



# Get involved...

**NHS Newcastle West Clinical Commissioning Group**

**Musculoskeletal Pathways: The Patient Perspective  
Draft Report**

**September 2013**

**0191 226 3450**  
**[www.involvenc.org.uk](http://www.involvenc.org.uk)**

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# Section 1 – Introduction and Methodology

## 1.0 Introduction

NHS Newcastle West Clinical Commissioning Group (NWCCG) has spent the last three years piloting new approaches to Musculoskeletal (MSK) care pathways.

Nine NWCCG practices have participated in a pilot pathway comprising a telephone-based physiotherapy advice and triage service, practice-based physiotherapy and secondary care consultants. The other nine practices in the CCG have used traditional referral pathways and physiotherapy services based at Newcastle hospitals.

## 1.1 Reviewing patient experience

In order to ensure that patients living in Newcastle West receive the best MSK services, NWCCG has commissioned Involve North East to explore the experience of patients who have been treated via the pilot service as well as those whose treatment has followed the traditional, non-pilot pathway.

NWCCG wanted to investigate:

- Whether patients in both routes felt their treatment had been successful
- Whether they had found the services easy to access
- What type of overall experience patients felt they had had
- What were the particular high points of their experience
- What could be improved to make their care better

## 1.2 Methodology

In order to gain a depth of understanding of the patient experience within the pilot and non-pilot MSK pathway, a qualitative methodological approach was deemed to be the most appropriate method for enabling the collection of meaningful data. Qualitative research is concerned with gaining an understanding of how people feel, their beliefs, reasoning and motivations; and therefore fitted with the objectives of the research.

We established a programme of one-to-one telephone interviews, to meet the review's timescales and allow us to explore issues arising from questions, prompting interviewees to deliver richer and more detailed responses than is usually yielded by written questionnaires.

## 1.3 Participants

We spoke to a total of 44 patients, 33 of whom had been through the pilot pathway.

Connect Physioline and NWCCG staff facilitated the recruitment of patients in pilot practices. The 33 patients we spoke to had experienced a number of pathway

variations, and were able to contribute a range of experiences and opinions to this review.

We did not receive the expected access to non-pilot patients, which, combined with the deadline for completion of this report, limited the number of non-pilot patients we were able to speak to. However, those we were able to interview provided a good breadth of experience and opinion.

Full participant profiles are provided as Appendices 1a (pilot patients) and 1b (non-pilot patients).

# Section 2 - Findings

## 2.0 Findings

This section summarises the experiences and feedback of 33 patients who have experienced different routes through the MSK pilot pathway; and 11 patients who have experienced non-pilot routes.

### 2.1 Pre-treatment impact of musculoskeletal pain

Patients we spoke to had consulted their doctors for a variety of conditions and differing levels of pain or disruption to daily routines. Some found their ability to work or perform simple daily tasks affected:

“I had trapped a nerve in my elbow, so I couldn't grip or lift things. It was very frustrating”

“I had daily back pain, worse if I did certain activities. If I did house work, shopping or gardening I would have to stop and stretch, shopping was back-breaking”

“I had fluid on one knee. It was very tiring and draining, and I couldn't do my work properly. I'm a cleaner”

“I had a lot of pain in my left knee. It was painful to walk on, and I need to be mobile in my job so it was a problem”

Others were experiencing difficulties but had put up with pain for some time before consulting their doctor:

“It was terrible, two sore knees, it was bad, I looked like an old woman. I had the problem for a while before I had it looked at”

“I'd been having bad pains in my back, and they were getting worse”

#### 2.1.1 Information after diagnosis

Although patients were not told whether their treatment would follow a 'pilot' or 'not-pilot' route, we asked people in both groups about the amount and quality of information they were given about the pathway they would be referred to. Levels of information varied considerably, but there was no clear distinction between information given to pilot or non-pilot patients:

“It was all explained to me. And he suggested exercises that I could do in the meantime, before I started my physio”

Non-pilot patient

“She said I had some kind of muscular spasm, and she thought I should ring the telephone physiotherapy line. She gave me a very fair explanation of what that was, and also suggested some exercises”

Pilot patient

“I was told I would receive a phone call from the physio, but that was all”

Pilot patient

By and large, most patients seemed perfectly happy with the level of information they were given before treatment. It is possible that GPs adapted their information-giving to suit their patient’s own approach and needs:

“My GP didn’t tell me what was going to happen, but that was ok”

Pilot patient

## 2.2 Connect Physioline

Twenty-one patients from pilot practices were referred to Connect Physioline. Some of these were treated solely by Physioline, while others were subsequently referred on to other services.

Fourteen of the twenty-one were perfectly happy for their treatment to start with a telephone conversation, especially as they understood that they would be speaking to people with relevant qualifications and skills:

“I was fine with it. GPs don't know much about this kind of thing, so it's much better to speak to someone who does”

Five people expressed some reservations:

“I felt I should have gone straight to see someone”

“It felt like the over-the-phone consultation was a money saving exercise”

One patient wondered how other people might react:

“I was happy about it, but for some I think they might struggle”

Finally, one person was won over after initial scepticism:

“I didn’t think it would work but was shocked at how thorough it was”

### 2.2.1 Initial phone call

Response to the initial Physioline phone call was almost universally positive:

“My call was answered straight away and I was able to organise a follow-up call from the specialist”

“I rang two days later and made an appointment. It was all very quick and easy”

Just one patient chose not to engage with the service:

“He was pleasant enough, but I chose not to follow up the phone call, they sent me some exercises but they are too painful”

### 2.2.2 Follow up appointments

Again, there was a broadly positive response to the Physioline follow-up phone call:

“Easy to talk to, and he understood me and I understood him - he didn't use any jargon”

“Really good. We had a long conversation and I got a lot of very good advice. He sent me a sheet of exercises, with the most useful ones marked. And he'd also been through them with me on the phone”

“Very nice, and also very thorough. They asked a lot of questions and I felt confident about it”

Only one person had significant difficulty with their follow-up phone call, and in the end this was down to an administrative error:

“I called them, they arranged a time and date for a return call - but they didn't ring. I gave them 24 hours then called again. They had the wrong number”

However, the situation was easily resolved:

“When we arranged a new date and time they rang back exactly as we arranged”

The reported length of telephone consultations varied from less than five minutes to 45 minutes. Although one patient said the consultation felt ‘a bit rushed’, everyone else was very happy with the length and thoroughness of the consultation.

### 2.2.3 Overall feedback on Physioline

Not everyone felt they had benefitted by their conversation with Physioline, although in most cases this was because they needed further treatment or believed their problems to be beyond fixing. And in some cases, patients did not follow the advice they were given:

“No, my spine is dropping. It might have helped if I did the exercises but I don't do them”

“They recommended what I should do and said I should call back if it didn’t improve – but I just put up with it”

One person had no complaints about the service, but was not completely won over:

“If I needed it again I would prefer to be seen”

Only three people expressed significant reservations, and in two cases this was about the accessibility of follow-up service locations:

“I was directed to Westerhope Surgery - I did not realise that it would be difficult for me to get to. They did not explain the location”

“I gave all my symptoms over the phone and one of them was that I couldn't climb stairs, they made the appointment at a surgery with stairs. I was furious - why had no one listened to me. I did complain and was told that the person on the end of the phone did not know the layout of the surgeries - that is ridiculous they should be told which ones have stairs!”

The third complaint was more directly related to the telephone consultation:

“Everyone was helpful and doing their job and what they can, but I don’t think a phone call is an appropriate way to do it. I wouldn’t use the service again, didn’t like it”

However, most patients were very positive about the experience and 11 people felt they had definitely benefited:

“Definitely helped. If I had gone to see someone I would have had to wait for an appointment which means I wouldn't have got the exercises straight away. Because I got them over the phone, by the time the sheet arrived in the post, I'd already been doing them so my foot was getting better”

“Yes, it was much better to talk to someone who understood about it. He was very good, and said I could ring again if I needed. He also said there were other things they could try, so I didn't feel I'd reached the end of the road”

One person expressed concern about a service run by a private provider:

“I was not aware that it was a non-NHS service and I am not happy that it is private”

However, the three other people who raised the question of private provision were unconcerned:

“I had no problem using a non-NHS service, I was just happy to be getting looked at”

## 2.3 Experience of physiotherapy services

Patients in the pilot and non-pilot groups were referred on where appropriate to physiotherapy, either as non-pilot patients to Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (NuTH) or as pilot patients to Connect’s practice-based service.

