

Physiotherapy Report



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- All the people who kindly filled in our surveys and helped us build up a picture of how physiotherapy is experienced in Brighton and Hove.

Quick Summary

Physiotherapy is a type of therapy that can help ill, injured or disabled people recover movement and function to their full potential. Healthwatch has surveyed 86 people in Brighton and Hove who recently or current receive physiotherapy locally. The survey was handed out in waiting rooms, available online and promoted widely. Many people praised good practice of individual physiotherapists. Nevertheless, just under half of people surveyed found waiting times from the time they were told they needed physiotherapy to getting their first treatment unsatisfactory. Some issues with communication were also found, particularly around people knowing what to expect from their physiotherapy sessions, and information about how to conduct exercises at home.

Introduction

Physiotherapy is an essential part of a health service, for many people. It is a type of therapy that can help ill, injured or disabled people recover movement and function in different areas of their bodies. They can help to treat problems linked to a number of body systems, including musculoskeletal (muscles and bones), neuromuscular (nerves and muscles), cardiovascular (heart and blood vessels), and respiratory (breathing). Physiotherapy is a protected title, which means all physiotherapists must be registered with the Health and Care Professions Council.

Physiotherapy takes a holistic approach, which means that the patient helps to direct their own care in some ways. People are often responsible for carrying out some of their exercises at home¹, as well as managing their lifestyle. At home the main treatments are movements and exercises to be carried out regularly; in the clinic ‘manual’ therapy is often used, which involves massage and hands-on movement of the affected area. Acupuncture can also be included as part of a physiotherapist’s range of treatments to improve and restore movement.

Access to NHS physiotherapy in Brighton and Hove is usually through referral from a GP or hospital consultant. Regular clinics are held at the Royal Sussex County Hospital, Brighton General Hospital and Hove Polyclinic. Specialist neurological cases are treated in The Princess Royal Hospital in Haywards Heath. There are also a number of Children’s Centres and gyms offering NHS physiotherapy services in the area. Many physiotherapists also work in private practice, sometimes in sports injury clinics².

Some physiotherapy clinics in Brighton and Hove have found that around three quarters of their patients suffer with chronic non-specific pain (for example back pain), which physiotherapy could help to alleviate³. Other clinics mostly see patients who need rehabilitation after an operation on a joint to get as much movement as possible back in the affected area. Sports injuries can usually be

¹ NHS Choices: Physiotherapy <http://bit.ly/16JoAXU>

² See Yellow Pages for more information on these <http://bit.ly/14nyP47>

³ Sourced from conversations with a local Physiotherapist

treated within GP surgeries, but will occasionally need physiotherapy during the healing process.

This survey focuses on the patient's experience of physiotherapy, which is important because physiotherapy involves the patient directly in their own care. Question 2 asks the patient to define their health issue; Questions 1, 3 and 4 define the route to treatment. Later questions ask if people felt they were helped to understand the cause of their problems, and if they had enough information to do their exercises at home. The survey also asked people for ideas to help improve the service, in order to motivate them to do their exercises at home.

Physiotherapy may achieve a reduction in pain and increased movement in joints. However, in some cases treatment will lead to a programme of pain management, which might include learning how to minimise pain, gain a healthy weight, improve posture or increase activity. People arrive at physiotherapy for many different reasons, so expectations about the results may vary widely - from the perhaps overly optimistic belief that physiotherapy will be the complete solution, to the somewhat pessimistic one that it probably will not work but will be worth a try. Because of these varied expectations, the quality of communication between the physiotherapist and their patient is likely to affect the patient's satisfaction with their treatment.

How we carried out the survey

A survey of patient's experiences of physiotherapy was first suggested by Brighton and Hove LINK, the organisation which preceded Healthwatch Brighton and Hove. It wanted to investigate this area, because people's experiences of the service varied widely. The LINK's research group wrote and reviewed the survey based on the opinions of people who had experienced the service, but the organisation closed before it could be circulated. The LINK recommended that the survey be run by Healthwatch Brighton and Hove⁴. The Healthwatch Transition Group agreed that

⁴ Brighton and Hove LINK Handover to Healthwatch Brighton and Hove <http://bit.ly/119DR67>

the survey should go ahead. The original survey was therefore finalised and carried out.

The survey was open for 3 weeks (1st - 21st June) It was advertised using Healthwatch's monthly magazine, the Healthwatch Brighton and Hove website, and through social media such as Facebook and Twitter. It was also promoted through the CVSF discussion list, and at Healthwatch's People's Day stand⁵.

