

HEALTH OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

13 MARCH 2023

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Summary

1. The Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) has requested an overview of the different Physiotherapy Services pathways in the County.
2. Representatives from Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust and Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust have been invited to the meeting to respond to any questions the Committee may have.

Background

3. Physiotherapy is one of the 14 Allied Health Professions (AHP's) regulated by the Health and Care Professions Council. Physiotherapy is a science-based profession that uses physical approaches to promote, maintain and restore physical, psychological and social well-being, working through partnership and negotiation with individuals to optimise their functional ability and potential (NHS England 2023a). Physiotherapists work at all stages of the patient pathway from prevention to acute care and rehabilitation and play a vital role in reducing dependence on long-term care services by enabling people to live well for longer.
4. A wide variety of NHS Physiotherapy Services are delivered across Worcestershire by Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust (HWHCT), Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust (WAHT) and Primary Care. There are also a number of private providers and independent Physiotherapists working in a variety of settings.
5. Between them they work with individuals of all ages and a wide variety of acute and chronic health conditions. The Physiotherapy workforce ranges from new graduates to Advanced Clinical Practitioners and are supported by trained Physiotherapy Assistants and generic Health Care Assistants who have also undertaken training in appropriate Physiotherapy skills. Workforce development, recruitment and retention is a key focus across all providers to ensure a sustainable future workforce as demand for Physiotherapy services grows.
6. Below is an overview of the NHS provided Physiotherapy services across Worcestershire to aid understanding of what is available, where, and how it can be accessed and to outline some of the cross system working that supports development and improvement of Physiotherapy services.

Physiotherapy Services delivered by Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust (HWHCT)

7. There are about 119 whole time equivalent (169 staff) qualified Physiotherapists, supported by around 52 whole time equivalent (62 staff) Physiotherapy assistants and technical instructors. Additional generic Health Care Assistants also play a vital role in supporting Physiotherapy services. HWHCT provides the services outlined below.

Community Hospitals

8. Physiotherapists work across the 7 Community Hospitals in Worcestershire. They review all admissions to determine if the individual would benefit from Physiotherapy and provide treatment to the point of discharge where appropriate. Core services are delivered Monday to Friday with a reduced service on Weekends/Bank Holidays. While Physiotherapy intervention focuses on aspects such as mobility, balance, and strength rehabilitation, they also support discharge planning and the daily care to patients in the ward environment.

Community Physiotherapy / Neighbourhood Teams

9. Community Physiotherapists form part of the Integrated Neighbourhood Teams assessing and treating individuals with Physiotherapy needs who cannot access outpatient services or whose needs are best met in their own environment. Interventions are wide ranging but include rehabilitation following illness, injury or surgery, management of long term or palliative conditions, manual handling assessments and advice, falls assessments and environmental assessments. They also support the Pathway 1 service delivered by the Reablement Service (below) and admission prevention intensive support alongside the wider Neighbourhood Team. The service is available to individuals aged 18+ years who are registered with a Worcestershire GP with referrals accepted from patients, carers and health and care professionals.

Community Stroke

10. A countywide specialist service for individuals (18+ years) who have had a diagnosed new stroke within the last year. Referrals are accepted from healthcare professionals. They work with individuals for up to 6 weeks. They provide rehabilitation and education tailored to an individual's needs in their own homes with a focus on maximising independence with mobility and everyday activities.

Hydrotherapy Pool

11. This is located at Osbourne Court in Malvern. The pool provides a safe, warm, heated environment for children and adults with a range of disabilities. A part time Physiotherapist works with trained pool assistants delivering sessions Monday to Saturday. Outside of booked sessions the pool is used by individuals receiving

respite care at Osbourne Court (individuals with learning disabilities). Therapeutic sessions focus on improving mobility and function, reducing pain and muscle spasms, inducing relaxation and/or improving fitness. The pool incorporates sensory lights and has changing and hoist equipment. Individuals can self-refer to the pool. All individuals are required to pay for pool use.

Integrated Neurology Services

12. A specialist service for adults (18+ years) for individuals with neurological conditions including head injury, Parkinson's, Multiple Sclerosis, Motor Neurone Disease, and post-stroke recovery. Referrals are predominantly made by health and social care professionals; however the service will accept appropriate self-referrals if an individual comes to them directly. The team see individuals in their own homes and in clinic settings and offer online exercise groups. The length and type of services varies to individuals needs and individuals with degenerative conditions may be open to the service for longer periods. Types of interventions can include maintaining or improving strength, balance, movement, and mobility to enable daily activities or return to work or social activities.

Learning Disabilities

13. A specialist service is provided for adults (18+ years) with a moderate to severe/profound learning disability, or individuals with complex physical health alongside learning disabilities, or individuals with a mild learning disability whose needs cannot be successfully met by mainstream services even where reasonable adjustments are made. Referrals can be made by family/carers or through health and care professionals. The length and type of service varies depending on individual need, however will be goal focused to a particular issue and is not intended to deliver long-term ongoing Physiotherapy. Types of interventions may include improving mobility and physical function, working on balance and muscle strength, use of equipment e.g. walking sticks to wheelchairs, reducing secondary complications such as muscle spasms and tightening of muscles that can occur due to posture or positioning.