Not everyone followed this up:

“They suggested I should see a physiotherapist, but I never got round to making an appointment”

Among patients who did take up the service offered, experience and feedback varied quite widely across the different routes.

### 2.3.1 Practice-based physiotherapy

The provision of practice-based physiotherapy by Connect was very well received by patients in pilot practices, except by those mentioned in 2.2.3 who had had to travel to inconvenient locations:

“I think it’s very good to have physiotherapists in your own local surgery, so you can see them on the days when they are there”

Non-pilot patients were generally prepared to travel to hospital and other locations, although one patient who had been visited at home identified practice-based provision as a potential improvement:

“It should be incorporated into the practice, closer to home. Home visits are ok but there isn't always the room to do the exercises. If it's at the GP and there are problems, the doctor can find out straight away”

### 2.3.2 General feedback on Connect Physiotherapy

Given the complexity of many musculoskeletal problems, and the fact that in some cases patients’ ability to respond to treatment was undermined by other conditions, most Connect patients felt they had received a good service almost regardless of outcome:

“From Day One, I was told there was nothing that could be done - it was more about managing my condition. My condition did improve, when I first went to physiotherapy I was walking with a stick. My medication and acupuncture helped but I then developed a hip problem for which I am now waiting for a replacement”

“It’s wear and tear so it won’t go away, but the exercises are helping me to manage it”

Others had a more straightforwardly positive experience:

“I thought it was excellent. The physiotherapist was very good, easy to understand and relaxing, he was very good. And I still do my exercises”

Most pilot patients appreciated the speed and efficiency of the process:

“I was given a date and all the details by \*\*\*\*\* over the phone. My past experience (hospital) I waited about a month – this didn’t take that long. I had no problems not going to hospital, if they are properly trained. Plus it was at my surgery and they had a proper physiotherapy room”

In a few cases, however, delays still occurred:

“I didn’t get an appointment for six weeks which was too long. And in that time the problem was getting worse”

One patient made a direct and unfavourable comparison between the pilot system and the way he perceived the service used to be provided:

“Before things changed my GP would have referred me directly to the hospital and they would have discovered earlier that I needed a hip replacement and not physiotherapy”

Of the 15 pilot pathway patients who answered our question about whether physiotherapy had resolved their problem, four replied that it had. Two more said that, while not resolved, their condition had become more manageable with physiotherapy. Seven people felt they were not significantly better, and a further two said physiotherapy had helped but they were now dealing with other complications.

### 2.3.3 NuTH Physiotherapy

Reflections on NuTH physiotherapy services came from a smaller cohort of patients: nine of the 11 non-pilot patients we were able to speak to had experienced the service.

Six of these answered our question about whether physiotherapy had resolved their problem. Two people said it was now resolved, and three said that it was not. However, one of these three acknowledged that in fact the physiotherapist had helped by making a further, appropriate referral:

“It wasn’t that kind of problem. But the physio could see that and referred me on for the x-ray”

The sixth respondent had missed the appointment because he had subsequently had a cancer diagnosis.

Regardless of whether they felt their condition had been cured, feedback on NuTH physiotherapy was generally good:

“Very good. The physio was very nice and thorough. I thought she was excellent”

“Very good so far”

“No complaints, the staff are always very helpful and friendly”

## 2.4 IMATT

Three of the non-pilot patients, and 10 of the pilot pathway patients we spoke to, were aware of having been referred to the Intermediate Musculoskeletal Assessment and Treatment Team (IMATT) run by Connect.

### 2.4.1 Location of services and waiting times

Most of the patients referred to IMATT, from either route, were happy with the service they received, although some would have preferred to be given a choice of location; satisfaction tended to be affected by how conveniently their particular appointment was located. People were generally satisfied with waiting times.

### 2.4.2 Medical histories

There seems to be some variation in the medical history IMATT staff had been given, or had read, prior to appointments:

“The staff were good, no problems, and I think they already had some information about my condition”

“I got a good sense they knew what they were talking about whereas GPs just think painkillers are the answer. The staff had read my notes and were aware of my issues”

“He didn’t have any of my records. I had previously had an MRI and he didn’t have a copy of that . . . I called up my surgery and got a copy for him. But without my records then what would be the point?”

### 2.4.3 Communication

One patient from the pilot pathway was concerned about the way she was told about the results of a subsequent MRI scan:

“My biggest criticism is the way IMATT dealt with me on the phone when they called with the MRI results. It was not a good call. It was someone I had never spoken to, they told me the facts in a way that made me think something was seriously wrong and they used terms I didn't understand. It wasn't explained properly at all”

#### 2.4.4 Overall feedback

Overall, however, feedback on IMATT was positive:

“Everything went smoothly and I had no problems”

Non-pilot patient

”I feel I was treated really well and I am grateful”

Pilot patient

## 2.5 MRI scans

Six pilot pathway patients, and two people from the non-pilot route, were referred for MRI scans. One was about to attend for their scan when interviewed, and one patient had failed to attend theirs.

Four of the six people who had already had their scan (all pilot pathway patients) reported favourably on the experience. One of the two unfavourable responses came from the patient quoted in 2.4.3 who, while satisfied with the scan itself, was unhappy about the way her results had been explained to her.

The other complaint came from a patient who had had the third of three different scans four months ago:

“I'm still waiting to see the consultant to get my results”

One other person felt that patients should be able to choose where to go for their scan because of difficulties reaching some locations.

On the whole, however, feedback was good:

“It gave them the information they needed and helped them decide what to do next”

“I only had to wait 10 days, which was good. I can't fault the service once I got there, and I was seen on time”

## 2.6 Secondary care consultants

None of the non-pilot patients we were able to speak to had been referred to a consultant, but 11 of the pilot patients reported being seen by at least one consultant.

The biggest problem seemed to be the difficulty in some cases of getting appointments:

“The consultant hadn't released his dates for June and May was full, his secretary kept saying, "he's been away" or "he'll do them soon". I waited ages in agony, finally went back to my GP who rang and was told the same thing. I asked my GP for any knee consultant and within two weeks I was having my operation at Hexham”

“I was told I would get an appointment for a nerve blocker injection in September but when I rang the secretary I was told 'he tells everyone September, you are non-emergency it could take 7 months'. I am very distressed about this because I have no quality of life”

“Since my MRI I've been referred back to see a consultant at the Freeman. It's been three months since my MRI and I've still not seen anyone. In the meantime I've been to A+E twice with my problem”

One patient had problems with the accessibility of her appointment:

“The appointment was quite soon after my referral but it was at Ivy Road in Gosforth. There was a steep staircase and the chair lift had been locked at the top, so I would have preferred somewhere easier”

However, this patient was happy with her eventual appointment:

“The appointment was about 30 minutes with very little wait to go in. The consultant solved my problems, I have been for a pre-med and am due to have an operation soon”

Feedback on the actual consultant appointment was generally favourable:

“Good. And he referred me to the physio at my surgery, which has worked well for me”

“Both consultants have been excellent”

“Very good, he referred me on to a physio so most of my treatment after that was with a physio”

## **2.7 Outpatients**

Two patients on the pilot pathway, and three people from non-pilot practices, had been referred at some stage to an Outpatient service.

The two pilot pathway patients, and one of the non-pilot people, were referred for physiotherapy. A fourth patient was referred to a rheumatologist and the final patient was fitted for and given 'lifts' to correct a walking difficulty.

The two pilot pathway patients who saw a physiotherapist at this stage gave very favourable feedback:

“She was excellent. While I was seeing her, the pain transferred to the other shoulder and the consultant arranged a CT scan. I was put on medication but it knocked me out, so between us we worked out a way for me to reduce the dosage and control it through exercise”

“I was treated at the hospital which was convenient and I didn't wait long for my appointment when I got there. The staff were really helpful and I was given exercises - shown how to do them and given a sheet”

The non-pilot pathway patient who saw a physiotherapist through Outpatients had no complaints about the service as it stood, but does not feel his condition has been fully addressed:

“My main concern was that my original knee operation may have caused some nerve damage, and I wanted both knees to be reassessed. But that message never seemed to get across”

The other two patients were generally satisfied with the service, although one commented that flexibility for patients and ‘a better understanding of timescales’ might improve patients’ experience.