In the third week of June volunteers from the Transition Group visited 3 key physiotherapy sites in the city⁶ to ask people to complete the survey. Nearly everyone we asked to complete a survey was happy to do so whilst they waited for their appointments.

A total of 86 people completed the survey, including 27 from The Royal Sussex County, 7 from Brighton General Hospital and 14 from Hove Poly Clinic. The remainder completed the survey online, or at events and meetings.

What the survey told us

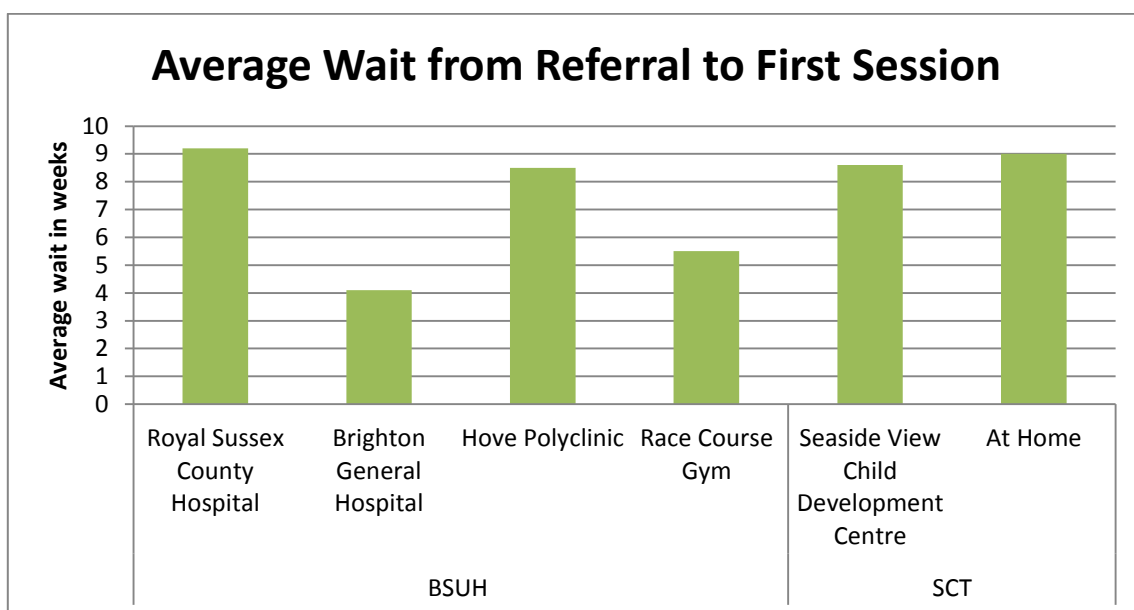
People were mainly referred for physiotherapy by their GP (48%) or by a hospital consultant (47%). They were referred to physiotherapy for a wide range of reasons, most commonly knee, hip or back problems. People also used physiotherapy to improve a range of long term conditions such as respiratory issues, Cerebral Palsy and Parkinson's Disease.

The people who responded received their NHS physiotherapy treatment in 8 different places in the city. In order of most mentioned, these places are: Royal Sussex County Hospital, Brighton General Hospital, Hove Polyclinic, Seaside View Child Development Centre, The Racecourse Gym, and other places like homes, schools and nurseries.

⁵ Some more information about People's day can be found here <http://bit.ly/14ld4ej>

⁶ The sites visited were Hove Polyclinic, Brighton General Hospital's Physiotherapy department, and Royal Sussex County Hospital's Physiotherapy department

The time taken from a person getting an initial referral to receiving their first treatment ranged widely. Some people were seen within 1 week, but some waited up to 6 months to receive treatment, with the average waiting time across all services and conditions being 8 weeks. As the graph below shows, waits varied from service to service. The average wait that people could expect from Sussex Community Trust Services (SCT) was 9 weeks, and for Brighton and Sussex University Hospital Trust Services (BSUH) was 7 weeks.



The time taken to get the first physiotherapy session seems to depend on how urgently the patient needed treatment. When asked if the time they waited for their treatment felt satisfactory, over half (56%) felt that it was. 15% of those asked said that their wait was not only unsatisfactory, but made their condition worse. Many people from this group underwent private physiotherapy to prevent this. 15% of the people asked were unsure if their wait was satisfactory or not.



