

Musculoskeletal Triage

For further information please contact 01707 247411

Hertfordshire Community Trust - Our core values

- Care** - We put patients at the heart of everything we do
- Respect** - We treat people with dignity and respect
- Quality** - We strive for excellence and effectiveness at all times
- Confidence** - We do what we say we will do
- Improve** - We will improve through continuous learning and innovation



What are staff and users experiences?



Appointments on time, everyone very polite and helpful. Who would go private if the NHS was always like this. Excellent!

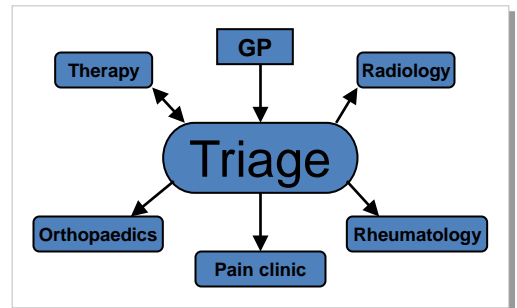
What is the approach?

The service is designed to ensure that all musculoskeletal patients are seen in the right place by the right specialist. It is run by highly trained physiotherapists known as Extended Scope Practitioners(ESPs). Patients are either referred by their GP or another healthcare professional such as another physiotherapist. All referrals are screened by the ESP physiotherapist in the service and it is then a decision is made as to whether that patient needs to be referred onto secondary care (Orthopaedics, Rheumatology, Pain clinic), therapy (e.g physiotherapy) or an assessment is needed in the service.. Where diagnosis is in doubt or we need further information to make a decision about where the patient should be seen then they will be offered an appointment for an assessment. The assessment will include a full physical examination and patients may be referred for investigations like x-rays, MRIs, blood tests and ultrasound scans to help the clinician decide whether or not an onward referral is needed.



What are the aims?

- To provide assessment and treatment for musculoskeletal conditions within primary care as timely as possible
- To reduce waiting times for orthopaedic and rheumatology consultant appointments
- To improve access to specialist therapy assessment and treatment
- To take out the unnecessary waiting time for a 'consultant to therapy' referral



What are the benefits & outcomes?

The benefits to the patients are numerous. All referrals are screened as they enter the service so that they can be directed to the most appropriate department or specialist. This means that patients are not waiting for an appointment that isn't necessary. Urgent referrals are identified quickly and with the use of electronic patient records and choose and book we can track the pathway of the patient easily before the referral is sent on. For those patients where it is not clear where they should be seen or need further assessment to identify the most appropriate care for that patient an appointment is made to be seen by one of the specialists in the service. Here all appropriate investigations can be requested and reviewed by the team. The clinicians then work with the patient to agree the next steps in their pathway.

What are the impacts?

The purpose of the service is to ensure that no referrals are referred to secondary care unnecessarily, which would otherwise waste resources. We have made this process even more efficient by collaborating with the GPs and the consultants to develop pathways for the spine shoulder. This means that all professionals who may have contact with the patient should know when to and where to refer on. The pathway also includes multidisciplinary team meetings that include the ESPs, radiologists and consultants. At these meetings difficult cases are discussed the pathway agreed for those patients. This way we can be absolutely sure that patients are being referred to the correct specialist.