

Self-referral to Outpatient Physiotherapy in Dorset

- As part of the Dorset wide Physiotherapy services review we have been working to enable self-referral to Outpatient Physiotherapy consistently across Dorset.
- This process has been shown to save GP time, money and workload and create further efficiency savings in Physiotherapy (see below). The Quality, Innovation, Productivity and Prevention (QIPP) programme in England has endorsed self-referral for musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) to give patients easier access to treatment. Self-referral to Physiotherapy currently operates in parts of Dorset and many locations across the country.
- The service will be available from the **1st July 2020** to all patients with a Dorset GP.
- Currently this referral route excludes patients requiring specialist Physiotherapy. If your patient requires Womens and Mens Health, Neurological, Respiratory or Paediatric Physiotherapy they will require a direct referral to your local specialist service.
- If a patient contacts the practice directly or via e consult regarding a musculoskeletal condition please encourage them to use the self-management resources on our website www.msksdorset.nhs.uk where they will be able to find the self-referral form on the home page if required.
- An information leaflet (attached) is available to provide to patients, electronically or by hand, explaining the new process.
- Self-referral may not be appropriate for your patient. You may wish to provide us with some specific information. In this instance please complete a referral in your usual way, **or** you may like to use the electronic *Healthcare Professional Referral Form* at www.msksdorset.nhs.uk. Here you can upload and attach a file or existing referral form template. The referral will be sent electronically to the patients requested Physiotherapy team.
- If the patient does not have access to the internet, and they do not have a friend or relative able and appropriate to help them the patient can use a paper self-referral form (attached). The patient should obtain from the surgery, complete, and hand back to your administration team where it should be attached to the *Healthcare Professional Referral Form* at www.msksdorset.nhs.uk
- On receipt of the referral a senior Physiotherapist will triage the information within 1 working day according to the condition and severity. Urgent (within 2-5 days) Soon (within 10-14 days) Routine (within 6 weeks).
- This process replaces any previous self-referral systems and forms currently in place. If you hold a self-referral form on your Practice website which your patients would normally refer through, please could you remove this and replace with the link to the self-referral form located on the MSK Matters website.
- We hope you find the new system valuable. If you have any questions or concerns please contact us at msk@dorsetccg.nhs.uk

Self-referral evidence and benefits for GPs

Self-referral saves GP time, money and workload.



Up to **30%** of GP consultations are for **musculoskeletal problems**. Self-referral frees up time

Self-referral: key considerations for GPs

Up to 30% of GP consultations are for people with musculoskeletal problems. Patient self-referral to physiotherapy frees up GP time

- Self-referral reduces associated administration costs and gives patients faster access
- GP-suggested self referral allows patients to make their own choices - patients like it!

Self-referral: key considerations for employers

- Self-referral returns employees to work quickly
- People who self-refer to physiotherapy take fewer days off and are 50% less likely to be off for more than a month compared to conventional GP referral
- Quick access is key. Evidence shows that early intervention for low back pain returns employees to work up to five weeks earlier, with a 40% reduction in recurrence the following year

Self-referral: delivering value to patients

- Self-referral puts individuals in control of their care, promoting self-management and health-focused behaviour
- People with complex and long-term conditions have a simple route in and out of services. It gives patients an easy route back into the service
- Evidence shows better treatment outcomes

Patient self-referral: saving time and saving money

'Allowing patients to self-refer reduces the overall musculoskeletal workload for GP practices. This frees up appointment slots in busy clinics.'

Dr Lenden, Plymouth

The Quality, Innovation, Productivity and Prevention (QIPP) programme in England has endorsed self-referral for musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) to give patients easier access to treatment.

Self-referral saves money

Research on the cost savings of self-referral in Scotland showed an average saving of approximately £2 million each year, considering the costs of patient self-referral were calculated as £66.31 per episode compared to GP referral at £88.99.



The QIPP process updated the costs above in accordance with Department of Health (2011), showing savings of £25,207 per 100,000 people as a result of reducing GP contact, unnecessary prescribing and diagnostic imaging. It also highlighted that the demand for physiotherapy did not increase in the long term.

QIPP also showed that an episode of GP-suggested self-referral costs 10% less and an episode of patient self-referral costs 25% less than traditional GP referral.

The English pilot showed 41% of MSD physiotherapy referrals came from the traditional GP route, 35.4% came from GP-prompted self-referral and 23.6% full self-referrals (patient refers themselves to physiotherapy without being told or prompted by a health care professional).

This evidence shows the potential for even greater cost savings in the management of patients with MSDs if full Self-referral were more widely implemented.

Self-referral: building the national picture

Results from national self-referral projects in England and Scotland have shown that it's a less expensive model of physiotherapy care than the GP referral route. Self-referral increases user satisfaction and reduces the number of other healthcare interventions such as MRI and x-rays.



Self-referral also reduces sickness absence and time off work. It's cost-effective in terms of patient time and commitments, and helps to streamline other care pathways.

By promoting autonomous decision-making about personal health needs, self-referral can enhance motivation for recovery, enabling speedier return to previous health status.

It also has the potential to provide opportunities for targeting particular groups with health needs, such as farmers or minority populations.