63% of people said they did all of the home exercises they were told to do, and 36% said they did most of the home exercises they were set. We asked people what could be done to help encourage people to do their exercises. The most common

replies (after ‘I cannot think of anything’, which accounted for over half of the answers) were group classes, general encouragement, checking suitability of exercises, and better written instructions and diagrams. The need for better information was also reflected in the fact that only 63% of people felt they received enough information about their treatment.

People who were given enough information about their treatment



It is important that any person who receives NHS treatment understands what’s going on and feels involved in making decisions. Most people felt that their physiotherapist fully explained what to expect of the treatment (75%), the benefits of the home exercises (90%) and their physiotherapist made them feel involved when making decisions about treatment (74%).

6 Wonderful service by all, thank you **9**

We asked people if there was anything that could be done to improve physiotherapy in Brighton and Hove in the future. 28% felt they could not improve



on the service they received. Common answers for those that felt things could be improved included wanting more sessions, more one-to-one appointments, and more hands-on work during sessions⁷.

Suggestions for better communication and information sharing were creative. Some people felt that providing booklets that show how to do the home exercises, or making existing booklets more widely available, would help people to understand more about their home exercises. For patients who use the internet, it was suggested that YouTube clips could be created for people to follow.

Our survey gave people a chance to talk about anything else related to their physiotherapy, which had not already been covered. In general the comments here were very positive, and while many mentioned that the waiting times were a problem, the majority praised physiotherapy staff and felt the system was well organised. There were also some comments around wanting to be treated more as an individual by physiotherapists during sessions. Several people commented that the Seaside View Child Development Centre was particularly helpful.

Out and About- Asking local organisations

Healthwatch Brighton and Hove visited the Sussex Interpreting Service's annual general meeting to get their views on Physiotherapy in the city. About half of the 80 people present had recently used physiotherapy services. The majority of people waited between 2 weeks and 3 months for their first appointment, and half of those asked thought the wait was unsatisfactory. Along similar lines to the main research, only 58% felt that they had received enough information about their treatment.

⁷ The 'word cloud' below uses size to represent how many people gave an opinion. The bigger the image, the more people made the suggestion.

Our Conclusions

For many people, NHS physiotherapy in the city seems to have been a good experience. There was much praise for physiotherapists themselves, and for how organised the service was as a whole.

However, some themes have come up which seem to be worth further discussion. Waiting times are considered too long for a number of patients. This finding is backed up by other national research which shows that 73% of physiotherapy services have seen an increase in demand, which has led to longer waiting times⁸. Whilst there are some innovative ideas on how to reduce waiting times⁹, the issue continues in many areas of the UK. Once a referral has reached an NHS physiotherapist, patients should expect a wait for between 4 to 6 weeks to receive treatment, depending on the severity of their condition. As this survey measured from when people were told they needed physiotherapy to their first appointment, it is possible that longer waits could be due to delays by the person who makes the initial referrals. The NHS constitution¹⁰ says of any treatment that:

 It is your right to start treatment within 18 weeks from referral 

Thankfully, no organisation's average waiting time was close to this maximum amount. However, some individuals will have experienced a wait which goes beyond this maximum limit. The issue of waiting times, teamed with patients wanting more sessions than the NHS provide is leading to some patients turning to private physiotherapy treatment.

As mentioned in the introduction, people's expectations of what the sessions will be like, how long they can expect to wait and what difference the physiotherapy will make to their health tends to be very different from person to person. Many people in this survey told us that they did not know whether some parts of the service were good enough or not. This could add to the idea that many patients do

⁸ Chartered Society of Physiotherapy. (2013). Physiotherapy outpatient services survey 2012.

⁹ University of Bristol research on physiotherapy appointments via telephone <http://bit.ly/1auWxAr>

¹⁰ NHS Constitution Handbook, p.29 <http://bit.ly/Hmb2e5>

not know what to expect from the service. There also seems to be a trend in people telling us that they felt they did not have enough information about their treatment, and how to do their exercises.

Aside from these issues, many areas of the physiotherapy services in Brighton and Hove are worthy of praise. Most people felt involved in decisions and understood their problems and treatment.

Recommendations

Healthwatch Brighton and Hove would like to work with providers and people receiving treatment to improve people's experiences in the future, and support change in the areas outlined below. The following is a short list of recommendations for moving forward in light of what we have found.

