

# Advanced Physiotherapy Practitioner consultation as an alternative to GP consultation for patients with Musculoskeletal Conditions

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## BACKGROUND

General Practice is currently experiencing considerable capacity and sustainability challenges. With General Practice carrying out 90% of patient contacts in the NHS and musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions accounting for 10 - 30% of GP appointments it is essential to explore new ways of coping with this demand.

In Midlothian, half the practices were operating with restricted lists as a result of increasing demand: a demand which is predicted to quickly rise as the influx of new housing has resulted in Midlothian being the fastest growing local authority area in Scotland.

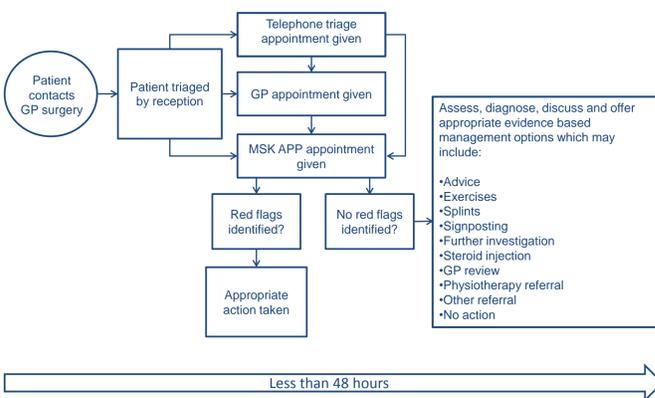
The role of MSK Advanced Physiotherapy Practitioner (APP) within General Practice has been explored across the UK and it is now widely recognised that MSK APPs can successfully work within practice teams for patients experiencing musculoskeletal conditions.

## AIMS

The strategic principle of this work is to redirect appropriate patients from General Practitioners to MSK APP services with the aim of:

- improving GP capacity
- improving patient outcomes
- improving the patient experience
- being cost effective and efficient
- allowing patients quick and easy access to highly specialised musculoskeletal input
- reducing referrals to secondary care, helping throughput and improving the conversion rate to surgery.

## METHODS

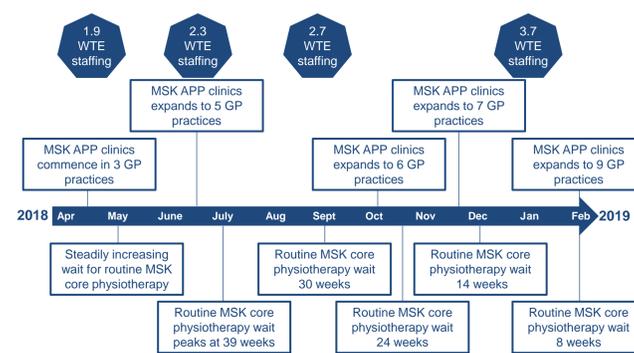


Patients were offered a 20 minute brief intervention with the MSK APP as an alternative to a GP appointment.

Patients accessed the service in one of four ways:

- triaged from reception and seen in a first contact appointment with the MSK APP
- seen by a GP first or telephone triaged by a GP, then booked in with the MSK APP
- already on the waiting list for core MSK physiotherapy and looking for advice from the MSK APP while they wait
- a small number were seen as return appointments

## TIME LINE



## RESULTS

An overview of our data from the first 11 months is below.

- 3669 appointments made with the MSK APP team**
- 60% of patients seen had no prior GP face to face appointment for the same condition**
- 731 hours of GP time redirected to the MSK APP team**
- Low onward referral rates – up to 90% of cases being managed in Primary Care**
- No waiting list - 95% of patients seen in less than 1 week**
- Reduced waiting times within core MSK physiotherapy**



**“You treat a disease, you win, you lose. You treat a person, I guarantee you, you’ll win, no matter what the outcome.”**  
- Patch Adams

## CONCLUSION

Musculoskeletal Advanced Physiotherapy Practitioners can successfully work as first contact practitioners within Primary Care as an alternative to a GP for patients with musculoskeletal conditions.

As our service is still in the implementation phase, the full impact is not yet known – however our early data suggests that MSK APPs within the Primary Care setting are cost effective and efficient, improve the patient pathway, allow quick access to highly specialised MSK input, reduce secondary care referrals and improve GP capacity.

## NEXT STEPS

As the service expands and becomes embedded in all GP practices in Midlothian, it is essential we continue to measure the impact and gather patient outcome data, feedback from GPs and other members of the MDT.

**We asked 76 patients for feedback:**

- 100%** said we gave enough information
- 100%** said we met their expectations
- 100%** said we listened and explained

“This service is very good... so good not to have to go through the GP and long referral times – it has to help the GP’s as well as it frees them up for other medical issues. Good for us all. Thank you.”

“Excellent service, hopefully these simple exercises will do the trick. Saves bothering the GP at the end of the day – all good!”

“Great service, very professional and effective. Really good to have the service at the local surgery.”

