

**Pain Management Service Redesign
Patient Discussion Group
30th November 2016
Leigh Cricket Club**

5 x Current patients of the Pain Service
1 X Carer of a patient of the Pain Service

Summary/Recommendations:

- Generally positive about the proposed new pain management service pathway.
- A helpline for patients may be helpful (pre-referral/not already in service).
- You need to consider different methods of reminders (in relation to the pain survey – people may not pick up letters – accessibility standards – use of text messages).
- The survey could be simplified, use of faces rather than rating 1 to 5.
- GP education is very important (continuity, sympathy, understanding of chronic pain conditions) – very mixed experiences and feeling about primary care.
- Active living membership is a good idea - patients here would be okay with paying a small fee and if this was maybe linked to the transport offer being looked at. Would want provision on both sides of the Town.
- Awareness campaign; GPs and wider around understanding chronic pain.
- Transport offer / shuttle bus – suggestion very positively welcomed. Patients struggle to travel across the Borough to different locations.
- Support group on the Leigh side would be beneficial.

Summary of the discussion:

Jennie Gammack, Assistant Director Strategy and Programme Management Wigan Borough CCG welcomed the group and opened the forum for an informal discussion on the proposed new pain management service pathway. The session was attended by other staff from the CCG and WWL including Susan Downes and Jane Downie who work in the service. The following summarises the discussion:

Could we have a helpline set up, so patients don't need to make an appointment they can just phone up for reassurance or guidance?

Any existing patients can phone Sharon directly for advice and guidance. For new patients, there are difficulties assessing and triaging patients over the telephone and we could not give any specific advice or guidance to these patients.

Who are the community drug team and community link workers?

Community link workers are patient navigators commissioned by the council and Wigan Clinical Commissioning Group. The community drug team are commissioned by the council and support patients on high doses of pain killers and prescription drugs who would like to reduce their dose.

There are a number of gym sessions that patients are able to access for a small fee. Do patients think that these should be free?

If the payment is funded back into the service and not in profits to the gym then patients would be happy to contribute a small amount to cover the cost of the service. A monthly/yearly membership could be suitable, or a capped weekly amount.

How often do you see your GP about your pain and do you always see the same doctor?

Reports of going to the GP many times and seeing a different doctor and having to explain the background. Continuity of care is important and having someone who understands. Seeing a different doctor each time can add to the fear of being discharged from the pain team and then being under your GP for treatment of pain. Having a good GP does give you the confidence in the treatment you are receiving. Reports around GPs taking patients off medication that the pain team have prescribed with a detrimental effect. GPs need to be aware that the pain team is the specialist and follow guidance accordingly. One member reported to also have a good link with his pharmacist who looks at his medications regularly for him.

On what occasion do you find you need to see your GP with regards to your pain?

There were different responses to this question. It can be for the support around the condition itself rather than the actual pain or when a new symptom arises that is a worry. Patients reported to try and avoid going to the GP if they can and the support they get from the Pain Team is very beneficial to them.

Are there any other elements of the pain service that you think need to change?

We could campaign to raise more awareness of the services that are available for patients and for clinicians to refer into. Patients can self-manage but they need the support from the pain management team, just to know they're at the end of the phone.

Somewhere local to Leigh that offers hydrotherapy would be great.

On the questionnaires, instead of rating from 1-5, could you use 'smileys' instead to rate how your pain is.

How do you think we could increase awareness of the service and improve patient experience?

GPs need to get more training on what chronic pain is and how this can be managed; they need to know more about what services are on offer in Wigan for the patient.

The following general feedback was given on the pain management services available and future plans:

Walking Groups are really important and beneficial. The social side of walks are beneficial. There have been lots of different events organised off the back of these walks and it improves wellbeing by regularly meeting up with that support network.

Organised cycle groups would be helpful for people who cannot do much walking due to pain, Active Living service do run cycle groups.

It is important to address the psychological side of a chronic pain condition first, before a patient can engage with treatment and therapy. For example there may be fear that people will look at you and think “well if he can do exercise then the pain can’t be that bad” and then people won’t believe the pain.

The TotalFitness Gym at Marus Bridge is too far away for the patients in Leigh and it would be good for patients on both sides of the borough to have access to the same level of service around hydrotherapy and swimming.

Once a referral has been made by the GP, the patient is required to complete the questionnaire which is sent to them by the pain management team, they are then sent a second letter to remind them if it not returned. If they still do not return the questionnaire, then the referral is sent back to the GP. Patients suggested that rather than sending a second letter, perhaps a text message reminder could be used to prompt the patient. The community link workers can also be utilised by the GP to assist the patient in completing the questionnaire, this will be picked up with the GPs at the education event around pain management.

Jennie advised the group of the plans to have a pain management centre at the Leigh Walk in Centre and also a smaller scale provision in Wigan. The CCG are working with the council to look at how they could provide a shuttle bus service for patients who are attending appointments or groups. Patients welcomed this as they often struggle getting from one side of the borough to the other if they are reliant on friends or relatives for transport.

Keeping the link with pain team reduces the panic and helps the patient lead a ‘normal’ life, knowing that they can contact the team before they reach crisis point and enables the patient to self-care and manage their consequences. Patient don’t want to be discharged, they’d rather know that they have that safety net in case they become unwell again, even if they only visit the service annually for a review.