

Enter and View Report

Southeast Staffordshire

Chronic Pain Management Service

14 November 2023



Healthwatch Staffordshire

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Report on Enter and View Visit Undertaken by Healthwatch Staffordshire on 14th November 2023

Service Visited

Southeast Staffordshire Chronic Pain Management Service

Samuel Johnson Hospital Lichfield Staffs, WS13 6JL

01283 507131

Context

Chronic or persistent pain is pain that lasts longer than 12 weeks and affects a patient constantly or intermittently despite receiving treatment or medication. Some Chronic pain can be caused by inflammation or damage to tissues or nerves in the body or underlying medical conditions, however some pain can be a condition in its own right.

The Health Survey for England (NHS Digital –2017) discovered that 34% of the UK population are affected by chronic pain–28 million people –and accounts for up to 5 million GP appointments per year. This has far reaching effects on quality of life of these patients, with limited ability to carry out regular daily activity leading to an increase in mental health issues and job losses. The situation affects more women (37%) than men (31%) and the numbers increase with age.

Our colleagues at Healthwatch Derby produced a report in 2022 entitled “Chronic Pain Experiences” which provides some useful context. In Staffordshire some work is just started looking at the reduction of the long-

term use of opioid medication in the management of pain to which Healthwatch Staffordshire is contributing.

Review Method

This visit was done jointly between Midlands Partnership Foundation Trust who were conducting an internal quality visit and Healthwatch Staffordshire who were conducting an independent Enter and View. By combining the visits, the aim was to gain a comprehensive view of the service with minimal disruption to operational delivery.

Prior to the visit, the Healthwatch Engagement Officer had heard from service users and carers via the Healthwatch Enquiries Line and from engagement with local community groups and voluntary organisations.

Due to the pain management team being dispersed across the area a brief introductory meeting was held with the whole team online followed by a face-to-face meeting with the clinical lead. The visiting team then split up and met with staff and patients either face to face in the Lichfield therapy department or online.

Healthwatch met with the team pharmacist. Then, with appropriate consent, observed a patient receiving joint injections followed by feedback from the patient and discussions with the treating consultant and nurse. The review team then met up again with the clinical lead for final clarification and feedback.

Both Healthwatch and the MPFT Quality Team produce their reports individually and this report is an independent view from Healthwatch. Thanks goes to all MPFT staff who made us welcome and participated in the process.

Review Team

The visiting team consisted of:

- David Bassett, Engagement Officer for SE Staffordshire, Healthwatch Staffordshire

- Quality Assurance and Effectiveness Officer MPFT
- Clinical Nurse Specialist MPFT from North Staffordshire
- Trust Non-Executive Director
- Trust Governor MPFT
- A member of the Trust Audit Team

Service Outline

The chronic pain management team works as part of a multidisciplinary approach. This is because persistent pain impacts people in different ways and not one size fits all. The team involves pain consultants, nursing staff, clinical psychologists, specialist physiotherapists and a pharmacist who specialises in pain medication.

