

MSK Pathway Redesign

First contact physiotherapist FCP Specialist MSK Physiotherapy service:

This is an **assessment** and advise service for those people registered with a GP surgery in Dacorum region, who have a musculoskeletal problem such as:

- Back or neck pain- radiating arm and leg pain in absence of recent change in bowel, bladder and sexual function (Cauda Equina Syndrome).
- Sprains or strains- ankle and shoulder sprain, wrist sprain etc
- Sports injuries- hamstring, quadriceps, Achilles tendon or knee ligament injury
- Joint or muscle pain- shoulder, knee, hip, ankle, elbow, wrist

What is a musculoskeletal first contact physiotherapist? A typical FCP appointment involves assessment, diagnosis and first-line management. FCPs can also refer patients for a course of physiotherapy treatment, order investigations or make referrals into secondary care services using the same pathways as GPs. Some FCPs are also able to independently prescribe and provide injection therapy.

As a person-centred service, most appointments include self-management advice, social prescribing, and discussions about physical activity and fitness for work.

The First Contact Practitioner Physiotherapist (FCP) role:

The role of the FCP in primary care is to assess patients with soft tissue, muscle and joint pain and to decide on the most appropriate management pathway. This is to promote early access and right person at the right time at right place.

In most cases, you do not **need to see your GP** with these kinds of problems, so book an appointment in the with FCP **instead** of with your doctor. The service will provide you with a thorough assessment and advice about the best path of care for you.

How FCP differs from other services

FCP and direct access / self-referral to MSK services: Unlike FCP, direct access / self-referral services are accessed by patients who know they need to see a clinician MSK expertise. The latter usually consists of a course of treatment, **whereas FCP consultations primarily provide assessment, diagnosis and management advice.** Because most people with an MSK issue still go to their GP first, even when they can self-refer, these services do not significantly reduce demand on GPs.

MSK triage services: Clinical MSK triage services provide specialist clinical assessment of patients often carried out by advanced MSK physiotherapists or GPs with Special Interest. Whilst some specialist assessment and investigations may be delivered by FCPs (advanced MSK physiotherapists), a proportion of patients will still

require specialist assessment (Rheumatology, pain management) and investigation (MRI/US).

Where are the FCP clinics?

The clinics are offered from a wide range of sites across the Dacorum area and usually in your or nearby GP surgery. Your doctor's surgery will arrange appointment for you in the FCP clinic at preferred location.

How do I access the service?

You can book an appointment directly with the FCP through your doctor's reception team. You should ask for the **FCP appointment**, and in many cases, these will take place in your own practice. In some instances, you may be offered an appointment in a nearby clinic, but this will not affect the care you will receive.

What if I think I need surgery or to see a hospital Consultant?

The FCP work very closely with MSK service (Connect Health). This means that if clinically indicated, you will be referred to Connect health who will triage and refer on directly to Orthopaedics or Rheumatology is needed. Your FCP will discuss your options with you and help you reach the decision of what is best for you.

Benefits to service user

- Quick access to expert MSK assessment, diagnosis, treatment & advice.
- Prevention of short-term problems becoming long-term conditions.
- Improved patient experience.
- A shorter pathway, so patients have fewer appointments to attend.
- Simple logistics, so patients are less likely to miss appointments, or to suffer administrative errors.
- Opportunity to gain lifestyle/physical activity advice.
- Longer appointment times, meaning patients feel listened to, cared for and reassured.

MSK Pathway redesign:

The introduction of **First Contact Physiotherapist (FCPs)** is redesign of the MSK pathway. It should not add further steps in the pathway, but rather reduce the steps and speed up the time it takes for a patient to receive the services they require.

The diagram below presents an example of the timescales with an FCP as part of the pathway, compared to a traditional MSK pathway. It is based on case studies of FCP early pilots.

Traditional MSK pathway	Pathway with FCP
Patient has an MSK problem	Patient has an MSK problem
	
Patient visits GP who offers analgesia and advice	Patient contacts GP surgery who offer appointment with a FCP- within 1-2 weeks
	
If Patient returns to GP with unresolved problem	Patient receives advice, analgesia, and 6-8-week exercise prescription. At the same time is advised on meds and imaging if referred (X-ray, bloods).
	
Patient referred to physiotherapy, 6-8 week wait. Then undertakes telephone or face to face and undergoes 8-12 weeks of treatment	If no improvement, referred to MSK service for either physio or for referral to secondary care through Connect Health. Total waiting time for patient 10 weeks
	
Problem unresolved, patient referred to CATS service, 4-6 week waiting time.	
	
Patient referred for diagnostic imaging and informed of results 5 -6 week	
	
Referred for surgical opinion. Total waiting time for patient 24 weeks	