Mental Health Inpatients

14. Physiotherapy is provided to individuals within our working age and older adult mental health units where required. Physiotherapists review admissions to determine individuals' needs, promoting wellbeing and independence through physical and psychological approaches to meet individuals' goals, facilitate recovery and support discharge. This may include advice and support to overcome barriers to exercise participation through to management of chronic pain, mobility problems and postural management. This may include one to one sessions and group-based interventions.

Musculoskeletal (MSK) Physiotherapy

15. The MSK service operates outpatient clinics across Evesham, Pershore, Worcester City, Droitwich, Bromsgrove, Upton upon Severn, Malvern and Tenbury. The core service actively encourages self-referrals from anyone

registered with a Worcestershire GP through its 'move to improve' website but also accepts referrals from GP's and other health and care professionals. The core service treats a wide range of injuries, disorders and diseases that affect joints, muscles, ligaments and tendons including sports injuries, joint pain, complex pain conditions such as arthritis and rehabilitation after certain surgical procedures. The service includes Advanced Practice Physiotherapists who accept GP and consultant referrals for the advanced physiotherapy service which supports individuals with complex musculoskeletal conditions working closely with primary and secondary care.

Paediatrics

16. The Paediatric Physiotherapy service accepts referrals from health care professionals from an individual's birth until their 18th birthday (19th birthday for individuals in special schools within Worcestershire for school-based issues only). Individuals will be registered with a Worcestershire GP or have a 'looked after' arrangement with Worcestershire Local Authority and continue to reside in Worcestershire or have a 'looked after' arrangement with another local authority and are placed in Worcestershire with an individual funding agreement. The service aims to support and empower parents/carers to promote their child's physical development, in order to maximise the child's potential and meet their individual goals. They work in collaboration with the child/young persons, their parents and carers and other professionals from health, social care and education.

Reablement Service

17. The service is managed by Worcestershire County Council and receives referrals from health and social care professionals to support the return home of patients from acute, community and out of area hospitals (known as Pathway 1) as well as for individuals who are already at home. The service is for individuals over 18 years old. It aims to promote people's independence following illness or injury and reduce the need for long term care and support. Physiotherapists form part of the multidisciplinary team providing a range of assessments and treatments. This is a time limited service usually for up to 6 weeks, although some people need much less.

Wheelchair Service

18. 'Wheelchair Therapists' have a Physiotherapy or Occupational Therapy background and work closely with Rehabilitation engineers. They assess the posture, mobility and tissue viability needs of individuals to provide appropriate mobility equipment (manual and powered wheelchairs, specialist buggies). They provide services to individuals of any age registered with a Worcestershire GP. Referrals are made via a healthcare professional.

Physiotherapy Services delivered by Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust (WAHT)

19. According to WAHT's ORACLE Business Intelligence report, in January 2023, there was a total of 122.32 whole time equivalent Physiotherapists within the Trust ranging from bands 2-8a. WAHT provides inpatient and outpatient Physiotherapy services as detailed below.

Inpatient Physiotherapy

20. The Physiotherapy department at WAHT provides cross cover at Worcestershire Royal, Alexandra, and Kidderminster Hospitals. They cover all specialities with the exception of neonates. Core services are delivered Monday to Friday 08:30-16:30. Outside of these times there is a 24hrs 7 day on call respiratory service, a daily discharge service until 20:00 7 days per week, and weekend respiratory, mobility service, trauma and orthopaedics and stroke services. The Physiotherapists attend the wards each morning to receive handover and identify patients appropriate for Physiotherapy interventions.

21. Staff teams are made up of clinical leads and various grade staff with a mixture of static posts within a speciality and rotational posts that support training. Prioritisation systems are in place to support safety, quality, and flow.

22. The services aim to:

- Provide proactive early Physiotherapy assessment to avoid admission where possible and commitment of delivery of home first ethos
- Reduce length of stay by providing early assessment and intervention to optimise physical and functional recovery
- Prevent deterioration and requiring escalations of higher levels of care
- Work towards earliest and safest discharge at all stages of the patient journey with co-ordination of the multi-disciplinary team. Ensuring conversations on discharge are started early
- Support, educate and empower patients and relatives where appropriate to take an active role in care and management, encourage independence and reduce risk of Hospital required functional decline. Where appropriate to have conversations with family and carers and deliver regular updates
- Ensure that all physiotherapeutic interventions are patient centred, evidence based with agreed goals and aims with appropriate involvement of family and carers
- Have the appropriate resources, expertise and skill mix to provide required physiotherapeutic interventions and treatments at each stage of the patient journey
- Ensure the patient has access to the required onward care and support in co-ordination with the multi-disciplinary team and partners
- Equip patients to live their lives, fulfil their potential and optimise contribution to family life, community and society as a whole
- Support the wider Physiotherapy workforce for now and the future. This includes supporting students, Apprentices, return to practice, development, progression, and support of existing staff.