1. For Healthwatch Brighton and Hove to facilitate communication between providers and the public in explaining to people why waiting times are longer than people expect in some cases. Providers are invited to comment on their waiting times, along with an explanation around how they triage patients in their responses to these recommendations.
2. For providers to create promotional materials such as posters which explain to potential patients what they can expect from physiotherapy. Such a resource could be found online for patients to look at, and also displayed in waiting rooms.
3. For providers to review the way they provide information about how to do exercises at home, and to explore if it is possible to update/create paper booklets, and look into the possibilities around creating online videos which show how to do exercises.

Sussex Community NHS Trust's Response

We are grateful to Healthwatch Brighton and Hove for providing us with the opportunity to respond to the physiotherapy report July 2013 which includes reference to Sussex Community NHS Trust (SCT). Feedback on our services is helpful for us to understand what we do well and where things can be improved. We have informed Healthwatch Brighton and Hove that we only provide a small proportion of the total commissioned physiotherapy services across Brighton and Hove. The largest provider in Brighton & Hove is Brighton and Sussex University Hospitals NHS Trust (BSUH). Brighton and Hove Clinical Commissioning Group should be able to inform Healthwatch Brighton and Hove what each provider is commissioned to provide, to help give some representation to this report.

We have asked Healthwatch Brighton and Hove some questions to clarify the findings of the report, in order that we can provide meaningful responses, including:

- Out of the 86 people surveyed, how many of these directly relate to a) Seaside View and b) At Home (SCT provides some small physiotherapy services to people via multi-agency and multi-disciplinary integrated primary care teams, as well our respiratory service, community rapid response service, potentially our osteoporosis and falls prevention service and possibly via our Sussex Rehabilitation Centre)? Healthwatch Brighton and Hove have informed us that all responses relating to SCT were completed via an online form independently, 8 responses relate to Seaside View and 2 responses from people who use SCT physiotherapy at home, although the appropriate named service has not been captured. This makes it hard to make representative comparisons between services and providers, especially as our commissioned activity is much lower. Therefore, if a small proportion e.g. says they have waited over 6 weeks, this may not be a true representation of the full service experience at Seaside View and the other physiotherapy services we provide for adults. Healthwatch Brighton and Hove have informed us that SCT represents 12% of the total responses.

- We have informed Healthwatch Brighton and Hove that BSUH provide follow up physiotherapy at home after people have been discharged from hospital following an operation i.e. hip replacement. In the report physiotherapy at home is presented as SCT as the provider. There is no at home data for BSUH. Healthwatch Brighton and Hove have informed us that they did not ask people specifically if they received services from an Integrated Primary Care Service or any other appropriate SCT service, therefore as this information is not available we therefore feel unable to comment on it. Please see below our full responses relating to Seaside View.

Recommendation One

Seaside View - physiotherapy

The service provides screening, assessment, diagnosis and management of children and young people from 0-19 years with complex needs who suffer from a physical difficulty or impairment which affects their function. The service is provided through the Integrated Child Development and Disability Service - jointly provided by SCT and Brighton & Hove City Council Children and Families Delivery Unit via a Section 75 Provider Agreement, bringing together health and social care, providing holistic care and support.

Triage

All referrals to the Community Paediatric Physiotherapy team are received via the integrated pathway at Seaside View Child Development Centre (SVCDC). Referrals requiring more than 1 professional are discussed at fortnightly panel meetings, in order to ensure the most appropriate teams are involved and the child is seen in the most appropriate clinic.

All children/young people referred to physiotherapy at SVCDC will receive an individual assessment and advice. They may require a physiotherapy programme which is communicated to parents, carers and young people to undertake.

Current waiting times are:

- Urgent referrals - seen within 4 weeks.
- Semi-urgent referrals - seen within 8 weeks.
- Routine referrals - seen with 12 weeks.

Children with the highest level of complex needs are prioritised. We also work in schools and nurseries to enable staff to deliver physiotherapy programmes and better support young people with additional needs in the community. Further information about physiotherapy service for children at Seaside View is available from our website: www.sussexcommunity.nhs.uk/services/servicedetails.htm?directoryID=16370

Recommendation Two

Seaside View - physiotherapy

Appropriate advice for each young person's needs is given in writing following discussions, tailored to their individual needs. We work together to ensure all children who require on-going treatment have a clear written plan, which includes advice, how much direct intervention to expect and jointly set treatment goals.

Children and young people generally receive one-to-one treatments at SVCDC, sometimes also with an occupational therapist (based on individual needs), and occasionally some group work as an adjunct to their on-going physiotherapy management.

