


The PHC will assess your needs, introducing you to an Ambassador, who will work with you to establish a Real Food Lifestyle Course for your practice, providing resources and templates.

For implementation a simple referral pathway will be established, that works for your practice, with the courses being delivered by PHC Ambassadors who will provide ongoing support.


PHC offers continued liaison to ensure outcomes are maximised and the programme remains aligned with your surgery's goals.

The Real Food Lifestyle Course on YouTube

The PHC have created an online Real Food Lifestyle course, consisting of 8 episodes, that is available for anyone to view for free on YouTube.



Real Food Lifestyle Course



Information not medical advice

A healthy breakfast: cereals, toast, fruit juice?		
Food item	Serving size in g/ml	How does each food affect blood glucose compared with one 4g teaspoon of table sugar?
Bran flakes	30	3.7
Milk	125	1
Brown toast, 1 slice	30	3
Pure Apple juice	200	4

Total for breakfast 11.7 teaspoons

Useful information for those with T2Diabetes making dietary choices

*As per calculations derived from the glycaemic index. To be found in: *It's the glycaemic response to, not the carbohydrate content of food that matters in diabetes and obesity* Journal of Insulin Resistance 2016. Unwin et al

Information not medical advice

This course can provide GPs and other healthcare professionals, wanting to know more, with an overview of the typical content of a PHC Real Food Lifestyle course.

You can find the course on YouTube here: [PHC Real Food Lifestyle Course](#)

Follow our **YouTube channel @phcukorg**

It can also be signposted to patients for them to self-serve and learn about the key elements of a real food, lower carbohydrate, lifestyle with suggestions for how to put this into practice. Whilst courses run in conjunction with GP practices are generally more effective and engaging, the YouTube resources are a useful adjunct.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Is this programme evidence-based?

Yes. The course is grounded in robust scientific evidence from randomised controlled trials, clinical audits, and peer-reviewed research. Studies show that lower carb diets can significantly improve blood sugar control, lower HbA1c, reduce the need for diabetes medications, support weight loss, and improve cardiovascular risk factors. PHC provides infographics, literature summaries, and peer-reviewed evidence to support Ambassadors and participants. Results from existing UK-based programmes, including those led by PHC Ambassadors, also demonstrate real-world effectiveness across multiple settings. Randomised controlled trials (e.g., Virta Health, DiRECT) confirm the benefits of lower carb approaches for type 2 diabetes and prediabetes.

Is this compatible with NHS practise?

Yes. The PHC Ambassador model aligns with NHS England's focus on prevention, personalised care, patient self-management, and reducing health inequalities. It is compatible with QOF targets, social prescribing, and structured diabetes education. The programme complements GP and nurse-led care by providing additional support in group or community settings, helping reduce pressure on practices. Importantly, the Ambassador-led format requires minimal GP time or funding, making it a practical and scalable solution for primary care teams.

How is this different from NHS Diabetes Prevention Programmes?

PHC offers a **real food-based, grassroots alternative** focusing on carbohydrate reduction, not calorie restriction or meal replacements.

Does it cost anything?

The programme is provided free of charge to patients. PHC offers Ambassadors access to a comprehensive resource pack, including branded materials, PowerPoint slides, templates, and printed handouts. Ambassadors volunteer their time and often run the course in a GP surgery, community venue, or online. Practices are not charged to participate. Occasionally, funding for printing or refreshments may be sourced locally or through charities, but the core programme remains freely accessible to all involved.

How is this funded?

PHC ambassadors are **volunteers** and the PHC is a registered charity. There is no cost to GP surgeries or patients.

What's the time commitment for GPs?

Minimal. The PHC Ambassador leads the delivery of the course and takes care of administration, facilitation, and patient support. The GP's role is primarily to identify suitable patients and refer them to the Ambassador. Communication may be needed to coordinate medication reviews or monitor outcomes. In some practices, Ambassadors are part of the clinical team; in others, they operate independently but liaise with the practice. Either way, the model is designed to ease pressure on already busy GPs.

What resources are provided?

- Patient guides.
- Meal ideas.
- Group support materials.
- Monitoring templates.
- Evidence summaries.

Is the course suitable for patients already on medication?

- Yes, absolutely. The course is designed to complement medical treatment and empower patients to improve their health through food and lifestyle changes. However, because blood sugar levels and blood pressure can improve rapidly on a lower carb diet, patients on medication should work closely with their GP or nurse for regular monitoring and medication adjustments. Ambassadors are trained to advise patients to consult their clinical team and can help guide discussions around de-prescribing where appropriate.

Are lower carb diets safe?

- Yes, when implemented correctly, lower carb diets are safe and effective for most people, including those with type 2 diabetes. Numerous studies show they can help reduce HbA1c, aid weight loss, lower blood pressure, and reduce medication dependency. The focus is on real, whole foods rather than processed replacements. Patients on medications need monitoring to avoid hypoglycaemia or hypotension, but under supervision, lower carb diets have a strong safety profile and are endorsed by many healthcare professionals worldwide.

Will patients be supported after the course ends?

- Yes. Many Ambassadors offer follow-up sessions monthly or quarterly to maintain momentum and provide ongoing encouragement. Some participants form WhatsApp groups or informal meet-ups for peer support. PHC also hosts a growing online community and provides access to ongoing learning resources. This post-course support helps patients stay on track and continue improving their health. Ambassadors may also link patients to other community resources, walking groups, or online forums to help sustain lifestyle changes long-term.

References

- Unwin D, Delon C, Unwin J, Tobin S, Taylor R. What predicts drug-free type 2 diabetes remission? Insights from an 8-year general practice service evaluation of a lower carbohydrate diet with weight loss. BMJ Nutrition, Prevention & Health. 2023;:e000544. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjnp-2022-000544>
- Dr David Unwin sugar infographics. <https://phcuk.org/sugar/>
- Summary table of randomised controlled trials Comparing Low-Carb Diets Of Less Than 130g Carbohydrate Per Day To Low-Fat Diets Of Less Than 35% Fat Of Total Calories. <https://phcuk.org/rcts>
- Public Health Collaboration booklets. <https://phcuk.org/booklets/>
- Public Health Collaboration conference videos. <https://www.youtube.com/PHCukorg>



A CALL TO ACTION



The PHC Ambassadors Programme embodies our mission: **empowering individuals to reclaim their health through real food and community support**. Imagine the potential:

- A volunteer in every village, town and city.
- Every GP surgery with an ally in prevention and lifestyle change.
- A nation reversing the tide of type 2 diabetes.

We invite you to join us. Together, we can make sustainable, evidence-based health improvement a reality for everyone. **Contact us today and start making a difference.**

Sam Feltham, PHC Director



Contact Us:

Website: www.phcuk.org

Contact Form: phcuk.org/contact

Email: info@phcuk.org

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