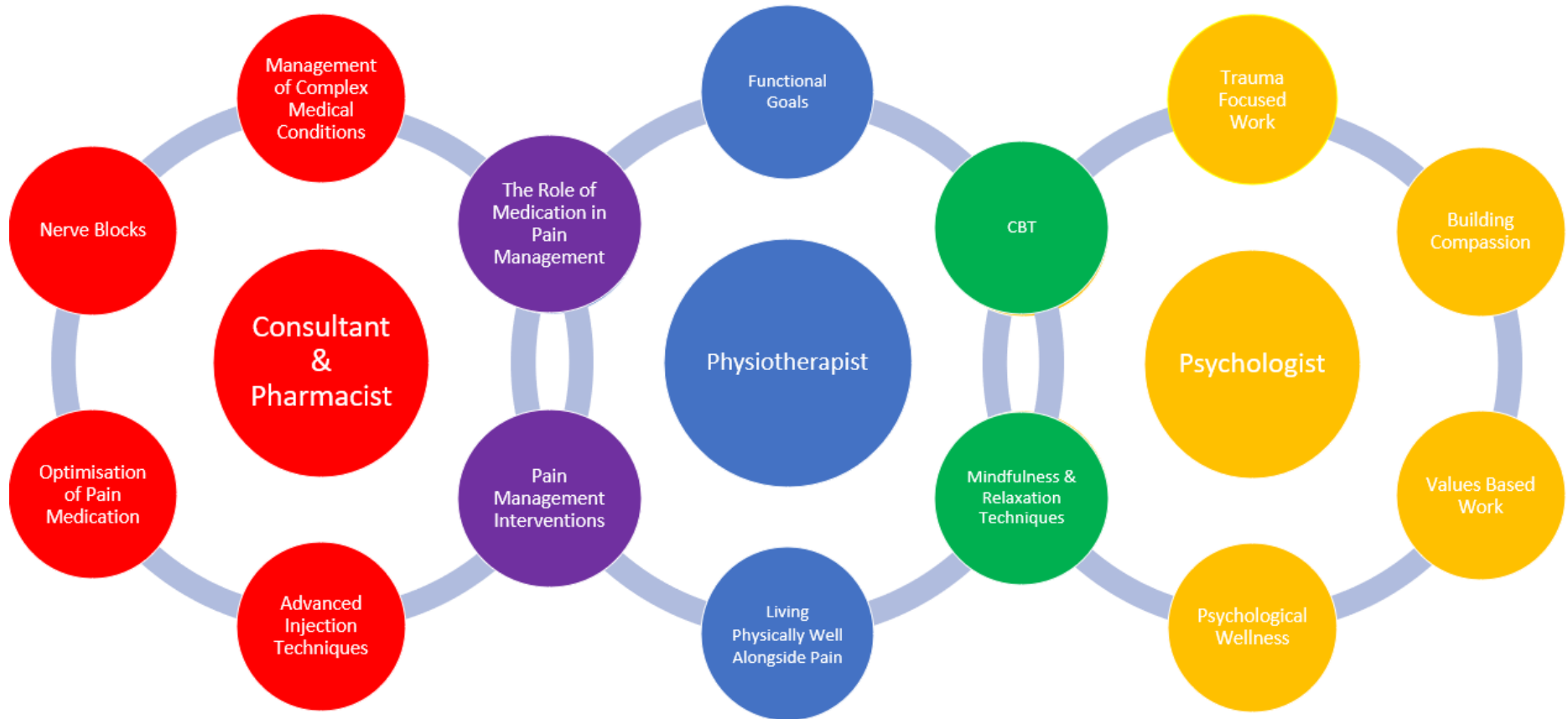
The service delivers services from three sites across Southeast Staffordshire, as well as through telephone calls, video calls and online groups. The Trust also delivers chronic pain management services through other teams in both North and Southwest Staffordshire.

Face to face appointments are delivered at Hill Street Health and Wellbeing Centre in Burton on Trent, Stonydelph Health Centre in Tamworth and at Samuel Johnson Community Hospital in Lichfield.

Alongside traditional one to one appointments, patients may be offered the chance to access some group sessions including the Pain Management Program face to face, Achieving Balance Group online, or Tai Chi.

The following diagram taken from the Team's web pages shows how they work together to offer clinical interventions, education and support that is tailored to individual patient need helping manage their pain.

There is clear patient information about what is available through the service on the MPFT web site.



The Southeast Staffordshire Chronic Pain Service Delivery Model

Referrals and Wait Times

The postal address for the service is Edwin House, Second Avenue, Centrum 100, Burton on Trent DE14 2WF with a phone number of 01283 507131.

