

Quick Business Case

Hiring a physiotherapist within the adult mental health community team to fulfil a gap in service

V1

Executive summary

We completed a six-week project looking into the need for a physiotherapist to sit within the adult mental health community team in XXXX. Currently, there are many members of the multidisciplinary team working within this service however there aren't any physiotherapists hence the importance of this project as a physiotherapist would help to provide holistic care to this cohort of patients.

We found that there was a need for a number of different reasons; patients needing physiotherapy who had not been referred to mainstream services, patients who had been referred to mainstream services but not received treatment due to not attending appointments or disengagement from services and had therefore fallen through the gap; patients who are currently attending mainstream physiotherapy appointments but requiring significant assistance to attend and are therefore using valuable time of other clinicians to do this. There is also a body of evidence to support our recommendations, which is outlined below.

Therefore, from our findings we would recommend that a physiotherapist with some experience in mental health and experience working in core areas of physiotherapy. We believe that to add to this body of evidence this physiotherapist should be hired for a six-month period, potentially on secondment, to carry out further research and to demonstrate the feasibility and need for a physiotherapist. With this project only being six weeks long we were limited in the amount of research we could do therefore it is key that some further research is done to form a full economic case.

Background

Adult mental health community teams treat a wide range of patients suffering from many different conditions such as psychosis, schizophrenia and depression amongst others. Currently the team here in Portsmouth consists of OTs, OTAs, social workers, support workers, nurses, psychologists, psychiatrists and peer workers however there are currently no physiotherapists working within the team. Therefore the purpose of this project was to investigate the need for a physiotherapist to working within the adult mental health community team in XXXXXX.

Individuals with severe mental health illness (SMI) such as schizophrenia and bipolar disorder have increased morbidity and mortality compared to members of the general public (Robson & Gray, 2007) and research is showing that to be increasing. Furthermore, patients suffering from mental health problems are less likely to access mainstream services (Latoo et al., 2022). To promote equal levels of care for both patients with mental and physical problems hiring a specialised physiotherapist to work within adult mental health community settings may be a strategy to provide parity of esteem.

Research has demonstrated a strong correlation between past mental health and physical health, vice versa and both in direct and indirect ways. The indirect effect of past mental health on physical well-being is mediated by lifestyle choices and social interactions. However, much of this research was carried out in an older population. Systematic reviews found regular moderate-to-vigorous physical activity (MPVA) such as brisk walking, yoga, tai chi, and lap swimming is known to improve physical health and prevent and manage chronic conditions (Hu et al., 2016; Patel, Newstead and Ferrer, 2012; Yan et al., 2013). Similarly, physical activity is also associated with improved mental wellbeing and reduced the risk of developing mental illness, also improved symptom management in patients with preexisting condition (Gorczynski and Faulkner, 2010; Mammen and Faulkner, 2013). Research also found exercise and physical activity provide benefits across diverse psychiatric and neurological conditions such as schizophrenia, anxiety, PTSD, ADHD, and dementia (Pajonk et al., 2010).

Common co-morbidities of mental health conditions are diabetes, cardiovascular disease, cancer, infectious diseases, and dementia, some of which exercise can have a positive impact on. Exercise prescription of 30-60 minutes, three times a week of moderate intensity exercise is an effective treatment for weight management and obesity related MSK symptoms. A study showed that meeting the criteria for resistance exercise and aerobic exercise was the best way to prevent or manage obesity however many people don't achieve the recommended guidelines for resistance exercise or perceive that to complete it requires a gym membership (Brellenthin et al., 2021). Exercise should be recommended as it also can help with secondary prevention of osteoarthritis (Barrow et al., 2019).

Exercise for diabetes management, whether aerobic or resistance training or a combination, facilitates improved glucose regulation. High-intensity interval training is also effective and has the added benefit of being time-efficient. A study concluded that regular exercise produces health benefits beyond improvements in cardiovascular fitness which include enhanced glycemic control, insulin signaling, and blood lipids, as well as reduced low-grade inflammation, improved vascular function, weight loss and insulin sensitivity which lasts for 96 hours post exercise. All these changes are beneficial for the management of type 2 diabetes (Kirwan, Sacks and Nieuwoudt, 2017).

