

Directory of Service (DOS)

Musculoskeletal Service

The musculoskeletal service provides support to people with new or recurrent pain problems associated with their joints, soft tissues, and nerves. The service is split into two parts:

The **MSK physiotherapy team** provide support, advice, and physiotherapy treatment to patients with new or recurrent MSK problems as well as those living with a long term MSK condition.

The **MSK advanced practice** team support patients along established outpatient diagnostic pathways to determine the correct treatment and management options available to them and act as an interface to secondary care orthopaedic services.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The MSK service accepts referrals for adult patients (>17 years) with new, recurrent, or long term MSK pain symptoms, providing they have no urgent medical need, and their symptoms are not attributable to an underlying systemic cause that requires alternative management. Indicative exclusions include:

- **Non-MSK conditions** E.g.: neurological conditions, podiatry referrals, inflammatory joint disease, fibromyalgia, balance disorders, mobility problems (including walking aid referrals), pregnancy related back pain, primary headache without neck pain, diastasis recti, bone health management referrals.
- **Suspicion of serious pathology** (i.e. malignancy, infection)
- **Cauda equina syndrome, or symptoms suggestive of this diagnosis**
- **Acute motor loss symptoms or other progressive neurology**
- **Active cancer diagnosis or treatment** unless pain symptoms explicitly proven to be an un-related condition
- **Acute trauma including traumatic fracture or acute tendon rupture** (except rotator cuff in patients >70 years), locked knee, hemarthrosis. Consider alternative urgent pathways (ED, urgent care centre, acute knee clinic, acute shoulder clinic)
- **Suspected fragility fracture**

- **Active immunosuppressive therapy**- unless infective cause explicitly excluded (normal bloods, no systemic signs)
- **Specialist diagnostic work up or surgical opinion for scoliosis/spinal deformity**
- **Post-surgical problems i.e. painful prosthesis**
- **Undifferentiated lumps and bumps**
- **Patients requiring secondary care MDT pain clinic input**- Referrers are encouraged to utilise secondary care pain services for patients with persisting spinal pain symptoms, that have not improved with previous input from the musculoskeletal service.

Important information for referrers

The MSK service does not provide emergency or immediate care. Patients referred with symptoms that have the potential to deteriorate while awaiting clinical review should be appropriately safety netted by the referrer, and/or an alternative referral option (i.e. ED) should be considered.

The MSK service is a physiotherapy led service and may, within the scope of Non-Medical Referrer Agreements, commission investigations to assist in the diagnosis and management of musculoskeletal pathology. Occasionally these investigations will demonstrate unexpected or untoward findings such as metastatic disease. In these circumstances the referring GP practice will be contacted to take over the management of the patient as it is not within the scope of physiotherapy practice to manage a new cancer diagnosis.