Referrals are welcomed from any healthcare professional in primary care without the need for it being passed through the GP which previously slowed down the referral process and created additional work for GPs. Patients are notified by letter that their referral has been received, that they are placed on the waiting list and that they will be contacted again once there is capacity to initiate an assessment.

Pain Management services are in high demand and the community service has a wait time of about 8 months from referral. This compares favourably with nearby hospital clinic waits. The Team have successfully reduced the wait time for joint injections from eighteen months down to three which is very beneficial for patients.

Since the Covid Pandemic the Team have adapted their working patterns and conduct their initial assessments by phone or video link appointments, having first sent out a pain scoring questionnaire for the patient to complete in advance. Initial assessments are discussed with the weekly multidisciplinary team meeting and then a treatment plan is drawn up with the patient, involving the relevant team members to address their needs. Patients will usually only be booked face to face appointments for "hands on treatment" sessions or specific group work. This creates more flexibility in patient throughput at clinics thus contributing to shortening the waiting list.

Service User Experience

Staff working in the service pride themselves on delivering an individual personalised support plan for each patient and this was evident when talking to patients. With the patient's permission I observed a gentleman receiving steroid injections into his ankle joint in an effort to reduce the pain in the joint. On completion of the treatment, he was given a date and time when a named member of the team would be following him up and a simple pain chart to complete at set intervals to enable the effectiveness of the treatment to be monitored.

Both he and his partner were complementary about his journey through the service and that after his initial assessment he did not have to wait many weeks for his treatment.

The other benefit for him was the treatment was provided locally thus avoiding the need to travel to a large hospital site. This compared favourably to the experience of a patient from Tamworth who recently contacted Healthwatch over having to travel Solihull Hospital for similar treatment. She had to rely on non-urgent patient transport that was hours late both taking her to her appointment and returning her home.

The Consultant explained that efforts were being made to encourage referrals to the local service rather than expecting patients to travel into Birmingham. The waiting list for appointments locally is substantially shorter.

Other patients who were visiting for treatment appeared to be pleased with the service they were receiving and that the combination of telephone, video and face to face appointments worked well for them and was far more convenient.

Reducing Harm from Opioids Working Group

Staffordshire ICB Pharmacy Team has recently initiated a countywide working group to look at reducing the use of prescribed opioid medication in line with a national directive. The East Staffordshire Primary Care Network has shown an interest in piloting some work on this. The Team is aware of this and are represented on the working group. In discussion with the Team Pharmacist there are time limited benefits of this type of medication for many patients and there is potential to look at changing both prescribing and deprescribing approaches.

Strengthening Partnerships

Part of the work the Team undertakes looks at the social and emotional aspects of living with chronic pain and encouraging the take up of previous hobbies and activities in their local communities. There is potential to build links with social prescribers working in primary care who can signpost and support patients in their local areas. Support Staffordshire maintains a large directory of voluntary groups and social enterprises across the county and in East Staffordshire there is growing use of the Joy App.

Summary and Recommendations:

Strengths:

- The Team is caring, committed, compassionate and professional.
- The Team is delivering a holistic service with a blended mix of appointments geared to individual need about which patients are positive in their feedback.
- The service is being delivered in localities closer to home.
- The waiting list for treatment is comparatively low compared with surrounding pain services. Staff are working hard to shorten wait times as much as possible with particular success in reducing waits for joint injections.

Opportunities:

- There is an opportunity to work more closely with East Staffordshire PCN over opioid reduction as part of the ICB working group.
- There is potential to develop links with local social prescribers and the wider voluntary sector in supporting patients possibly linking in with the peer development programme for social prescribers and health coaches delivered by the Support Staffordshire Consultancy Team.
- An increase in reliability of the Wi-Fi system in the clinics that staff rely upon would be welcomed. It is something that has come up wherever we have visited community-based teams within the Trust.

The Trust's Director of Digital Transformation has advised that "we are commencing our community wireless improvement project in 2024, following the successful completion of our inpatient ward wireless improvement project."