For patients with cardiovascular disease (CVD), exercise significantly reduced CVD-related mortality, decreased risk of myocardial infarction, and improved quality of life (Pinckard, Baskin and Stanford, 2019).

The higher cardiometabolic risks observed in individuals with mental health conditions compared to the general population can be attributed to a variety of factors. Lifestyle factors play a significant role, as individuals with mental health conditions are more prone to engaging in unhealthy behaviors such as poor diet, lack of physical activity, smoking, and substance abuse. These behaviors increase the risk of obesity, elevated blood pressure, high cholesterol levels, and diabetes, all of which contribute to cardio metabolic risks (Karatzi et al., 2021). Additionally, certain medications used in the treatment of mental health conditions, such as antipsychotics and mood stabilisers, may have metabolic side effects, leading to weight gain and impaired glucose metabolism (Himmerich, Minkwitz and C. Kirkby, 2015; Whicher, Price and Holt, 2018).

Studies have shown that healthy lifestyle interventions targeting diet, physical activity, and smoking cessation can lead to improvements in cardio metabolic risk factors among individuals with severe mental illness (Bonfioli et al., 2012; Bruins et al., 2014). These interventions may include dietary counseling, structured exercise programs, and smoking cessation support.

Physiotherapy can have several benefits for adult mental health patients. Some of the potential advantages are:

- Improved physical health
- Physical rehabilitation
- Reduced stress and anxiety
- Improved self esteem

Therefore, our analysis clearly highlights the need for the appointment of a dedicated physiotherapist within the adult mental health community teams in XXXXX. By bridging the existing gaps in care, this addition will ensure that patients receive the specialist care they require, leading to improved overall outcomes and a reduction in the health inequalities within service therefore improving parity of esteem.

By advocating for the integration of a physiotherapist, we aim to address the current shortcomings and enhance the quality of care provided to these individuals, therefore creating a more inclusive and equitable healthcare system for all.

The appointment of a physiotherapist within the adult mental health community team would fall in line with the AHPs in mental health and learning disability strategy because it will help with the vision of improving the lives of people who access the service by providing more well-rounded, holistic care.

Case 1 - Strategic case

Reasons for business case:

Promoting equity in healthcare is essential. Equity means that every individual, regardless of their background or circumstances, should have equal opportunities to access and benefit from the services we provide. To achieve this, we need to identify and understand the specific health inequalities within our service and develop tailored approaches to address them.

People with mental health are less likely to access routine healthcare and the NHS long term plan outlines that they should receive an annual health check to reduce health inequalities in this area (NHS, 2021). Research shows that those with poor mental health are also more likely to suffer from poor physical health but have the lowest chances of receiving treatment (Latoo et al., 2022). This also means that patients with mental health conditions are less likely to access mainstream physiotherapy services.

Due to unmet health needs, people with serious mental illness die on average 20 years before the rest of the general population. Furthermore, when compared to the general population, young adults aged 15 to 34 are five times more likely to have three or more physical health conditions. Those aged 15 to 74 are one and a half to two times more likely to have a serious

physical health condition such as obesity, asthma, diabetes and COPD amongst others (PHE (Public Health England), 2018). Physiotherapy plays an important role in the treatment of COPD; different treatments can involve breathing techniques to help with breathlessness and chest clearance as well as pulmonary rehabilitation classes. Physiotherapists can also help with the treatment of asthma in similar ways, providing education and treatment surrounding breathing techniques and chest clearance techniques. Physiotherapy can play a role in the management of obesity and diabetes by providing education on weight management and physical activity.

Addressing health inequalities in accessing physical healthcare for individuals with mental health conditions requires a comprehensive approach that involves collaboration between mental health and physical health professionals, improved care coordination, and targeted interventions to ensure equal access to healthcare services. By addressing these inequalities, we can work towards ensuring that individuals with mental health conditions receive the necessary physical healthcare they need to maintain their overall well-being.

The NICE guidelines for mild to severe depression state that all patients with depression should receive tailored exercise programs consisting of one exercise session per week for ten weeks with roughly eight participants in the group. The guidelines state that a trained practitioner should provide this intervention (NICE, 2022).

