Physiotherapy First point of contact in GP practice

Maple Healthcare are proud to be among the first health centres to offer their patients an innovative first point of contact physiotherapy service.

Musculoskeletal (MSK) health issues are the most common cause of repeat GP appointments and account for around 1 in 5 of all GP appointments. Most of them can be dealt with effectively by a physiotherapist without any need to see the GP.

**What is Physiotherapy First point of contact?**

First point of contact physiotherapy is a service whereby patients suffering from MSK conditions can gain rapid access to a physiotherapist for specific assessment, diagnoses and management of their complaint. This essentially replaces the need for the traditional GP appointment. The Physiotherapist will complete a thorough ‘one off’ assessment and then discuss with the patient how best to manage their complaint. First point of contact physio is not a service for ongoing treatment. If it is felt that a course of physiotherapy is needed, the first point of contact physiotherapist will complete a referral as indicated, just as the GP would have done previously.

**How can I be referred to the Physiotherapist?**

Patients can access the service directly without having to see their GP or anyone else first. Our receptionists will ask a few short questions to help identify appropriate patients who will be signposted to the physiotherapist in the health centre. Alternatively, patients can request an appointment with the physiotherapist. Again, our receptionists will ask a few short questions, and once deemed appropriate the patient will be offered an appointment.

**Is my complaint appropriate for the First point of contact physiotherapy Service?**

Patients will referred to the service if they meet the following points:

\*Patients with obvious or suspected MSK pain

\* Pain for up to 3 months in duration

\* Some patients with pain for 3-6 months may also be considered

\* Patients who have not been assessed or treated by NHS physiotherapy for this complaint

\* Patients who have a ‘flare up’ (up to 3 months) of a pre-existing or recurring complaint

\* Patients who are awaiting or who have received joint injections at injection clinic

**Patients who will be managed via other services**

\*MSK pain longer than 6 months in duration

\* Patients who have previously received physiotherapy treatment for this complaint

\* Patients who are currently receiving physiotherapy treatment for this complaint

\* Patients who are currently on physiotherapy waiting list for treatment of this complaint

\*Patients who are currently on waiting list for ICATS, orthopaedic assessment, Rheumatology assessment or surgical intervention, for this complaint

**What can the physiotherapist offer?**

Physiotherapists who are based in the GP practice have advanced practice skills and training and are able to assess, diagnose, advise, provide exercises and, when needed, carry out further investigations and refer on. They can safely and effectively manage an MSK caseload in the GP practice. The physiotherapist works alongside the GP’s and nurse practitioners as part of the multidisciplinary team and have access to their input as and when required. If there are particular concerns regarding the nature of the complaint the physiotherapist can identify these and refer accordingly.

**Benefits to the patient**

• Rapid access to expert MSK assessment, diagnosis, treatment & advice (early intervention is likely to result in a better long term outcome)

• Reduced waiting lists to see suitably placed, qualified health professionals

• Prevention of short-term problems becoming long-term conditions

• A shorter pathway, so patients have fewer appointments to attend

• Opportunity to gain lifestyle/physical activity advice

• Longer appointment times with a physiotherapist

A physiotherapist in the GP practice not only has the ability to improve the patient experience but frees up GP time to manage patients with other complaints. This has a potentially huge impact for all service users both in the short and long term.