

For the Connect Health & Wolverhampton Integrated Musculoskeletal Service (WIMS)

Q1. Who is Connect?

A. Connect Health is the largest, specialised independent provider of community musculoskeletal (MSK) services (including orthopaedics, pain and rheumatology) in the UK, serving over a quarter of a million NHS patients per year across 19 NHS contracts and 75 businesses.

Q2. Where do they operate from?

A. Connect has grown from a single private clinic established in 1989 in the North East, to providing services all over the UK. The head office is based in Newcastle.

In Wolverhampton we have services in

- West Park Hospital
- Phoenix Health Centre
- Coalway Road Medical Practice
- Penn Manor Medical Practice
- Keats Grove Medical Practice
- Bilston Health Centre

We run patient group sessions and patient education seminars at

- Newhampton Arts Centre

Q3. What is MSK?

Musculoskeletal conditions can often be a major cause of pain, disability and ill-health. Over 200 musculoskeletal conditions affect millions of people ranging from all forms of arthritis, back pain and osteoporosis and often the most common reason for repeat consultations with a GP, making up to 30% of appointments (Department of Health, 2006).

Q4. The physio has told me I can only be treated for 2 areas of my body, even though I have been referred for more, why is this?

A. The Wolverhampton Integrated Musculoskeletal Service (WIMS) has been commissioned as an 'episode of care' service, which essentially means our physiotherapists can only assess and treat you for the issues that your GP has told us about in the referral form. Your physiotherapist can treat you for more than 2 areas of the body, provided they are on the referral from your GP. More time would need to be allowed for a safe and effective assessment.

Q5. I have to ring for my next appointment, why can't I make it there and then?

A. WIMS operates a service where patients are asked to phone a Wolverhampton telephone number to book their next appointment. This allows more time for you with your physiotherapist. It also allows patients to make a choice as to when they come back for treatment. If there are reservations around using the phone opt-in system, then an appointment can be booked there and then by the physiotherapist.

Q6. If I am deaf, how am I supposed to ring for my next appointment?

A. If there is no one to make the call on your behalf (family member or friend) then your physiotherapist will make the appointment with you while your British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter is present. We are aware that all patient circumstances are different and procedures can be altered for the benefit of the patient and their safety.

Q7. Who is responsible to arranging an interpreter including BSL if I need one?

A. It is the GP's responsibility to make us aware that an interpreter is required but we also check this when we book your first appointment. Interpreters are booked by Connect's booking team.

Q8. Can I get a choice of who I see and where?

A. Yes, you have a choice of where and who you see. If you chose a venue which is particularly popular then you may be offered alternatives as early treatment is key to recovery.

Q9. I had been given a letter from my GP to book an appointment via Choose and Book, but when I went to book on the times were very early in the morning, can you explain why this is?

A. There are different ways that Choose and Book can be used and WIMS is not one that offers 'directly bookable' appointments to patients. The process is:

- Your GP books you a 'dummy appointment' which essentially notifies us that there is a referral - which we then manage.
- Your referral is registered within 48 hours of the GP surgery *attaching all necessary information*. It is then assessed, if appropriate, within a further 48 hours and then we will attempt to contact you.

Q10. Once referred, how long should it be before I get an appointment?

A. Our target is to see 95% of all patient referrals within 4 weeks but the majority of referrals will be seen sooner.

Q11. If I choose a surgery / health centre, how do I book in?

A. By delivering care in as many locations as possible we offer patients choice and care close to home. As a result of offering services across a range of locations, we do not have our own dedicated reception staff at all venues. In some instances, the GP practice/health centre reception staff are happy to mark people in manually, but we are not directly linked to GP electronic record systems or auto-call display boards.

Q12. Do I need to book in, or do I just take a seat?

A. When you arrive for your appointment you should take a seat and your physiotherapist will call you. There are posters in all venues that direct and advise you.

Q13. Will I still be able to have acupuncture with the new service?

A. Acupuncture is one of the treatments offered by the service. The decision of whether the use of acupuncture is appropriate is made with you after an assessment by your physiotherapist. All treatments will be considered after assessment and based on current best evidence.

Q14. Are all services available at each GP practice?

A. Not all the services that Wolverhampton Integrated Musculoskeletal Service offers are available at each GP practice. Our services include: pain management, Clinical Assessment and Treatment Service (CATS), physiotherapy, rheumatology and groups are community based.

Q15. Why are you delivering your services from one side of the city?

A. At present we only operate in centres listed In Q2. We accept referrals from all GPs in the Wolverhampton CCG area and all of our locations are accessible by public transport and road. Currently free parking is also available at all locations.

Q16. Where do you want to expand to?

A. We have options to operate out of more locations as the need and demand changes

Q17. What contact do you have with the CCG as to where you want to go in terms of delivering the services in Wolverhampton?

A. We have a list of GP practices and health centres that we can have access to across the Wolverhampton area. This list was supplied by Wolverhampton CCG during the mobilisation phase of the new service

Q18. Are you delivering services out of any GP practices that are part of the Vertical Integration Scheme?

A. Currently we do not operate in practices that are vertically integrated with RWT.

Q19. The lack of information is appalling in Wolverhampton - I did not know the service existed until I saw the poster for this event?

A. Prior to the service starting in April 2017 Connect engaged in GP events, Practice Manager Forums and education sessions. Information leaflets have been made available for GPs.

Q20. How long is your programme funded for?

A. The Wolverhampton Integrated Musculoskeletal Service is a commissioned service by the CCG. The contract is for 5 years.

Q21. Can you self-refer?

A. No, you cannot self-refer to the WIMS service. Referral is made via your GP

Q22. Carers and Social Services do not know about this service.

A. As with any new service it can take time for all agencies to become aware. The way patients access physiotherapy in Wolverhampton has not changed and the first point of contact is with your GP.

Q23. Are there prompts to follow up patients who fail to book appointments, even when they are advised to do so as the onus is now on the patient to make the call and to book an appointment and this will put some patients off.

A. See question 5 and 9 above