The NICE guidelines for psychosis state that people with psychosis or schizophrenia, especially those taking antipsychotics, should be offered a combined healthy eating and physical activity programme by their mental healthcare provider (NICE, 2014). Physiotherapy could play a role in providing health education for this. These guidelines also state that MDT teams for treatment for psychosis should not include a physiotherapist however these teams should have access to physiotherapists for treatment if required, therefore for reasons that we'll go onto explore having a physiotherapist sitting within the team could be beneficial.

Physiotherapy can have several benefits for adult mental health patients. Some of the potential advantages are:

- Mental health conditions can often lead to physical symptoms, such as chronic pain, stiffness, and reduced mobility. Physiotherapy can help address these issues, potentially reducing pain, improving range of movement, and increasing mobility.
- Physiotherapists are experts in assessing and treating musculoskeletal, neurological and cardiovascular respiratory conditions. Through various techniques such as exercise prescription, education on gait and breathing techniques amongst others, physiotherapists help individuals recover from physical deficits and improve patients' function abilities. This process often contributes to increased self-confidence and overall mental well-being.
- Physical activity has been shown to reduce stress and anxiety, which are common symptoms of mental health conditions. Physiotherapy can provide a supportive environment for patients to engage in physical activity, which may help them manage their symptoms.
- Physical activity can improve self-esteem and confidence, which are often low in individuals with mental health conditions. As patients make progress in their physiotherapy sessions, they may feel a sense of accomplishment and increased confidence in their ability to manage their symptoms.

The recovery model for mental health focuses on an individual's ability to regain control and live a meaningful life. Research into this model highlighted that when following this model an assessment of an individual's mental health must include their physical wellbeing (SCIE, 2012). Physiotherapists can play a role in assessment of physical health which is closely related to physical wellbeing. Therefore, despite the recovery model not directly mentioning physiotherapy these two treatments can complement each other and work closely together to provide an increased quality of life for mental health patients.

The development of this case and the need for a physiotherapist in mental health arise from the limitations of mainstream physiotherapy in meeting the specific needs of the mental health population. Generic physiotherapists often lack the necessary specialised knowledge and expertise in mental health conditions. Therefore, the integration of specialist mental health physiotherapists becomes essential to provide guidance and support to occupational therapists and physiotherapists in generic settings who may not possess sufficient specialised skills in mental health. By incorporating a dedicated physiotherapist with expertise in mental health, we can enhance the overall quality of care and ensure that the unique requirements of individuals with mental health conditions are effectively addressed. Additionally, from our virtual caseload we had five different occasions where clinicians brought patients to us for specialist advice, as it was not in their scope of practice to treat these specific conditions. This further emphasises the necessity of having a dedicated physiotherapist with specialised knowledge in mental health within our team.

Stakeholders

- Patients under the mental health community teams who have physiotherapy needs.
- Allied Health Professions Team (Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy Teams).
- Nursing and support worker teams from the community mental health teams.

Anticipated outcomes, benefits and risks:

Hiring a physiotherapist within the adult mental health community team is expected to produce several beneficial outcomes. Firstly, incorporating physiotherapy services into the team will enhance holistic treatment for patients. Physiotherapy interventions can address physical symptoms and promote overall well-being, contributing to improved mental health outcomes. Additionally, the presence of a physiotherapist will widen the scope of the multidisciplinary team, allowing for combining of physical and mental health specialists to provide more integrated care. This integration of professions will result in more comprehensive treatment for individuals, promoting better overall health outcomes. This physiotherapist could work flexibly providing some community visits for those who wouldn't otherwise access care and they could also provide some clinic sessions for those nearing the end of their rehab as a progression of their rehab as these clinics would be run in a similar style to mainstream services just by someone with specialist mental health training. Furthermore, the addition of a physiotherapist will enable early identification and intervention for physical health issues often associated with mental health conditions, such as musculoskeletal problems or sedentary lifestyles, therefore improving quality of life. Overall, hiring a physiotherapist within the adult mental health community team is expected to lead to improved physical health outcomes, increased collaboration among healthcare

professionals, and a more comprehensive and patient-centered approach to mental health care.

