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Press Release

For more information about the Society of Shoe Fitters go to their website: www.shoefitters-uk.org.

We know that badly fitted and cheaply made footwear are bad for us, but they are our guilty pleasure. We make excuses to buy perceived bargains (*even those of us who know better*). What many still fail to understand is that even an unsuitable shoe can be fitted more comfortably with professional advice and service – although there is never an excuse for cheaply made footwear that floods our shores and ends up in landfill in a matter of weeks after wear. Tomorrow never comes when we want something that is bad for us long term, but with footwear there are two primary groups for whom this is seriously dangerous and irresponsible - children and diabetics.

Independent retailers are more important to the footwear industry and health than they are given credit and most will agree they have not been supported or acknowledged enough by suppliers or the government. Independent shops are the backbone of this country, the bread and butter of both suppliers and HMRC, so why do we continue to put our eggs in the biggest baskets when the smaller baskets are more reliable, flexible and hold more in the long run? One ugly word – avarice! We want what they seem to have – high street status and profit...but is it smoke and mirrors? The multiples, chainstores, multi-nationals allude to massive orders and greater brand awareness, but they are just as fragile as the small people – in fact the larger they are the harder they fall as we have seen with Brantano this month. The allure is obvious; but when the ‘big boys’ (*and girls*) buy in bulk they cut manufacturers margin to the bone and suppliers stretch themselves to the limit to please. However nice a Buyer is there is little loyalty involved...it is justifying numbers. A supplier may step up to supply, but what happens when a few seasons down the track they decide the supplier is old news? If a chain like Brantano goes under it is not just initial monies outstanding – it is forward orders placed on the system that have yet to be paid for and forward projections. Small shops therefore need to be nurtured. In countries like France, Italy, Spain and Germany independents thrive with two or three shoe shops in the same street, but here in the UK the ‘indies’ scream if another shop dares to come within 5 miles thinking it could be their end when often it just increases footfall.

The public still like appreciation for spending their money and demand more product information, the small shop has time to give it. Footwear is not simply a commodity; it is proven that footwear is linked to our well-being. However even some good independents think that shoe fitting is still an add-on not a vital priority and many fail to realise it is their only U.S.P. Traditional shops pass on knowledge through generations and understand there is much to learn about physiology, footwear manufacture, how materials affect the fit and know only one third of the populous actually have ‘average’ feet? But who is left to fit the two thirds that need a little extra help and care? Who will inform the parent that by neglecting their child’s foot health it could cause them physical pain which will need expensive treatment later?

The famous ‘70’s Munro Report warned the government what would happen to our manufacturing base, independent retailers and the vital link to public health, but it was ignored and sadly has proven to be a visionary document. The SSF reminded MP’s of its accuracy in Parliament last October. Thankfully they are starting to see the light. Greatly assisted by other health based organisations and charities the cost to the NHS and Benefit system of ignoring shoe fitting is now being prioritised. Diabetes UK is onboard and supporting the 2016 National Shoe Fitting Week starting 19th March 2016. Together with The Society of Chiropodists & Podiatrists,

The Institute of Chiropodists, Lymphoedema Support Network and others, Diabetes UK are sending out hard-hitting evidence of the link between ill-fitting shoes and long term illness leading to amputations and worst case scenario death. There are now 135 foot amputations weekly, many patients sadly needing much greater medical care and longevity not assured.

The most vulnerable part of a diabetic is their eyes and their feet. The SSF covers this subject in their Footwear & Fitting Course so that students/prospective members understand the problem sufferer's face and the importance of giving best advice. The following national press release from Diabetes UK is currently doing the rounds. We therefore urge everyone to get involved with National Shoe Fitting Week as the posters are becoming more noticeable with so many looking for them. Artwork is available from our website www.shoefitters-uk.org and A4 posters are available from the MODA footwear – or can be posted.

The SSF also need more shops selling purely adult footwear to qualify their staff. There are not enough members in the Midlands/North West where there is a high population and a large volume of calls from the public needing a professional fitting service, so if you are selling adult footwear don't think the SSF is just for kids shops – stand tall against the others and make your shop a fitting destination!

MPs call for improvements to diabetes care

Diabetes UK - Friday 22 January 2016

The Public Accounts Committee has called on the Government and the NHS to make urgent improvements to the delivery of diabetes care in England.

The Committee, which is formed of cross party MPs, made their call in a report, which has found that there has been very little improvement in diabetes healthcare in the past three years.

The report highlights that the quality of diabetes care varies far too much from area to area and that there are still far too many people with the condition who are not getting the basic recommended level of care. For example, younger people with Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes and people with Type 1 diabetes of all ages are less likely to receive the recommended level of care and have worse health outcomes.

The report also shows that the numbers of people receiving education to help them learn more about their condition varies from area to area. It is important that people with diabetes are supported to manage their condition well as this can help them to reduce their risk of serious diabetes related complications such as amputation, heart attack and stroke.

To improve the delivery of diabetes care, the Committee recommends that poorly performing areas are held to greater account and that the NHS put in place a timetable to reduce geographical variations and variations between different patient groups.

The Committee also calls on the NHS to set out a timetable to increase participation of the NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme, which Diabetes UK is working jointly with NHS England and Public Health England to develop, to 100,000 people a year.

Other recommendations in the Report include making it mandatory for GP practices to submit data for the National Diabetes Audit, and for NHS England to develop a more flexible range of diabetes education courses.

Chris Askew, Diabetes UK Chief Executive, said: "We welcome today's report from the Public Accounts Committee, which has once again highlighted that the current state of diabetes care must improve and that the NHS must take urgent action to get this right. We also welcome the report's recognition that the launch of the NHS Diabetes Prevention Programme, which we are developing jointly with NHS England and Public Health England, will be an important step towards tackling the increasing rise of Type 2 diabetes, which is largely preventable. What is really encouraging is to see how the report emphasises that the quality of

diabetes care varies far too much from area to area and in particular that younger people and those with Type 1 diabetes have worse outcomes.

“The report also highlights how the numbers of people receiving education to help them learn more about their condition is very variable. Lack of care and support is reflected in the fact that around two thirds of people with diabetes don’t have their condition under control, which puts them at increased risk of developing life threatening and debilitating diabetes related complications such as amputation, heart attack and stroke.

“This is a huge concern as these complications are not only personally devastating for all those involved but are also extremely costly to our already stretched health service. Diabetes costs the NHS £10 billion every year and if we don’t get better at supporting people with the condition to live well this figure threatens to rise to unsustainable levels. This is why it is essential that the NHS acts on the report’s recommendations and ensures that all people with diabetes get the care and education they need to manage their condition well and that poorly performing areas are held to account.

“We only know about the differences between the quality of local services because of the National Diabetes Audit, which gathers this information. However, the number of GP practices submitting their data has been falling and now only covers 57 per cent of them. The committee is absolutely right to say that it should be mandatory for GP practices to submit data.

“Until we get better at preventing Type 2 diabetes and supporting people with diabetes to live long full lives we will continue to see high rates of premature death, devastating complications and unsustainable costs to the NHS.”