

ARRS Cost & Clinical Benefit Analysis

First Contact Musculoskeletal Practitioners

Introduction:

Musculoskeletal (MSK) FCPs were introduced in 2019 as part of the additional roles reimbursement scheme (ARRS) when PCNs were being created. Their purpose is to reduce pressure on practice clinical teams in relation to the MSK demand. MSK demand is increasing rapidly with the ageing population and reciprocal increases in long term conditions affecting joints, spines, mobility and independence. NHS England states that up to 30% of primary care consultations are for MSK conditions, highlighting the vital role MSK FCPs can play in practice workforce. Specialist physiotherapists who carry out the role of FCPs are regulated under The Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC). Given their first contact clinical role they have additional regulation through the NHSE road map to practice governance documents FCP Roadmap. FCPs are regulated allied health professional with a minimum of 5 years dedicated exclusive MSK experience working at the advanced end of the profession as clinical MSK experts.



REDUCE PRESSURE ON PRACTICE CLINICAL TEAMS & ADD VALUE TO PATIENTS

Cost benefit:

GP appointment cost:

Data from NHS: Key Facts And Figures | The King's Fund 2022-2023 shows that an average 10 minute GP appointment costs £49.

FCP appointment cost:

£17 per 20-minute patient appointment*.

Cost difference per session:

The cost saving per FCP consultation is, on average, £35.50:

- Per week of 80 appointments: £2,560
- Per 48 working weeks year (allowing for AL): £122,880

An FCP seeing the same number of patients as a GP can save an equivalent of £122,880 over one year.

Clinical benefit:

MSK FCP impact on patients, practices and wider health system:

Recently published studies reviewed the impacts and outcomes of MSK FCP and concluded that an FCP led primary care MSK model provided:

- ✓ **Lower medication needs** for patients vs normal primary care management (reduced opioids, analgesics and polypharmacy)
- ✓ **Lower referrals into MSK and secondary care pathways** (orthopaedic, rheumatology, etc).
- ✓ Patients who were referred to orthopaedics had a **higher likelihood of being appropriate for surgery** (improved patient journey and system working).
- ✓ **Patient recovery was accelerated**, and patient knowledge and journey was improved

Source: First contact physiotherapy: an evaluation of clinical effectiveness and costs | British Journal of General Practice

*(£65,838 per WTE (ARRS 2024/2025) divided by 48 weeks (allowing for AL) = £1,371.63 per week. This creates around 80 clinical slots = £17)

Pure Physiotherapy has completed an audit on 2,091 patients, following them up for 3 months after their FCP consultation to see if they re-attended primary care within that time to see another healthcare professional for the same condition. The audit concluded that 79.8% did not return (hoping to have this published in 2025). This shows that FCP can genuinely offload the MSK pressure in a sustainable and highly significant way.

The NHSE roadmap to practice documents stipulate the patient feedback form all FCPs must use. Taking a sample of 500 patients' feedback from the last quarter of 2024, we see the average score is:



Anonymised patient feedback comments:

"Very impressed, she listened to my concerns and changed my exercises and informed me that if I have any more problems I can contact her again."

Patient

NHS Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland ICB

"I felt that the FCP assessed the impact of the pain holistically, was very clear in her advice and explanations. Advice was given regarding smoking cessation in a non judgmental way. She made me feel very at ease."

Patient

NHS Birmingham and Solihull ICB

"After two years from 2011 of doctors and pain specialists not listening to me or ordering a scan, I eventually had to undergo surgery to remove a C5 disc from my neck. Naturally, I was apprehensive before my appointment today. However, I can honestly say that the examination of my neck, along with the reflex testing, explanation, and advice, was outstanding. I was also impressed by how quickly my appointment was scheduled through my doctor."

Patient

NHS Herefordshire and Worcestershire ICB

MSK FCPs are there to reduce the MSK burden on general practice. The way Pure Unity Health approach the FCP service we deliver is focused on maximising this for the benefit of the PCN, practice staff and patients.

To find out more about how we can help provide the most impactful FCP support please get in touch.