Whilst hiring a physiotherapist within the adult mental health community teams has many beneficial outcomes, it is important to consider any risks that it might pose. One of the main risks of implementing the role of a physiotherapist would be overlapping of services, where current professionals are already providing care adjusting to the new role that the physiotherapist would provide may take some time. This may lead to patients who need physiotherapy not being referred or inappropriate referrals being completed. However, to mitigate for this risk teaching sessions for the team could be completed to inform the current professionals of the role that physiotherapy would play within the team. Secondly, there would be financial implications of hiring a new member of staff which would mean that resources would need to be directed away from another area to allow for the physiotherapist to be suitably trained and employed within the trust. Finally, there are risks that the anticipated benefits would not materialise however from the research we've done over the past six weeks sitting within the team and talking to professionals and reading up on patients this is unlikely to be the case as we have identified a lot of need for physiotherapy. Overall, so long as there are teaching sessions, open lines of communication and ongoing evaluation, these risks will be well managed, and any downfalls should be able to be mitigated to allow for successful implementation of a physiotherapist within the adult mental health community teams.

Case 2- Clinical Quality Case

Staffing arrangements:

After analysing the findings, we have identified a pressing requirement for a dedicated physiotherapist to work within the adult community mental health team. This role is critical in promoting the overall well-being and recovery of our clients. The physiotherapist will work collaboratively with the multidisciplinary team to address the physical aspects of mental health conditions and improve the functional abilities of our service users. We propose recruiting an experienced physiotherapist who would run clinics and complete home visits. This individual will possess expertise in mental health and rehabilitation, enabling them to provide tailored treatment plans and interventions. They will conduct comprehensive assessments, develop personalised exercise programs, and implement evidence-based techniques to enhance mobility, reduce pain, and support the overall physical and mental health of our clients. This individual should aim to deliver holistic care that recognises the interconnectedness of mental and physical well-being, ultimately fostering improved outcomes and quality of life for our service users.

Quality impact assessment:

- Patient Safety

Employing a dedicated physiotherapist in the adult community mental health service will positively impact patient safety. The physiotherapist's expertise in mental health and rehabilitation will enable them to assess and address any physical risks or limitations that may pose a threat to patient safety. By developing personalised exercise programs and implementing evidence-based techniques, the physiotherapist will enhance mobility and reduce pain, thereby minimising the likelihood of accidents or injuries (King and Anderson, 2010).

- Clinical Effectiveness

The presence of a physiotherapist in the team will significantly improve clinical effectiveness. Their ability to conduct comprehensive assessments and provide tailored treatment plans will result in more targeted and efficient interventions. By addressing the physical aspects of mental health conditions, the physiotherapist will contribute to the overall effectiveness of the treatment approach, leading to improved outcomes for the service users (Doherty and Gaughran, 2014; Ohrnberger, Fichera and Sutton, 2017).

- Patient Experience

Employing a physiotherapist will greatly enhance the patient experience within our adult community mental health service. By addressing the physical well-being of our clients, the physiotherapist will contribute to their overall sense of well-being and recovery. The personalised exercise programs and evidence-based techniques will not only improve mobility and reduce pain but also empower patients to actively participate in their own recovery journey, resulting in a positive and fulfilling experience.

- Staff Experience

The addition of a physiotherapist to our team will have a positive impact on staff experience. The multidisciplinary collaboration between the physiotherapist and other team members will create a supportive and cohesive work environment, enhancing job satisfaction and professional growth opportunities for all staff members involved in the care of our clients.

- Equality and Diversity

Employing a dedicated physiotherapist aligns with our commitment to equality and diversity. The physiotherapist's expertise in mental health and rehabilitation will ensure that the diverse needs and backgrounds of our service users are considered. By providing tailored treatment plans and interventions, the physiotherapist will address the specific physical challenges faced by individuals from different cultural, social, and demographic backgrounds, promoting inclusivity and equitable access to care.