## 2.8 Summary

Of the 44 patients we spoke to, most patients had broadly positive experiences of whichever pathway they had experienced, and most of those whose problems had not been cured were philosophical about the difficulty of completely curing many musculoskeletal problems.

There was no significant difference between the overall feedback provided by pilot and non-pilot pathway patients; and only one of those patients who mentioned the fact that Connect is a private provider expressed misgivings about their status.

However, participants in our research did provide interesting feedback on the two features which most clearly distinguish the pilot pathway from the 'traditional' MSK route: telephone consultations and practice-based physiotherapy.

### 2.8.1 Telephone consultations

In general, patients were happy to engage in telephone consultations, recognising that a phone call with a physiotherapist gave them better access to specialist help than a face-to-face conversation with a GP.

Positive responses outweighed reservations, and the fact that in some cases initial reservations were overcome by actual experience suggests that telephone based advice from a specialist could become a valued and more widely used service in future.

### 2.8.2 Practice-based physiotherapy

While it is not altogether surprising that patients experiencing the pilot MSK pathway appreciated access to practice-based physiotherapy, it is interesting that two non-pilot patients specifically identified this (unprompted) as a service they would have appreciated.

This suggests that practice-based physiotherapy could become a useful and valued part of any future service design.

# Appendices



# Appendix 1a

## Pilot Patient Profile

Gender	Number of participants	% of participants
Male	12	36.4
Female	21	63.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Age	Number of participants	% of participants
16 – 30	1	3.0
31 – 59	10	30.3
60+	22	66.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Which GP Practice do you belong to?	Number of participants	% of participants
Betts Avenue	5	15.1
Cruddas Park/Hillsview	2	6.1
Denton Turret	4	12.1
Holmside	3	9.1
Newburn	2	6.1
Parkway/Chapel House	7	21.2
Throckley	1	3.0
West Road	3	9.1
Westerhope	6	18.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Ethnicity	Number of participants	% of participants
<b>White</b>		
White British	33	100
White Irish	0	0
Any other White	0	0
<b>Asian or Asian British</b>		
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
<b>Black or Black British</b>		
Caribbean	0	0
African	0	0
Any other Black background	0	0
<b>Mixed</b>		
White and Black Caribbean	0	0
White and Black African	0	0
Any other Mixed	0	0
<b>Other ethnic groups</b>		
Chinese	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>100.0</b>



# Appendix 1b

## Non-pilot Patient Profile

Gender	Number of participants	% of participants
Male	3	27.3
Female	8	72.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Age	Number of participants	% of participants
16 – 30	0	0
31 – 59	2	18.2
60+	9	81.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Which GP Practice do you belong to?	Number of participants	% of participants
Broadway	0	0
Denton Park	1	9.1
Dilston Road	0	0
Fenham Hall	1	9.1
Grainger/Adelaide	6	54.5
Ponteland	0	0
Prospect	0	0
Roseworth	1	9.1
Scotswood	0	0
Not known (by patient)	1	9.1
Other (The Grove)	1	9.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Ethnicity	Number of participants	% of participants
<b>White</b>		
White British	9	81.8
White Irish	0	0
Any other White	1	9.1
<b>Asian or Asian British</b>		
Indian	1	9.1
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
<b>Black or Black British</b>		
Caribbean	0	0
African	0	0
Any other Black background	0	0
<b>Mixed</b>		
White and Black Caribbean	0	0
White and Black African	0	0
Any other Mixed	0	0

<b>Other ethnic groups</b>		
Chinese	0	0
Any other ethnic group	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100.0</b>

## MSK – Pilot patients

**P1 – Patients went to IMATT then onto to see a consultant**

**P2 – Patients went to physio either from IMATT, direct from their GP or  
Physioline**

### Ice – breaker

1. Thinking about an average day in your life, before your treatments, how did your musculoskeletal pain affect your daily activity
  - a. It didn't
  - b. Worse/better at different times of day
  - c. Worry/lack of confidence to do things
  - d. More careful about what you do physically – inside the home, outside the home, at work

### Pathway experience

2. After diagnosis, how much did the GP tell you about 'what would happen next eg: referrals to physio, outpatients, waiting times etc

### Connect Physioline

3. For those patients that were referred to Connect Physioline, what was your initial feelings towards this?
  - a. How was this service described to you, did the information you were given provide enough detail
  - b. How did you feel about having a consultation over the phone about your condition
4. Did anyone self-refer to physioline and if so why?
5. When you first called Physioline, what was your experience?
  - a. Did you have to wait in a queuing system
  - b. Did they answer your call straight away
    - i. did you have to call a few times
6. When you arranged your follow up, were you:
  - i. given a convenient time to call
  - ii. was it easy to change your call time
  - iii. If you missed their call, did they call you back
  - b. How was the person you spoke to
    - i. Were they easy to talk too
    - ii. Did they explain who they were ie physiotherapist etc
    - iii. Did they understand you
    - iv. Did you understand them
  - c. How long were you on the phone for – was this too long, too short or about right
7. Did calling Physioline help you?
  - a. Were you discharged, if yes, were you advised on how to maintain your condition
  - b. Were you sent any information? Was it / would it have been useful

- c. Were you referred on? If so where?
- 8. Could you offer any suggestions to improve physiotherapy for future callers. What worked well, what could be improved?

### **Connect MSK Physiotherapy**

- 9. For those patients that were then referred onto physiotherapy or who were referred directly onto physiotherapy, how did you find this experience?
  - a. How did this happen – did Physiotherapy do this for you? If the GP referred you why was this
  - b. How long did it take to get an appointment? What are your thoughts about the waiting times
  - c. Did you have any issues/problems about using a non NHS service?
- 10. What was your experience during your treatments/assessments?
  - a. Where were you treated? Were you given a choice?
  - b. How easy or difficult was it for you to get there?
  - c. Would you have preferred to be seen somewhere else? Where? Why?
  - d. How were the staff/physiotherapist?
  - e. Were the staff/physiotherapist aware of your condition prior to attending?
  - f. How was any information / advice / exercises given to you? How useful was this
    - i. Verbally
    - ii. Written
- 11. How was the treatment itself- not enough, too much, too little, too short, about right, time between appointments?
- 12. Did the Physiotherapy resolve your problem?
  - a. If yes and you were discharged, what advice were you given about how to maintain your condition?
  - b. If no,
    - i. Why do you think this was?
    - ii. Did you complete your physiotherapy treatment? If not, why was this?
    - iii. What happened next? Were you referred onto IMATT (Intermediate Musculoskeletal Assessment and Treatment Team)
- 13. Could you offer any suggestions or ways to improve the Physiotherapy service for future users. What worked well, what could be improved

### **IMATT (Intermediate Musculoskeletal Assessment and Treatment Team)**

- 14. If you were referred to IMATT, how did you find this referral?
  - a. Did Connect Physiotherapy recommend this referral?
    - i. How long did you have to wait for your IMATT appointment (too long, ok etc)
    - ii. What information were you given
  - b. Did you go straight into IMATT from your GP

- i. How long did you have to wait for your appointment (too long, ok)
  - ii. What information were you given
- 15. How was your appointment?
  - a. Where were you treated? Were you given a choice?
  - b. How easy or difficult was it for you to get there?
  - c. Would you have preferred to be seen somewhere else? Where? Why?
  - d. How were the staff/physiotherapist?
  - e. Were the staff/physiotherapist aware of your condition prior to attending?
  - f. How was any information / advice / exercises given to you? How useful was this
    - i. Verbally
    - ii. Written
- 16. After your assessment, were you referred elsewhere or discharged?
  - i. How did you feel about this
  - b. If you were referred on, where was this to:
    - i. Back to physio
    - ii. MRI
    - iii. A Consultant
    - iv. Outpatients

And how did you feel about this
  - c. If you were discharged, were you advised on how to maintain your condition
- 17. Do you have any suggestions to improving IMATT for future patients What worked well, what could be improved

