

Physiotherapy - Profession specific descriptor for registered professionals and support workers

As experts in movement, the Physiotherapy workforce understand that physical activity plays a significant role in the prevention of many of the long-term conditions that are costly to health and care services and impact on the lives of an ever-increasing number of people. But physical activity is not the only factor contributing to the increasing prevalence of long-term conditions such as diabetes, obesity, cancer, respiratory disease and malnutrition. The Physiotherapy workforce is already talking to people in their care about other parts of their lifestyle that contribute to the development of ill-health such as physical activity, smoking, alcohol consumption and loneliness.

Wider Determinants

Physiotherapists play a key role in addressing the wider determinants of health.

Physiotherapy can contribute to policy making, for example, they are currently involved with changes to community rehabilitation which have occurred in response to health inequalities within the population. Physiotherapists have been looking at barriers to rehabilitation and working to help people access Physiotherapy services by overcoming those barriers and making it easier for communities to access services e.g., providing Physiotherapy services in gyms and leisure centres, and encouraging people to self-manage conditions, particularly long-term conditions, where appropriate.

Physiotherapy support workers can work with deprived groups e.g., asylum seekers to support them in accessing healthcare facilities, identifying the level of treatment they are entitled to and ensuring they get it, signposting them to places to access funding for necessary equipment, and accessing toys if needed for broader health and wellbeing.

Physiotherapists work closely with marginalised groups e.g., people with learning disabilities, who experience health inequity and restricted access to services. There are Physiotherapists who specialise in working with these groups to ensure that they are best placed to meet the health and wellbeing needs of their patients.

Physiotherapists work with population specific charities to provide condition specific support those groups and their families e.g. spina bifida charities, to provide support to families. They can also support with things like charity applications for better wheelchair to promote better access to better quality of life/activities/education as needed.

Physiotherapists can help people access, stay in, and return to employment. They can do this both through supporting individuals with their unique needs, and by working in occupational health settings, doing assessments of buildings and working environments.

Physiotherapists are also able to provide support and advice about wider health conditions and use this advice to prevent conditions leading to secondary problems, potentially also reducing hospital admissions associated with those secondary problems. This is particularly important for people with longer term conditions/developmental problems, Physiotherapists can help with postural issues, for

example, by supporting the way that they stand, and provide equipment to make sure that they're able to participate in and enjoy life.

Health Improvement

Physiotherapists encourage patients to engage with wider healthy living activities such as increased physical activity levels, to promote general good health and wellbeing. Studies show that Physiotherapists are trusted by the public to impart advice about physical activity and healthy lifestyle.

Motivational interviewing and health coaching are integrated into Physiotherapy training and these skills give Physiotherapists the capacity to support patients in improving their health wellbeing and resilience. Physiotherapists encourage health improvement through behaviour change and motivate them to engage with long-term healthy living behaviours.

Physiotherapists integrate Making Every Contact Count (MECC) into practice with patients about wider health elements e.g., smoking cessation. As part of this they can also encourage patients to attend any national screening services. E.g., local population drive on 75+ health check. Physiotherapy support workers often check things like weight and blood pressure while the patients are waiting to go into an appointment. In some areas there are also databases of online tools, local healthcare, voluntary community and social care providers which have been embedded into a clinical template to make it easy to see where patients can be referred onto in the area.

Physiotherapists have recently started to work within long COVID clinics, providing activity pacing support and supporting other professionals with their care, to support the health and wellbeing of people with long COVID.

Population Healthcare

The Physiotherapy workforce supports self-management of individuals with long term conditions. For example, Physiotherapy support workers host support groups to educate and promote the management of long-term conditions. Group education sessions are hosted in the community for specific populations. These can provide falls advice and guidance for the groups.

Physiotherapists have an important role in the care home setting. Physiotherapists and their support workers deliver care in care homes to monitor and improve the respiratory and mobility issues of the residents. This can prevent avoidable admissions to hospital and prevent possible (long-term) complications associated with deterioration and deconditioning in this population. Active Hospitals' is a scheme to improve levels of activity within hospitals which prevents deconditioning in patients (particularly the elderly population) while they're in hospital, prevents the loss of muscle mass and loss of independent function.- <https://movingmedicine.ac.uk/active-hospitals>

Health Protection

Physiotherapists have been deployed in vaccination hubs to support the timely roll out of immunisation against COVID and Influenza.

Infection prevention and control is a key part of a Physiotherapist support worker's role and they will ensure that all equipment is sanitised. This has become especially relevant during COVID-19.

Physiotherapist support workers work with patients who have just been given new orthotics and talk to them about the health and safety of the device including cleaning, safety, and the need to build tolerance.

Physiotherapy – Wider Reading and Case Study Examples

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<p>Health Protection</p>	<p>Wider Determinants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual Physiotherapy Review Project – Working to create an efficient, patient centred and cost-effective service to those with profound and multiple learning disabilities in the community • Physiotherapy Pulmonary Rehabilitation – Social Prescribing Active Signposting • Physiotherapy – AHP as Prescriber – Social Prescribing • Physiotherapy – AHPs promoting, growing and developing social prescribing
<p>Population Healthcare</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sport for Confidence and Stay Connected: Creating an online physical activity service • Collaborative cross agency service delivery to address public health issues within an MSK setting: evaluation of the 'Healthy Mind, Health Body' project 	<p>Health Improvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MECC Ready • Making Every Contact Count' to promote smoking cessation: What is the impact of AHPs routinely giving brief advice to patients who smoke on a vascular ward? • Physiotherapy back pain – Social Prescribing Active Signposting • Physiotherapy physical activity – Social Prescribing Active Signposting