

# MAKING A DIFFERENCE FOR PATIENTS...

## PATIENT DIRECTOR UPDATE

### ABOUT MSK

Sussex MSK Partnership East (SMSKPE) was established in April 2015 and the patient director role seven months later. As far as we know only two NHS organisations have a patient director, the other, David Gilbert is in the Central MSK partnership. The idea is to reflect at director level the importance of patient and clinician working together as the former travels through the health system, in the jargon, "person centred care".

SMSKPE was set up to make improvements in the way that musculoskeletal (MSK) services are delivered across much of East Sussex. It has been of vital importance to find out what patients think of the service and make any necessary alterations and improvements. This report outlines what patients in SMSKPE have been telling us and what we have been doing as a result.

### HOW DID WE DO THIS?

One of our first actions was to set up a system of questionnaires asked both before treatment and afterwards. This allows us to measure how successful any treatment has been and how patients feel they have been dealt with by various staff. Many patients have taken the time and trouble to complete these either on-line or on paper and we have used the comments to improve the service and to praise staff and departments when they have been complimented. By the end of April, 2017, we had sent almost 19,000 questionnaires via email, text or post and had received approaching 6000 responses. This has given us a wealth of information.

Nine in every ten patients would recommend us. Around one quarter of comments are complimentary, mentioning the personal attention, from receiving help on the telephone to the level of care from extended scope practitioners and physios. However, 1 in 10 have made the effort to tell us what has not gone so well. This has been important as it is by receiving adverse comment that we can learn what needs improvement.

Running alongside, we also set up a series of patients', carers' and families' forums around our area. These are held every 6 – 9 months in Crowborough, Eastbourne, Hailsham, Heathfield, Lewes, Peacehaven, Seaford and Uckfield. More recently we have expanded these into Mayfield, Polegate and Newhaven. To date over 300 people have attended and joined in some really interesting discussions and shared their stories.

## In brief below is an outline of what you told us and what we did

### LETTERS

One of the first things we were told was that our letters were not clear enough so we rewrote them and asked people at a couple of forums what they thought. Their ideas were included in the new letters.

### GPs

From the questionnaires and the forums we learned that some GPs were not clearly explaining the service so people were surprised when they heard from us. As a result of suggestions we put together some leaflets explaining our services and circulated these to all the GP practices. Again, feedback was given on the actual look and wording on these by patients at forums.

### WEBSITE

As we built our website we asked patients to use it and comment and most liked it. As it has become larger we have had comments that it has become more difficult to navigate so we are currently looking at simplifying this.

### PHYSIOTHERAPY

For many MSK conditions physio is the most important activity to set someone on the road to recovery or being able to cope. With thousands of patients, bottlenecks built up and waiting lists rose to over three months in some areas. Patients and clinicians told us that this was unacceptable. At forums people commented on the wide range of quality of physio treatment and follow up. To explore this further we sent questionnaires to 2,500 patients who had received physio. 500 replied with in depth comments and 10 people gathered for a physiotherapy focus group. We looked closely at what had happened to them and asked what they wanted a 'good' physio service to look like.

As a direct result physios are working hard to alter their way of working in order to cut down the waiting list and to make sure that there is a minimum quality level. This is not easy to do and is taking time but all are keen to make it work.

Patients are pleased to receive a copy of the letter sent to their GP following diagnosis but have commented on the medical jargon used which they do not understand. We are working with clinicians to introduce an additional 'care plan' so that patients are reminded precisely what was discussed and any future actions which they or the clinician should carry out.

### PAIN MANAGEMENT

The Pain Management service aims to provide advice, guidance, and support for those with persistent pain and who are struggling to manage. There is a large self-help section on our website at:

[www.sussexmskpartnershipeast.co.uk/pain](http://www.sussexmskpartnershipeast.co.uk/pain)

### OSTEO-ARTHRITIS

In the past, people with hip and knee osteoarthritis have had to wait until it became so bad that they needed an operation. Often this meant years of pain and decreasing ability to go about their everyday lives.

Many patients would prefer to be offered exercise programmes designed to reduce pain naturally, improve function and carry on with their lives in the way they want.

As a result we are rolling out a programme called ESCAPE-Pain which is aimed at people with knee and hip joint problems. This has proved to be highly successful in other parts of the country and we are currently training physios and leisure centre staff to run this programme. The techniques learned and continued at home could delay, or even stop, the condition getting worse, depending on how far a knee or hip problem has progressed.

We are also looking at encouraging a bigger range of pain control methods to enable this different, less medicalised approach.

### ANKYLOSING SPONDYLITIS

We have worked with Eastbourne District General Hospital to publicise their specialised classes for those with AS, run in their hydrotherapy pool and gym. For many patients meeting others with the same condition and sharing experiences is vitally important and supportive.

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## The future 2017 - 2018 and beyond

Above are outlined some of the ways in which patients have helped shape our service and will continue to do so. We are truly grateful to those individuals who have given up their time to complete our questionnaires or to attend our forums. The feedback has been invaluable and is making a difference. Why not share your story with us?

Recently three patients have become more involved and are just starting to work directly with clinicians on some of our projects. They have become 'patient partners'. I am hoping that over the next few months another half dozen or so will volunteer. This requires people with a little spare time, an interest in wishing to improve the NHS and the ability to step beyond their own medical condition. If you would be interested in volunteering please contact Anne Sabine, Patient Director to find out more.