## **MRI**

- 18. If you were referred to have an MRI, how was this experience?
  - a. Was the appointment arranged for you
  - b. How long did it take to have an MRI
  - c. Was it at a time and place that was convenient
  - d. Was the appointment on time
  - e. Could your experience have been improved

## **Secondary Care Consultant**

- 19. If you were referred to see a consultant, how was this experience?
  - a. Was the appointment arranged for you
  - b. How long did it take
  - c. Was it at a time and place that was convenient
  - d. Was the appointment on time
  - e. Could your experience have been improved
  - f. Was the appointment successful – lead to a positive result

## **Outpatient**

- 20. If you were referred to outpatients, what was this for
  - a. Trauma and Orthopaedics

- b. Neurology
- c. Neurosurgery
- d. Rheumatology
- e. Biomechanics

21. How was this process for you?

- a. Was the reason for your referral explained
- b. Was the appointment arranged for you
- c. How long did it take to get an appointment
- d. On the day, was the appointment on time
- e. On the day, was the appointment too short, about right or too long

22. Has this resulted in an improvement in your condition?

23. Could you offer any suggestions or improvements for future patients?

24. Overall how would you sum up your experience of this service

- a. Has your condition improved
- b. Would you be happy and confident to go through this service again as it is at the moment

## MSK – Non pilot patients

**N1- Patients went to IMATT then onto outpatients**

**N2 – Patients went to IMATT then onto physio**

### Ice – breaker

1. Thinking about an average day in your life, before your treatments, how did your musculoskeletal pain affect your daily activity?
  - a. It didn't
  - b. Worse/better at different times of day
  - c. Worry/lack of confidence to do things
  - d. More careful about what you do physically – inside the home, outside the home, at work

### Pathway experience

2. After diagnosis, how much did the GP tell you about what would happen next eg: referrals to physio, outpatients, waiting times etc?

### NuTH Community Physiotherapy

3. For those patients that were referred on to physiotherapy
  - a. How long did it take to get an appointment? What are your thoughts about the waiting times?
  - b. Was this referral what you wanted?
  - c. What information did you receive?
4. What was your experience during your treatments/assessments?
  - a. Where were you treated? Were you given a choice?
  - b. How easy or difficult was it for you to get there?
  - c. Would you have preferred to be seen somewhere else? Where? Why?
  - d. How were the staff/physiotherapist?
  - e. Were the staff/physiotherapist aware of your condition prior to attending?
  - f. How was any information / advice / exercises given to you? How useful was this
    - i. Verbally
    - ii. Written
5. How was the treatment itself? Not enough? too much? about right?
6. Did the physiotherapy resolve your problem?
  - a. If yes and you were discharged, what advice were you given about how to maintain your condition?
  - b. If no,
    - i. Why do you think this was?
    - ii. Did you complete your physiotherapy treatment? If not, why was this?

- iii.
  - iv. What happened next? Were you referred onto IMATT (Intermediate Musculoskeletal Assessment and Treatment Team)
7. Could you offer any suggestions or ways to improve the NuTH Community Physiotherapy service for future users? What worked well, what could be improved?

### **IMATT (Intermediate Musculoskeletal Assessment and Treatment Team)**

8. If you were referred to IMATT, how did you find this referral?
- a. Did NuTH Community Physiotherapy recommend this referral?
    - i. How long did you have to wait for your IMATT appointment (too long, ok etc)?
    - ii. What information were you given?
  - b. Did you go straight into IMATT from your GP?
    - i. How long did you have to wait for your appointment (too long, ok)?
    - ii. What information were you given?
9. How was your appointment?
- a. Where were you treated? Were you given a choice?
  - b. How easy or difficult was it for you to get there?
  - c. Would you have preferred to be seen somewhere else? Where? Why?
  - d. How were the staff/physiotherapist?
  - e. Were the staff/physiotherapist aware of your condition prior to attending?
  - f. How was any information / advice / exercises given to you? How useful was this
    - i. Verbally
    - ii. Written
10. After your assessment, were you referred elsewhere or discharged?
- i. How did you feel about this?
  - b. If you were referred on, where was this to:
    - i. MRI
    - ii. Physiotherapy
    - iii. Outpatients
 And how did you feel about this?
  - c. If you were discharged, were you advised on how to maintain your condition?
11. Do you have any suggestions to improving IMATT for future patients? What worked well, what could be improved?

### **MRI**

12. If you were referred to have an MRI, how was this experience?
- a. Was the appointment arranged for you?

- b. How long did it take to get an appointment for your MRI?
- c. Was it at a time and place that was convenient?
- d. Was the appointment on time?
- e. Could your experience have been improved?

## **Outpatient**

- 13. When you were referred to outpatients, what was this for:
  - a. Trauma and Orthopaedics
  - b. Neurology
  - c. Neurosurgery
  - d. Rheumatology
  - e. Biomechanics
  
- 14. How was this process for you?
  - a. Was the reason for your referral explained ?
  - b. Was the appointment arranged for you?
  - c. How long did it take to get an appointment?
  - d. On the day, was the appointment on time?
  - e. On the day, was the appointment too short, about right or too long?
  
- 15. Has this resulted in an improvement in your condition?
  
- 16. Could you offer any suggestions or improvements for future patients?
  
- 17. Overall how would you sum up your experience of this service?
  - a. Has your condition improved?
  - b. Would you be happy and confident to go through this service again as it is at the moment?



## Musculoskeletal Pilot Pathways Questionnaire responses

This section contains the responses of the interviewees whose musculoskeletal conditions were treated via a pilot pathway (including telephone-based physiotherapy advice and triage service, practice-based physiotherapy and secondary care consultants).

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1 Thinking about an average day in your life, before your treatments, how did your musculoskeletal pain affect your daily activity?

- I had daily back pain, worse if I did certain activities. If I did house work, shopping or gardening I would have to stop and stretch, shopping was back breaking. I would use pain killers, had Rheumatoid Arthritis so I had pain killers but would also use anything I thought would help such as sprays
- It was terrible, two sore knees, it was bad, I looked like an old woman. I had the problem for a while before I had it looked at
- It was very dependent on the time of day, my back was worse early morning
- It was very painful, any reaching or stretching involving my shoulder was very painful
- I have had the problem for 20 odd years, but in January my back gave way
- I had hip pain when I was walking and sleeping, and when I stood up after sitting down for a while
- I had fluid on one knee. It was very tiring and draining, and I couldn't do my work properly (I'm a cleaner)
- I've been getting a lot of knee pain. It comes on every few days
- I had a lot of pain in my left knee. It was painful to walk on, and I need to be mobile in my job so it was a problem
- I've been to the physio for loads of things
- Previously crippled with pain, got acupuncture and it went away but then it came back so I went to my GP
- Back pain. Things are not much better now
- I had a constant nagging pain
- It gets worse as the day goes on, I have arthritis in both hips which is going down my legs
- I'm still in lots of pain, I am waiting for a hip operation
- Not daily pain, but periodically from a long-term condition
- Quite a lot, I've got lower back as well as knee issues so it limits walking
- I had ankle pain and used to run a lot. It only affected me after running
- I used to do a lot of running and I can't do that anymore
- In every way
- Can't walk far, can't go anywhere or sleep, it affects me constantly
- It is one of a long list of complications because I suffer from a number of conditions, but I am in constant pain from my spine and hip. This has all escalated since I had an accident in December 2011. After that I had a year of physiotherapy at the RVI and that did no good at all so I went back to the GP and said I needed something different
- I had pains in my shoulder, going down my arm. And I was getting pins and needles in my fingers. It was very painful and affecting my sleep, and it also made it hard for me to use my computer at work

- I've not actually had treatment yet, I'm still on painkillers for problems with my toes. I'm in considerable pain that stops me from doing a lot of day to day things. The painkillers have helped but the doctors seem to think they're the answer to all problems
- Damaged nerves
- I had problems with my fingers which were bearable, but I just wanted to know why
- I had a lot of pain – it kept me awake
- Work involves fairly heavy lifting so it affected me a lot

## **2 After diagnosis, how much did the GP tell you about what would happen next?**

- I called my GP to arrange physiotherapy, the receptionist then called me back and gave me the phone number (PhysioLine). My doctors lets me manage my own care. When I spoke to connect they explained what it was and what would happen
- Yes, told me I would be referred and I went to physiotherapy next door. They (Connect) got in touch and sent me a letter explaining who they were and what they do, they gave me an appointment time and information on how to change it but it was fine
- My GP referred me to PhysioLine, just gave me the number and I was told to give them a call. He didn't really explain the service
- He gave me the number to call to see what they had to say
- My GP came out to see me and gave me a leaflet and told me to call them, did describe the service to me
- She said I had some kind of muscular spasm, and she thought I should ring the telephone physiotherapy line. She gave me a very fair explanation of what that was, and also suggested some exercises
- He gave me a leaflet with the phone number on, and explained what would happen
- Enough. I understood what was going to happen
- She explained about the telephone physio and gave me the number
- I've been referred many times before so I knew what would happen next
- They said they would refer me to a physio, that someone would ring me to make an appointment
- My GP didn't tell me what was going to happen, but that was ok
- Just referred me to X-ray at the Cowgate Walk in Centre. The results came back in 7 or 8 days - arthritis was diagnosed. He told me I would be referred to physiotherapy
- My GP told me that a physio would call me in 48 hours
- Can't remember - I have short term memory loss after my daughter died
- I was told someone would ring me
- Gave a leaflet and explained what would happen
- I was told what would happen next, even who I would see at my surgery. I was given a choice of a male or female and got a confirmation letter
- I was told I would receive a phone call from the physio, but that was all
- I was told to ring a number and given a leaflet and it was really easy
- GP didn't say much, I was just given a leaflet
- No, not really
- Just referred to physio, that was it
- No, not really – I was just told I'd be going for physio

## **CONNECT PHYSIOLINE**

### **3 What was your initial feeling about this referral?**

- I was happy about it, but for some I think they might struggle. I was given the opportunity to ask questions or go to different venues/locations. Talking over the phone was more convenient, it cut waiting times
- No bother, I was happy to speak to a physiotherapist over the phone
- I have had this condition before in my other shoulder and had 6 months' worth of treatments at the hospital, I was a bit sceptical, I felt I should have gone straight so see someone
- It was fine, I had no problem about calling them I was fine about having a consultation over the phone
- I thought it sounded like a good idea
- I was fine with it. GPs don't know much about this kind of thing, so it's much better to speak to someone who does
- I thought it was a good idea. Like ringing the doctor, only an extension of that because you'd see the right person
- Fine, I was happy to ring them
- I was happy about this
- I didn't think it would work but I was shocked at how thorough it was
- I received a telephone call and was directed to Westerhope Surgery but they did not realise it was difficult for me to get to. I was given no information/no phone consultation just an appointment followed by a letter which had more information in it, for example if I didn't ring up to confirm the appointment it would be cancelled
- How would I explain my symptoms over the phone? It was very difficult to explain them. I was given a useful leaflet about the service
- They rang and assessed me over the phone
- I can't remember
- I half expected it, problem has been ongoing for years. The information was enough but it felt like the over the phone consultation was a money saving exercise rather than face to face contact
- I was only told I would receive a call so I was fine with that and was fine with having a consultation over the phone
- I was told I would get over the phone advice and man was really nice. I was fine with it over the phone
- I was happy to see what happens, happy to get something done. I wasn't bothered by the lack of information from the GP as I thought I would get it from the physio. I thought the idea of phone consultation was strange, thought I should be seen face to face really
- I felt all right about it - I was desperate to get something done
- I was fine about it, I just wanted my back pain sorted
- I was happy to ring

#### **4 When you first called Physioline, what was your experience?**

- I got through straight away, nothing stands out in my memory so it must have gone smoothly
- No bother, got through smoothly
- He was pleasant enough, but I chose not to follow up the phone call, they sent me some exercises but they are too painful
- I got through straight away, it was fine
- I rang as soon as I got home, and I got through straight away
- My call was answered straight away and I was able to organise a follow-up call from the specialist

- I rang two days later and made an appointment. It was all very quick and easy
- I called them, they arranged a time and date for a return call - but they didn't ring. I gave them 24 hours then called again. They had the wrong number
- They rang me to make an appointment
- They called me asked all the right questions and got me to move sideways/backwards all trying to get me to stretch the base of my spine
- They phoned me x 2
- I was concerned because I was in so much pain. They made me an appointment to see a physio
- I was given an appointment to ring back, which was fine
- I rang up and left a voicemail and they called me back really quickly
- It was quick and helpful
- I didn't have to wait long for my call to be answered x 2
- No problems at all

**5 When you arranged your follow up, were you given a convenient time? Was it easy to change this if you needed to?**

- They offered me a time and called on time, it felt very comfortable and I was asked it was convenient for me
- I didn't have a follow up, just that first phone call x 2
- I don't recall x2
- It was fine, and it all worked smoothly
- Yes, and he rang me four days later, exactly as we had arranged
- Yes, we made an appointment and I didn't need to change it
- When we arranged a new date and time they rang back exactly as we arranged
- This didn't happen as I didn't want it because I couldn't choose which GP practice it would be at and I really wanted a female Physio because my pain was in my groin. I'm in my 70s and feel it's not right for a man to be looking at that area
- No follow up arrange but they did say if it didn't get any better I could just ring them back
- They phoned me
- Had an assessment the day after I'd initially called so it was very quick
- Got a follow up assessment at a more convenient time
- It was a convenient time for me x3

**6 How did you find the person you spoke to?**

- Yes, easy to talk to, he was very sympathetic, easy to understand – he didn't use jargon
- He was easy to understand and I was given a number to call back on if I needed any more information. The information I got ( I was posted some exercise sheets) was also easy to understand
- Yeah, easy to talk to, and he understood me and I understood him - he didn't use any jargon. The information leaflet I was posted, I already had
- Really good. We had a long conversation and I got a lot of very good advice. He sent me a sheet of exercises, with the most useful ones marked. And he'd also been through them with me on the phone
- Very nice, and also very thorough. They asked lots of questions and I felt confident about it
- Very good, very thorough
- Everything was fine x 2
- Excellent telephone manner
- Very pleasant, easy to understand
- Easy to talk to and understand

- Easy to talk to but it felt a bit rushed, did still feel like they were listening
- The assessment was really good, he knew what he was talking about and was narrowing symptoms down as he asked questions and understood the condition. The physio talked about my trainers and footwear - it was really good
- I was given exercises and the physio was really easy to talk to and explained everything
- Professional
- Helpful x 2

## **7 How long were you on the phone for – was this too long, too short or about right?**

- It was just to the point, they asked me to tell them what happened and gave me the chance to ask questions
- It was fine, I was able to ask any questions I had
- 45 minutes. Very thorough, and it felt like enough time
- About half an hour. He asked quite a few questions and I felt he was taking an interest. He suggested exercises, because I wasn't in constant pain so he didn't think I needed 1to1 treatment. I do the exercises a bit, and I also do a lot of walking
- Several phone calls, so different times. But they were all helpful
- 20 minutes on the phone, I was surprised by how long, they explained they were a physio
- less than 5 minutes but this was the right amount of time
- Allocated a half hour slot and they were 15 minutes late ringing, I thought they had forgotten. When they did ring, they tried to rush the appointment into the last 15 minutes
- Only about 10 minutes but that was just fine as I got all the information I needed
- It was the right amount of time, I explained all my symptoms and got an appointment to see a physio at the surgery
- It was about right x 6

## **8 Did calling Physioline help you?**

- It didn't really help, I feel this kind of problem would just go away on its own by just doing your normal daily activities
- The exercises helped my back
- Not really, I have had problems for years. They recommended what I should do and said I could call back if it didn't improve but I just put up with it
- Yes, definitely. I was also supposed to have a follow up 5 months afterwards, but I haven't arranged that yet. My GP has booked me an x-ray now, and we think I should have another call with Physioline
- Yes. They also suggested that I should see a physiotherapist face to face
- Yes, it was much better to talk to someone who understood about it. He was very good, and said I could ring again if I needed. He also said there were other things they could try, so I didn't feel I'd reached the end of the road
- No because of me wanting a woman I didn't go any further with it
- No my spine is dropping, it may have helped if I did the exercises but I don't do them. I got exercises on a printed sheet that were very good and I was pleased with them
- Yes, I was sent exercises I wasn't referred any further
- Didn't really help. They sent the information to the wrong address, the exercises antagonised the condition so I stopped the exercises and that was it
- Definitely helped. If I had gone to see someone I would have had to wait for an appointment which means I wouldn't have got the exercises straight away. Because I got them over the phone, by the time the sheet arrived in the post, I'd already been doing them so my foot was getting better. The sheet was still useful