Outpatient Physiotherapy

23. Outpatient Physiotherapy is provided at Worcestershire Royal, Alexandra, and Kidderminster Hospitals. Each site has access to clinical assessment/treatment areas and gym-based environments as well as a hydrotherapy pool at Worcestershire Royal Hospital. Specialities covered are Hydrotherapy, Musculoskeletal, Neurological, Occupational health (staff only), Pelvic Health, Respiratory, Rheumatology and Vascular. Advanced Practice Physiotherapists also work alongside consultants within the pain and multiple orthopaedic clinics. Referrals are via healthcare professionals (predominantly consultant only), self-referrals are not accepted to outpatient Physiotherapy services. Patients are seen for a defined period of treatment then discharged or referred on to other services where required. All referrals are triaged with sites running urgent and routine waiting lists.

Physiotherapy Services delivered by Primary Care within Worcestershire

24. Physiotherapy practice and roles have grown significantly in recent years within primary care following identification that around 30% of GP appointments are due to Musculoskeletal (MSK) issues (NHS England 2023b).
25. Prior to the national Primary Care Network (PCN) contract starting in July 2019, in March 2019 all Clinical Commissioning Groups were asked to complete a baseline assessment of the general practice workforce. As of March 2019, there was only 1 whole time equivalent physiotherapist reported as employed in Worcestershire general practices.
26. From July 2019, the Primary Care Network contract started. During the period of 2020/2021 PCNs were able to recruit and be reimbursed for 1 WTE 'First Contact Physiotherapist (FCP)' as part of the Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS). The FCP would be employed across a group of practices to: *Assess, diagnose, triage and manage patients (not to provide a Physiotherapy service), to support the assessment of patients presenting at GP practices*. During the period of 2021/2022 the 1 WTE restriction was lifted.

Current Primary Care Workforce

27. As of January 2023 (latest data available) there are 23.6 WTE First Contact Physiotherapists employed through the PCN Additional Roles Reimbursement Scheme (ARRS). 9 out of 10 PCNs have FCPs in their teams (noting that PCNs can choose their skill mix of PCN ARRS roles to suit their population need). The additional workforce is to support general practice workload.
28. There is also 1 physiotherapist who remains directly employed by a GP practice (part of the original 2019 baseline exercise)
29. Of the 23.6 WTE FCPs who are employed by PCNs, the employment model is a mix of:
- Directly employed by the PCN, or GP Federation (SW Healthcare)
 - Sub-contracted arrangements with a local physiotherapy provider
 - Sub-contracted arrangements with national physiotherapy providers.

Primary Care opportunities for the future

30. PCNs must produce an annual and long-term workforce plan that is submitted to the Integrated Care Board and NHS England. The ARRS scheme continues to grow in investment, meaning PCNs can increase their workforce and skill mix according to population need each year of the contract to support general practice workload.
- 15 The current long-term workforce plan runs to the period of March 2024 in line with the PCN 5-year contract term end date. This plan indicates an ambition of 32 WTE and a further 2 WTE of FCPs who are also Advanced Clinical Practitioners.
- 16 Achieving this ambition will be dependent on:
- Future supply of the workforce, working closely with Worcester University, Health Education England, and local NHS providers to develop the qualified pipeline
 - The infrastructure to support supervision, ongoing training and development and retention of staff
 - Ability to recruit trained staff across all providers
 - Certainty and investment beyond the current national 5-year PCN contract deal- ending March 2024.

Working together at system level to develop Physiotherapy Services

31. It is recognised that there are national challenges to the supply and retention of Physiotherapy staff in the NHS. Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care System (ICS) have an ICS AHP Council and AHP Faculty group which provide strategic support and development of AHP services and their workforce. The AHP Council and Faculty have undertaken positive programmes of work over the last 2 years, for example:
- Implementing an ICS standardised approach to Return to Practice including a rolling advert on NHS jobs to indicate the Trusts offer this
 - Implementing a standardised approach to AHP apprenticeships (including physiotherapy) for degree courses. 4 individuals have now commenced on this pathway for Physiotherapy across WAHT and HWHCT.
 - Implementing a 'Fair Share Allocation' model for student placements to support expansion of undergraduate training support offered and offering new models of placement provision.
 - Ensuring all new graduates are accessing a Preceptorship programme.
32. As the ICS matures and appropriate clinical leadership structures are developed, there are further opportunities to attract, retain and upskill our workforce to enhance care delivery through for example, expanding cross organisational rotations, international recruitment and integrated career and care delivery pathways across Health and Social Care, Primary Care and Private, Independent and Voluntary Organisations.

Purpose of the Meeting

The HOSC is asked to:

- consider and comment on the information provided
- determine whether any further information or scrutiny on a particular topic is required.

Contact Points

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance), the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report are:

NHS England (2023a) The 14 Allied Health Professions [NHS England » The 14 allied health professions](#).

NHS England (2023b) First contact Physiotherapists [NHS England » First contact Physiotherapists](#)

All agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website here.