

A Multidisciplinary Pathway in Primary Care for People with Fibromyalgia: a Test of Change Project

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[Project documents at: osf.io/7ekwy/](https://osf.io/7ekwy/)

Project Aim:

To test and evaluate a small multi-disciplinary pathway for people with Fibromyalgia in Primary Care, developed to improve access to streamlined, evidence based care.

Telephone appointment with Physiotherapy (PT)

- Covid protocol
- 18 attended (Jan-May 21)
- Medical, drug history
- Patient Qs about FM & Management
- Early chance to provide info

Face to face appointment: GP + PT

- Clinic room in same health centre as GP practice
- 1 hour appt
- 16 attended

PT, Pharmacy, self referral options

- Limited due to Covid-19
- 8 Physio
- 1 GP + physio
- 1 Pharmacy
- 1 GP + Pharmacy
- 1 GP
- 4 no additional mgt

What did the service users say?

3 Semi structured interviews conducted by Christine Addington.

Feeling listened to and understood

"They listened to everything I had to say, and they asked questions that triggered my thought processes ...that initial meeting you weren't run by the 10-minute rule, so we could go over everything and...tell them things that were getting me down."

"Speaking to somebody, telling them how you feel is good, getting it off your chest ...Relieving a bit of the tension in thinking what the hell was wrong with me"

Access to healthcare and self management resources beyond pharmaceuticals

It was the first time all interviewees had experienced pain management beyond pharmaceuticals.

"so I think I just need to be kind to myself, but I have never been the person to do that but (clinician's name) is learning me to do that and I didn't feel guilt and I actually felt a wee bit liberated, which was quite nice "

Developing collaborative relationships with HCPs facilitated empowerment and a personalised understanding of pain

The 2 HCPs created a supportive space for people to feel validated.

"you don't normally see a doctor and a physio interacting because normally the doctor knows more and normally lays down the law... but this was a collaboration between the two... that made you want to discuss things with them"

The knowledge that services users had control over their healthcare gave them a sense of empowerment. Patients also described these aspects helped them to better understand the mechanisms underpinning their own Fibromyalgia.

Interdisciplinary supervision

6 x 1.5h sessions were facilitated by psychology. The team gained an "invaluable understanding" of each other's perspectives and some increased their confidence in implementing advice that went against their instincts. Others felt psychology supervision "really helped validate" what they were experiencing and would remain a critical component of any future provision.

What did the staff say?

5 semi structured interviews conducted by Helen Alexander with the project team before and after.

The project team were "willing to give stuff a go." Their strong motivation enabled this diverse group to collaborate in an environment of mutual respect, with a "shared value of compassion... that's the glue."

Despite there being "trepidation" before the 1hr joint GP-PT assessment, both felt it had "worked well."

"We believed the condition was real, we understood the symptoms were present and real, we listened to how it affected them holistically and that put us straight away into a good position because patients levelled up. We all knew where we were and then we could work from there."

Earlier intervention was possible.

It could prevent people "bouncing around the system" for years, although some time was needed for the "diagnosis by exclusion."

Scottish Core Minimum Dataset (baseline)

18 responses (from telephone appointments)

- Gender..... 17F, 1M
- Age..... Mean: 45y; Range: 25y-62y
- Duration..... 13/18 had pain for more than 10 years

Complete responses for 12

- Severity.....1Mean 8/(10)
- Emotional impact.....1Q1: Mean 2.25 (/3); Q2: Mean 2(/3)
- Functional impact.....1Mean 8.25(/10)
- HrOOL.....1Most frequently chosen (6/12) category was 'poor'