- It did help, the exercises were sent out. Told I could call back for more information at any time but I didn't need to
- I felt I had to go through the system and was willing to do that
- Yes, it helped me to get an appointment x 2

## 9 Could you offer any suggestions to improve Physioline for future callers?

- No x 3
- I had no problems, I understood what happened and was happy - all straight forward, but I had experience (as a retired nurse) of working and talking to physiotherapists
- Well no one called me back
- It seemed to be reasonable, they made suggestions and told me to get back in touch if it didn't improve - not sure how they could improve it
- No, it is a very good system and I got very sound advice. I also know someone who went through the telephone line and was also seen personally
- No, it was very good and I really couldn't complain
- It was spot on. No suggestions really. But my right knee hurts now!
- Just to make sure they get the number right. It was frustrating when they didn't call back, and it made them seem a bit unprofessional
- No I recommend it to everyone
- No, but if I needed it again I would prefer to be seen
- I was directed to Westerhope Surgery - I did not realise that it would be difficult for me to get to. They did not explain the location
- It seems like a team of people trying to get through a list of people. You can't get to the bottom of the symptoms over the phone without seeing someone
- Really good. They were enthusiastic when they phoned me which is important. That has to be the case when they ring people, especially for people who are less confident. They need to know they are safe and the physio wants to help
- Fine. My problem was fairly straightforward so others should be seen if it's more complicated
- I gave all my symptoms over the phone and one of them was that I couldn't climb stairs, they made the appointment at a surgery with stairs. I was furious - why had no one listened to me. I did complain and was told that the person on the end of the phone did not know the layout of the surgeries - that is ridiculous they should be told which ones have stairs!

## 10 Overall, how would you sum up your experience of Physioline?

- Good/fine/helpful/can't fault it x 7
- It was very convenient, meant within 48 hours I had an appointment so not much waiting time and I would be happy to use them again
- Not brilliant, it didn't work for me. I think you would have more confidence seeing someone, face to face. You can't point to where it hurts over the phone
- I would be happy to use the service again but I am self-managing
- Very good. And I will ring again if it gets worse, maybe in the winter
- Very good in the end, after the initial problem
- It is a great service and I'm happy that the GPs are doing this
- Very good, apart from the problems with the location
- My condition has improved and I would recommend this service and use it again if I had to
- Everyone was helpful and only doing their job and what they can, but I don't think a phone call is an appropriate way to do it. I wouldn't use the service again, didn't like it
- Suited me. I was happy with it and the exercises worked

- Good, solid service. My foot is better and I would definitely use the service again
- Frustrating to start off with but fine overall

## **CONNECT PHYSIOTHERAPY**

### **11 Whether you were referred directly onto physiotherapy or referred on from Physioline, how did you find this experience?**

- I was given a date and all the details by Phil (over the phone). My past experience (hospital) I waited about a month – this didn't take that long. I had no problems not going to the hospital, if they are properly trained. Plus it was at my surgery and they had a proper physiotherapy room
- I got the appointment within a couple of weeks (three max). I had no problem using a non NHS service I was just happy to be getting looked at
- They suggested that I should see a physiotherapist face to face. But I never got round to making the appointment
- They agreed that I needed to see a physio in person, but it was going to be a 10-day wait so I went private for a few months then contacted them again. This time they referred me to a consultant, who then referred me to a physio at my own surgery. She gave me some exercises to do, and these have helped
- Physioline set up the appointment. It was satisfactory. I was not aware that it was a non NHS service and I am not happy that it is private
- I was referred to Denton Turret
- I was referred to four different physios as each one tried but couldn't help me. They referred me on to another and then another and finally someone senior at Newburn
- I was referred to Stobbs Road, I got my appointment within a week or two I didn't know it was non NHS but it doesn't bother me in the slightest
- Fine the lady showed me exercises and gave me charts to use, got an appointment quickly and although I didn't know it was a non NHS service, that is fine
- Had X-rays so I was referred straight to physio, I had to wait around 5 weeks but was prepared to wait to get the problem sorted. I didn't know it was a non NHS service but doesn't make a difference
- Okay referral process but I didn't get an appointment for six weeks which was too long. And in that time the problem was getting worse
- This referral was fine apart from being sent to a surgery with stairs, the next appointment after that was fine
- The way he arranged it was quite helpful, he asked me where I lived and which surgery I preferred to go to
- Ok, but you only get 10 sessions even if your leg drops off
- The physiotherapy didn't help me at all
- It took a while to get an appointment but once I was in the system it seemed to flow very well. I had to catch a taxi because I couldn't leave my husband on his own (he has Alzheimer's) and it was expensive

### **12 What was your experience during your treatments/assessments?**

- I was given a choice of where I could have the treatment. We talked about what my problem was. I was given exercise sheets and discussed my treatments. My first appointment was mainly spent going through my treatments and explaining the exercise sheets. He answered all my questions and showed me how to do the exercises
- The venue was on my door step so was easy to get there. We talked about everything that was happening to me, the physiotherapist was grand, talked me through everything such as the exercises - he went through everything

- Satisfactory, I was given some exercises to do which were quite hard and painful to do. I was given written instructions on how to do the exercises
- They were all good but none of it helped
- I was treated well
- I was given a choice of where to go but I didn't mind because I can drive. The staff were great and were aware of my condition before I got there. I was given a very useful exercise sheet
- I was treated at doctor's surgery which was convenient, easy to get to and I liked it being there. I had confidence in them and their ability and they explained things in detail from the start, the physio asked questions and gave good verbal advice as well as showing me how to do the exercises
- It was well organised. I was at physio for 8 weeks and was no better. I had physio at Newcastle General then the RVI, but it was easy to get to both. The staff were good but I don't think they had any information about my condition before I went. I did get verbal and written information like a pamphlet, all of which was useful
- People and staff were great but the physio didn't feel like it was helpful for my condition
- The physio said he could help my situation and I believed him and was relieved
- It was a bit of a waste of time but I was prepared to try anything
- Good, I was given written instructions with diagrams to help with the exercises
- Good, fine x 2

### **13 How was the treatment itself: not enough, too much, too little, too short, about right, time between appointments?**

- We both agreed on the last day that it was as far as we could go, we agreed that I would carry on with my exercises and if I needed more treatment I could call up for another appointment
- It was more or less three months(length of treatments), after the first appointment I was not sure it would work but it was smashing it really helped. The physiotherapist was very attentive, even when I turned up with other complaints ( fell in the snow or ice a few times). The time between appointment was about right - you needed time to do the exercises
- When I went back to them after trying a private service I was very happy with the treatment. And I can keep on with the exercises they gave me, whereas the private acupuncture would wear off and I had to pay for another go
- I went to two appointments at Westerhope Surgery and then I was referred Ageing and Vitality at the General to continue physio treatment
- Just about right. I was given written exercises and a steroid injection
- I would have liked a couple of more visits but the physio was happy with my progress and signed me off
- It was an okay time between appointments but the physio wasn't helping the condition
- The treatment wasn't enough but there was a suitable time between appointments
- It was far too long between appointments
- Right amount of time and it was very helpful
- Did not help at all
- The treatments were phased correctly, weekly, fortnightly then monthly

### **14 Did the Physiotherapy resolve your problem?**

- From day 1, I was told they was nothing that could be done - it was more about managing my condition. My condition did improve, when I first went to physiotherapy I was walking with a stick. My medication and acupuncture helped but I then developed a hip problem for which I am now waiting for a replacement

