



Faculty of Sport
and Exercise
Medicine UK

FSEM

Modernising Musculoskeletal and Physical Activity Medicine

A Summary of FSEM's
Workforce Planning Proposition



Introduction

Musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions have a major impact on the health of this nation, with one third of the UK population living with an MSK complaint. At an individual level they can have severe consequences in terms of pain, loss of function, increased risk of disability and loss of income. It reduces physical activity and therefore contributes to the development of many other conditions such as obesity, diabetes, cancer and cardiovascular disease. Over 28 million working days are lost every year in the UK due to MSK conditions, impacting economic productivity. The health and social consequences of these conditions are greater in areas of deprivation and have the potential to widen health inequalities when not addressed.

It is of paramount importance that people with MSK pain receive rapid, high quality, evidence-based treatment. This is best provided through a multidisciplinary team (MDT) working across community and secondary care.

The UK needs an integrated MSK and physical activity workforce

To significantly improve the management of MSK and conditions and build a confident, well trained, professionally supported, integrated MSK workforce we need:

- An increase in Sport and Exercise Medicine (SEM) Consultant numbers
- An increase in specialist training posts across all four nations
- SEM involvement in commissioning of MSK services nationally to build sustainability and diversity into the workforce

The strategic aims of our newly established integrated care systems include a focus on productivity, population health, prevention and reducing inequalities. SEM as a specialty is well placed to be part of the MDT delivering and leading this.



SEM Consultants will ease the NHS's burden

Consultants in SEM are experts in the management of musculoskeletal conditions in the general population and are trained in the use of physical activity in the prevention and treatment of illness and injury. They work with colleagues across health to refocus on the importance of physical activity as a part of the management of long-term health conditions. The NHS has an inadequate number of skilled SEM Consultants to support the system with the growing care demands of the UK population. As previously alluded to, this has a negative impact on morbidity, work absenteeism and on the wider teams providing their care.

SEM Consultants have demonstrated their value within the MSK and physical activity workforce across tertiary care, secondary care, and community care settings since 2007. Despite this, of 42 integrated care systems across the UK, only around 15 currently benefit from this expertise. Those who do employ SEM Consultants are generally also training locations.

There are multiple examples of successful SEM-led MSK services highlighted in the full workforce planning document, each model locally designed to work for each community and its partnerships to deliver sustainable and high quality MSK care.

Understanding and overcoming the challenges

We know that MSK conditions are widespread, with many implications for health and care. We also know the dangers of physical inactivity. Even more concerning, we know that those who suffer from long term conditions such as MSK problems are among the most likely to be inactive, despite having the most to gain from moving more. We also know that those experiencing the greatest health inequality are most likely to be physically inactive. It is imperative that we find a way to bridge that gap.

The success of the Long-Term Plan depends on the success of collective endeavour. In other words, it relies on clinicians working together across systems to deliver best care for patients. SEM Consultants routinely work across systems both by upskilling and



supporting the system wide MSK team and by working with all healthcare professionals to encourage them to have impactful conversations about physical activity.

The NHS Long Term plan highlights the importance of a flexible integrated workforce to develop and support staff and ensure efficiency. For SEM, this is essential because MSK conditions and physical inactivity are both so common. An effective integrated workforce depends on:

- A well-functioning interface between primary, community and secondary care
- The effective utilisation of IT-based solutions
- Flexibility of Consultants in the geographical location they work.

The Faculty's role in driving change

The Faculty of Sport and Exercise Medicine (FSEM) has embraced key relationships with other, larger organisations to deliver our vision and strategic goals. We are a standard setting organisation committed to raising the standards of both MSK and exercise medicine delivery in the NHS. We understand the importance of working together with our multidisciplinary colleagues to deliver cost-effective but high-quality care across our scope of practice.

There are many ways in which the Faculty drives positive change, including work with Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) to support the upskilling of the GP workforce, the development of the UK advanced practitioner MSK Standards, and developing MSK care and exercise medicine / physical activity diploma examinations. We work with multiple partners both inside and outside of government on the secondary prevention agenda, developing key resources to support healthcare practitioners deliver physical activity as a key part of routine clinical practice.

Conclusion

To meet the growing burden of MSK and inactivity-related conditions, the Faculty is committed to building a skilled, integrated workforce. Through strategic partnerships and national leadership, we aim to embed SEM expertise across care systems and improve health outcomes for all.





**Faculty of Sport
and Exercise
Medicine UK**



Contact Us

Faculty of Sport and
Exercise Medicine UK
1a Hill Square
Edinburgh
EH8 9DR



0131 603 4060



enquiries@fsem.ac.uk