Case 3 - Economic Case

* Is the proposal appropriate and value for money? * Business Options (Do nothing, Do the minimum, Do something) * Economic Appraisal (Findings and conclusion) * Details of the procurement process * Resource Implications * The preferred options

Case 4 - Commercial Case

Over the past six weeks we have gathered 13 patients and added them to our virtual caseload, we have given advice directly to the referring clinician for 5 of them. One of the patients we picked up and have seen on a weekly basis. 5 of the patients could potentially benefit from some signposting or physiotherapy input in the future and 2 were inappropriate referrals. Out of these 13 patients we identified 4 who had been referred to mainstream services however were no longer receiving treatment due to not attending appointments or disengagement from services. The patient that we took onto our caseload and went and saw suffers from systemic lupus and complains of reduced balance, she also suffered a recent fall whilst stepping down a set of stairs- when we assessed her, we found that she had reduced balance, reduced lower limb strength, and reduced range of movement which are all problems that

physios can help with. After assessing this patient, we devised some goals and a home exercise program for her which we have given to her and will review in two weeks' time to review her progress. A further patient who we identified could benefit from specialist community input is a patient who was awaiting a total hip replacement who had been referred to MSK outpatients for prehab. This patient did not attend two appointments meaning that they were discharged from physio as there are strict rules within MSK outpatients regarding how many times patients are allowed to miss appointments. This patient still has a need for physio due to having osteoarthritis hip however they have fallen between the gap in service provision and therefore this shows that if there was a specialist community physiotherapist within the adult mental health team, they could have picked up this patient and given them appropriate treatment prior to their surgery. These two examples are just a couple from the virtual caseload which give a picture of the types of patients within Portsmouth who could benefit from physiotherapy.

Case 5 – Financial Case

As this physiotherapist would initially be the only one within the team there would be need for them to be competent within mental health and core areas of physiotherapy. They would also need to be confident as they will complete lots of lone working. Therefore, it is recommended that the physiotherapist that is hired has at least completed some core rotations and it would be beneficial if the physiotherapist hired had some previous experience working within mental health whether that be inpatient or community focused. Taking this into account the minimum salary for this position would probably be £30,639 per annum which is the average salary for a band 5 physiotherapist with 2 to 4 years of experience (NHS, 2019). It is recommended that a physiotherapist is initially hired for a six-month period, potentially on secondment to continue to gather further evidence. This evidence would then be able to be used to calculate a full economic case as provide further evidence for the business case as a whole.

Financial Appraisal

	Year 0	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Total
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Preferred Choice:						
Capital						
Revenue						
Total						
Funded by:						
Existing						

Case 6 – Staff and patient feedback

A member of staff that we worked with emphasised that mental health patients often conceal their true feelings and conditions effectively or masking them when they are in the hospital or an unfamiliar environment. However, through home visits, therapists can witness firsthand how patients behave in their own familiar surroundings, allowing for a more accurate assessment of their mental and emotional well-being. This approach uncovers hidden concerns that may not be evident in clinical settings, enabling more targeted and effective treatment.

He also emphasised the importance of building strong relationships and rapport with patients. By engaging with patients in their own homes or familiar environments, therapists can establish a deeper connection and understanding. This increased familiarity encourages patients to open up, actively participate in their treatment, and collaborate more effectively with their therapists. As a result, the therapeutic relationship becomes stronger, leading to better overall outcomes.

While there may be a lack of literature evidence specifically regarding patient masking their feelings in hospitals, I believe the staff's extensive practical experience adds valuable insight to the topic. By unveiling hidden mental health concerns, fostering stronger therapist-patient relationships, and promoting holistic care, community physiotherapy offers a patient-centered approach that can lead to enhanced engagement and improved mental and physical health outcomes.

Some patients that we met in the well-being clinic were uncertain about the scope of physiotherapy and the specific interventions and treatments it can offer for their conditions. For instance, individuals with COPD may be unaware that physiotherapists can help in managing their shortness of breath through techniques like Active Cycle of Breathing Techniques (ACBT) in conjunction with education.

When patients are not feeling well, especially when experiencing anxiety or discomfort leaving their homes, many individuals with mental health conditions believe that seeking assistance from community physiotherapists who conduct assessments and treatments in the patient's own environment would be beneficial, as an alternative to visiting the MSK outpatient clinic as they would be unable to get to the MSK appointment. By offering physiotherapy services in the right place, at the right time, and by the right healthcare professional, we can ensure that patients receive the necessary care in a setting that is convenient and supportive of their mental health needs.

Case 7 - References

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