- It helped and I was discharged - but that was down to me, I thought I was well enough. I was told to carry on with my exercises and how to manage my condition
- Yes. It's wear and tear so it won't go away, but the exercises are helping me to manage it
- The physio did not solve my problem but Ageing and Vitality gave me a steroid injection which helped a lot
- Yes. I am not getting any treatment at the moment because I missed the next appointment. Did not get a reminder text. I am still doing the exercises
- Yes, I'm still doing the exercises
- No - physio thought injections would be suitable so I was referred to IMATT
- No they didn't resolve the problem but I did complete the treatment course with them. I went back to my GP to be referred for a MRI scan after that
- After a while we were getting no further, I had a bug over Christmas so rang to cancel a January 2nd appointment as I was still too ill to travel. I asked if I could speak to the physio as I had gotten much worse. I was told "they don't do that". I went back to my GP who rang the physio and got them to ring me. I had an appointment for the end of January and he took one look at me and said I needed to see his supervisor as he didn't think he could help me as I had really gotten much worse. The supervisor was in Long Benton and he referred me for an x-ray, he filled all the papers out and told me to go to reception and they would ring the Freeman. I went but she refused as I wasn't a patient of Long Benton Surgery. Anyway, I got x-rayed and was told I needed a new knee. I was referred to a consultant
- No, went back to my GP to be referred to a consultant
- No x 4
- Yes

**15 Could you offer any suggestions for ways to improve the Physiotherapy service for future users? What worked well, what could be improved?**

- It all worked well, the Physiotherapist's attitude was good, he was calm and you could have a joke with him and he talked you through everything
- Nothing didn't work well – I thought it was excellent. The Physiotherapist was very good, easy to understand, relaxing he was very good. And I still do my exercises
- I think it's very good to have physiotherapists in your own local surgery, so you can see them on the days when they are there
- The location of the venue could have been better explained to me
- They should send reminders like other NHS services. I was relying on the reminder because of my memory loss but did not get it and I have not responded to the letter
- Before things changed my GP would have referred me directly to the hospital and they would have discovered earlier that I needed a hip replacement NOT physiotherapy
- Sometimes I think the physios push you too hard when you're not well and should be more sympathetic to the pain and your condition. They don't know how the person feels
- I am satisfied, her massaging and explanations were really useful
- Service was fine, it just wasn't suitable for treating my condition
- Transport was a problem for me and I had to pay for taxis but the service was good

## IMATT

### 16 If you were referred to IMATT, what did you think about this referral?

- Connect Physiotherapy made this referral for me and I was really happy with this
- I don't remember being referred to IMATT
- They told me that if I didn't do my exercises I would be crippled and wouldn't walk again
- I didn't wait long for an appointment after being referred. The physio consultant was on the ball and did a good thorough examination. He told me he didn't agree with the physio's recommendation for injections and recommended I see a consultant
- Fine really. I waited up to a month for an appointment and would like to have been seen quicker
- Good. I had a pre-assessment with them and then an MRI and a hip x-ray
- I had a bit of a wait before I could get an IMATT appointment, so I used my private health insurance to go to Connect for physiotherapy while I was waiting
- I waited 4 weeks for my appointment which I thought was reasonable. I was sent a letter about what it was and where it was. Though I had been told it would be the General, it was the Freeman
- The appointment was more or less straight away and it was nearby so there wasn't a problem
- Fine x 2

### 17 How was your appointment?

- I went to the general hospital, there was no choice, I would like to have been seen at my GP practice, the staff were very professional and knew what they were doing, they gave me exercises to do which I am still doing now
- I couldn't climb onto the bed
- Went to IMATT at the general hospital which was fine as I travel by car so it was convenient, the staff were very nice and the physio had passed on information about my condition. They did still ask questions to make sure they had all the information
- The appointment was good, only waited a few minutes before going in. It was at the Lemington Health Care Centre which was easy and wouldn't have wanted it to be anywhere else. The staff were good, no problems and I think they had some information already about my condition
- I was sent a letter and because of the fact they used a 24hr clock I missed my appointment. I was thinking 14:00 as being 4 for 4 o'clock
- I wasn't given any choice and would have chosen the General, as my GP had told me. It was harder for me to get to the Freeman and travelling is difficult with my condition. Once I was there the staff were fine, really good and asked me a lot of questions. I got a good sense they knew what they were talking about, whereas GPs just think painkillers are the answer. The staff had read my notes and were aware of my issues
- I wasn't given a choice but it was nearby anyway. The staff were great, really friendly and were aware of my condition. I was given verbal and written information
- My appointment was easy apart from taxi's there and back. I have given up using ambulances, they are irregular and I have to wait too long with my husband
- Good/fine x 2

### 18 After your assessment, were you referred elsewhere or discharged?

- I was given an injection x 2
- I was referred to a consultant and given an x-ray and I have arthritis, I have asked about acupuncture and the consultant thinks this would be ok

- Discharged to see a consultant but I was fine with that as it was progress and I was getting somewhere
- I was referred to a consultant x 2
- I was referred to a consultant for my spine, and another for my hip
- I was referred for an MRI. The results then went back to IMATT
- I was told I would have to go for an MRI scan and an appointment was sent through in the post
- I was referred back to a consultant and am still managing on painkillers

**19 Do you have any suggestions for improving IMATT for future patients? What worked well, what could be improved?**

- I was late for my appointment and he wouldn't see me, I had to go back to a physiotherapist
- My biggest criticism is the way IMATT dealt with me on the phone when they called with the MRI results. It was not a good call. It was someone I had never spoken to, they told me the facts in a way that made me think something was seriously wrong and they used terms I didn't understand. it wasn't explained properly at all
- The nature of the problems means that the service should be as near to the patient as possible
- Good/fine x 4
- No, I feel I was treated really well and am grateful

**MRI**

**20 If you were referred to have an MRI scan, how was this experience?**

- Experience was fine, it was arranged for me, took about 2-3 weeks which was good and convenient. Good experience. Only just had the scan so waiting to see a consultant now
- Had three different MRI scans, one after my physio, then I had another after being referred by my GP, then I had another after I'd seen my consultant. The first one was unpleasant because it was an old machine so it took ages, but the second and third time it was fine. Although it's been 4 months since my last one and I'm still waiting to see the consultant to get my results
- It gave them the information they needed and helped them to decide what to do next. My only regret is that I didn't ask for it sooner - my son told me last year that I should, and he was right
- The scan was at the Nuffield and I only had to wait a couple of weeks for it. It was good, apart from the way the results were given to me.
- My appointment came through the post. I only had to wait about 10 days which was good. I had no choice over date, location though and it was at the Nuffield which was really hard to get to as I didn't know where it was. They should give consideration of where people live. I can't fault the service once I got there and was seen on time. I was phoned up with results of photos
- Fine

**SECONDARY CARE CONSULTANT**

**21 If you were referred to see a consultant, how was this experience?**

- Good. And he referred me to the physio at my surgery, which has worked well for me
- Good, I'm waiting for my next appointment to see him and it's been a while so I might chase that up

- I got a letter about an appointment and the appointment was quite soon after my referral but it was at Ivy Road in Gosforth. There was a steep staircase and the chair lift had been locked at the top so I would have preferred somewhere easier. The appointment was about 30 minutes with very little wait to go in. The consultant resolved my problems, I have been for a pre-med and am due to have an operation soon
- No problem with the first appointment apart from it taking about two months which I expected but then I was sent for a scan and when I arrived for my appointment I had to wait three hours and instead of going for a scan, they'd mixed the appointments up and I went to see the consultant which was a waste of time. They rearranged the scan and I did get an appointment quickly, but that should have happened the first time
- Good but I got a shock as the consultant said that there was so much wrong with my foot that he didn't know where to start, which unnerved me. The appointment was arranged and I had to wait six weeks. I just wish they would do things sooner, the whole process has dragged on for two years
- The consultant hadn't released his dates for June and May was full, his secretary kept saying, "he's been away" or "he'll do them soon". I waited ages in agony, finally went back to my GP who rang and was told the same thing. I asked my GP for any knee consultant and within two weeks I was having my operation at Hexham
- Both consultants have been excellent
- Very good, he referred me on to a physio so most of my treatment after that was with a physio
- Fine but I was told I would get an appointment for a nerve blocker injection September but when I rang secretary was told "he tells everyone 'September', you are non-emergency it could take 7 months. I am very distressed about this because I have no quality of life
- Since my MRI I've been referred back to see a consultant at the Freeman. It's been three months since my MRI and I've still not seen anyone. In the meantime I've been to A+E twice with my problem
- An appointment was made for me and I didn't have to wait long. I don't think the service could be improved other than treating my condition might cause more damage so I'm still managing with painkillers

## OUTPATIENTS

### 22 If you were referred to Outpatients, what was this for?

- Physiotherapy x 2

### 23 How was this process for you?

- She was excellent. While I was seeing her, the pain transferred to the other shoulder and the consultant arranged a CT scan. I was put on medication but it knocked me out, so between us we worked out a way for me to reduce the dosage and control it through exercise
- I was treated at the hospital which was convenient and I didn't wait long for my appointment when I got there. The staff were really helpful and I was given exercises - shown how to do them and given a sheet

### 24 Has this resulted in an improvement in your condition?

- It's been 5-6 months and I'm still only on painkillers and have broken 2 more toes since
- Yes

**25 Could you offer any suggestions for improvements for future patients?**

- Fine with the consultant, very happy with the service but I have arthritis so there's not much that can be done

**OVERALL**

**26 Overall, how would you sum up your experience of this service?**

- Very happy with the service overall, apart from only being able to have a certain number of physio sessions



## Non-pilot pathway Questionnaire responses

This section includes responses from the xx interviewees who are patients of non-pilot practices, and whose musculoskeletal conditions were treated via traditional referral pathways and physiotherapy services based at Newcastle hospitals.