We work closely with Amaze (<http://amazebrighton.org.uk/>), a local charity offering advice, information and support to parents/carers of children with additional needs, on service developments, such as provision of written and visual information, and development of webpages on the Brighton and Hove City Council website (www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/children-and-education/childrens-services).

We work closely with parents and carers who are represented at our quality and standard meetings, and in the recruitment of new staff.

Recommendation Three

Seaside View – physiotherapy

All our information provided to young people, parents and carers is personalised to their individual needs. We are aware that new videos are uploaded to YouTube daily and there are videos already available on the subject of children’s physiotherapy. If we feel there is a need to commission videos for a specific purpose, we will look into this. Most of the children we see have complex needs and one-to-one support is often the best way to provide care. There is also appropriate national guidance from Arthritis Research UK including exercises: www.arthritisresearchuk.org

Brighton and Sussex University Hospital Trust's Response

Recommendation One

The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy guidelines suggest waiting times for musculoskeletal physiotherapy should be less than 10 working days for urgent referrals and 4-6 weeks for routines. These are guidelines, and how closely services work to these is often based around how services manage demand and capacity. Within Brighton and Hove MSK physiotherapy we can offer an urgent appointment within 10 working days but routine waiting times fluctuate between 8-12 weeks. We have done a lot of work with the PCT/CCG's on managing demand and helping GP's manage demand their patients in the community. We have offered GP training days and produced a number of self-help leaflets to help patients recover/manage simple musculoskeletal complaints. Unfortunately every month the number of referrals which we receive into our service continues to outstrip our capacity and exceeds our CCG contracted levels, hence our difficulty maintaining a 6 week wait. We are constantly looking at new ways of working so that we can maintain a high quality of service but keep waiting times down to an acceptable level.

Notice has been given by CCG's on current contract as the CCG's are working with Mid Sussex and Horsham Crawley CCG's to provide a new integrated MSK services, early indications in that waiting times and access to physiotherapy is one of the key deliverables.

Recommendation Two

We have a physiotherapy website www.nhsphysiosussex.org.uk The website gives information on what to expect from a physiotherapy appointment. In February we are moving to a new electronic booking system which should allow us to detail more information on our appointment letters, and include the website details. We did previously send out a leaflet with our invite letters called 'What to expect from physiotherapy'. The feedback we had was that nobody looked at the leaflet so our

receptionists tended to brief the patient on the telephone when they made an appointment. In January we are likely to move to an administrative hub and therefore we could explore the possibility of refreshing the provision of this leaflet.

Recommendation Three

We already use a programme called physio tools that allows us to print out personalised exercise regimes for patients. The plan for the coming year is to upload exercise videos from reputable sources as video reference for patients and we also have an increasing number of leaflets which provides info about patient's condition how to manage it and exercises these are currently been expanded and these are all accessible to GPs.

Physiotherapy Survey

1. Who referred you to physiotherapy?

GP

A&E

Nurse

Hospital Consultant

Other (please specify)

2. Why were you referred to Physiotherapy?

3. Where did you have physiotherapy?

The Hospital

Your Own Home

The Hove Polyclinic

Other (please specify)

4. How long did it take to get your first appointment, from when you were referred (told by someone that you needed physiotherapy)? E.g. 3 weeks, 3 months

5. Was the length of time you waited for your physiotherapy satisfactory in your opinion?

Yes

No

Unsure

If no or don't know – do you think the waiting time has **made your condition worse?**

6. Do you feel you were given enough information on your physiotherapy treatment?

Yes, all the info I need

To some degree

Not really

Not at all

7. Did you do the exercises you were advised to do?

- Yes, I did all of them Yes, I did some of them No, I did not do any I was not advised to do any exercises

8. Is there anything that could have been done to help encourage you to do the exercises?

- Group Classes Better written instructions More info from Physiotherapist
 I was not advised to do any exercises Nothing I can think of Other

Other (please specify)

9. Did the physiotherapist fully explain what to expect from the physiotherapy treatment?

- Yes No Can't remember

10. Were the benefits of any exercises you were asked to do at home explained to you?

- Yes Can't Remember
 No I was not told to do any exercises

11. Do you/did you feel involved when making decisions about your treatment?

- Yes No Can't remember

12. Is there anything that could be improved with your physiotherapy treatment sessions?

13. Is there anything else you'd like to mention on this subject?

Thank you for taking the time to complete our survey!
We will put all of the findings into a report, which will be available on our website
www.healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk