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1 Thinking about an average day in your life, before your treatments, how did your musculoskeletal pain affect your daily activity?

- I suffer from arthritis - my knees are bad. I also have back pain which means I could only walk for 5mins max, even sitting was painful
- I've been having bad pains in my back, and they were getting worse
- I had trapped a nerve in my elbow, so I couldn't grip or lift things. It was very frustrating
- Back pain, can't sleep, can't stand for long. I also have neck problem but that is not too bad
- I had difficulty walking
- Two very painful knees, both with damaged cartilages
- I've had previous osteoporosis problems and had hurt my ankle. My tablets were making me sick but now I'm on concentrated vitamins that seem to work better
- Trying to sort out the pain with painkillers
- I was in a bit of pain
- Patient couldn't remember x 1
- No reply x 1

#### 2 After diagnosis, how much did the GP tell you about what would happen next?

- I got the diagnosis after my x-ray. I've been kept informed and haven't had to wait long for my appointments
- I was told I would be going to IMATT and would see a physiotherapist or get referred to a consultant
- My GP gave me a choice of locations and times so I went to Ponteland Road. He didn't give me a leaflet but he did tell me it was IMATT
- It was all explained to me. And he suggested exercises that I could do in the meantime, before I started my physio
- I was aware that I was being referred for physio
- He referred me for an x-ray
- The appointment was fine - the doctor told me he was going to refer me to physio
- He rang for an appointment for me

### NuTH PHYSIOTHERAPY

#### 2 What was your experience during your treatment?

- My GP referred me to a physio, and he said there was nothing wrong with my back. So he sent me for an x-ray and they found a benign tumour on my left hip
- Good. I had to wait a couple of weeks, but that was ok

## Appendix 3b

- I was referred to the Molineux. - It was fine - I went by bus
- Very good so far
- Very good. the physio was very nice and very thorough. I thought she was excellent
- I have no complaints against the physio, I can't fault her. But I never felt my condition was being properly reassessed
- No complaints, the staff are always very helpful and friendly
- Good but the physio couldn't do much because of the pain I was experiencing
- Good

### **3 How was the treatment itself: not enough, too much, too little, too short, about right, time between appointments?**

- I am waiting for the operation now (to remove a tumour), but all my appointments have come much quicker than I expected
- Excellent. I needed three sessions in all, a week apart each time and each time she assessed the improvement. The problem was relieved by the third appointment
- I have two conditions so the exercises for one condition actually exacerbated the other condition
- The treatment was not proving very effective because of the pain I was in
- About right

### **5 Did the physiotherapy resolve your problem?**

- No x 2
- No because it wasn't that kind of problem. But the physio could see that and referred me on for the x-ray
- Yes. I'm still getting some physiotherapy for my neck, and it's all helping
- I missed the appointment
- The physiotherapy really helped me - I only had one treatment and they showed me how to do the exercises

### **6 Could you offer any suggestions or ways to improve the NuTH Community Physiotherapy service for future users. What worked well, what could be improved?**

- No, it was good. I've got a problem with my neck now and I'm disappointed not to be still at the top of the waiting list!
- I was happy with the service. I did not know I had a choice of where to go
- It should be incorporated into the practice, closer to home. Home visits are ok but there isn't always the room to do the exercises. If it's at the GP and there are problems, the Dr can find out straight away
- I was happy with the service but I was then referred somewhere for a scan but to be honest did not go because I have been diagnosed with cancer
- No suggestions, I was happy with the service

## **IMATT**

### **7 If you were referred to IMATT, what did you think of the referral?**

- I was not referred to IMATT x 3
- I got a letter and the system seemed quite good, I was given the chance to change. It took about two weeks to get the appointment. I don't recall a flyer
- Good
- I only waited three days for my appointment

## **8 How was your appointment?**

- The assessor was good, he listened and didn't use any jargon. But he didn't have any of my records - I had previously had an MRI but he didn't have a copy and his secretary didn't really try to get a copy - I called up my surgery and got a copy for him. But without my records then what would be the point?
- Fine. I was referred for an MRI Scan. It was difficult to find IMATT in the General and it is hard to walk from the bus to IMATT
- Fine, they were very professional and explained everything to me. I didn't get any written information about them so no leaflet, and they didn't give me anything to take away with me

## **9 After your assessment, were you referred elsewhere or discharged?**

- I was referred to see a consultant. I told him who and where I wanted to go . My daughter then called up as I had not received a letter in a few weeks and she was told there was a long waiting list and she asked about any cancellations. But I then received a letter telling me that I would be seeing some else at a different hospital. I tried to then contact the assessor to understand they this was, but was told I would have to make another appointment, that would have been in two weeks - a waste of time. I even called his surgery directly but was told, quite rudely that since I wasn't a registered patients I was not able to talk to him. I ended up going private to see the consultant I wanted. I am now on a waiting list for surgery (received a letter) when I agreed to try some injections not surgery. Now I am just waiting to see what happens
- MRI scan
- I was x-rayed and then sent back to my GP who then referred my onto a consultant at the RVI - I am getting a new shoulder on Friday

## **10 Do you have any suggestions to improve IMATT for future patients? What worked well, what could be improved?**

- They should have access to your records prior your assessment - all my records should have been available, they need to full picture. Also you should be able to contact the assessor to understand or question your referral
- No
- It was ok as far as it went. But I think there has been some miscommunication along the way
- Everything went smoothly and I had no problems and didn't have to wait very long at all

## **11 If you were referred for an MRI scan, how did you find the experience?**

- Did not attend
- My appointment is at the end of August

## OUTPATIENTS

### 12 If you were referred to outpatients, what was this for?

- I went to the hospital where they made impressions of my feet but I struggled to wear the lifts. It was painful
- Rheumatism
- To see a physio

### 13 How was this process for you?

- I think mainly the problem was that my original query was never passed on. On reflection, I should have pressed harder for answers, but you expect your notes to have been read by people who see you
- Good x 2

### 14 Has this resulted in an improvement in your condition?

- Yes - I had an injection which was great but has now started to wear off.
- I have another appointment for November
- No

### 15 Could you offer any suggestions for improvements for future patients?

- A better understanding of the time scales and they don't seem very flexible for the patient
- No
- My main concern was that my original knee operation may have caused some nerve damage, and I wanted both knees to be reassessed. But that message never seemed to get across

### 16 Overall, how would you sum up your experience of this service?

- I think the service has been fantastic so far - I have been seen very quickly and it didn't take long to get a diagnosis
- It has been a fairly lengthy process to get to the MRI scan but overall I am pleased. I did not know I had a choice of where to go for IMATT
- I am very happy and will be better after Friday
- OK as far as it went. But I am no further forward and now I am thinking of going privately
- I'm happy but it would be better if all appointments were at my practice
- I have other problems so the doctor is just trying out painkillers to help the pain in my hip (a bit of spina bifida). I am also suffering from depression so feel as if I couldn't be bothered to go for the scan. The treatment did not work but that was down to me and my other problems
- Happy with my treatment and I am no longer in pain. I followed physio's advice and did the exercises. That is all I needed
- Happy with it x 3

