

## Millions To Get Fast Support To Overcome Back Pain Thanks To NHS Long-Term Plan

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Tens of thousands of people have been helped to overcome back pain, arthritis and other muscle, bone and joint conditions without going to hospital, thanks to additional specialist care at local GP surgeries – with millions more set to benefit over the coming years as the NHS delivers on its Long-Term Plan.

Trials in 41 areas including Nottingham, West Cheshire and Gloucestershire have seen patients choosing to be assessed and treated for common musculoskeletal conditions by physiotherapists with enhanced skills based in GP practices, rather than waiting to see a GP to get a referral to hospital.

Evaluation of the service found that in some areas they delivered hundreds of thousands of pounds of savings which the NHS can reinvest into patient care, while patient satisfaction with the care they received was very high – in some cases 100%.

And new polling today shows that people are overwhelmingly in favour of this approach, saying that they would be happy to see a physiotherapist as the first point of contact instead of a GP if they have back or joint complaints.

The service will be rolled out to help patients across the country as part of the NHS Long Term Plan which is expanding services at GP surgeries, with primary care networks joining up care across every community.

Patients will be able to book convenient appointments directly with physios and other expert health professionals at a local practice, without the need to wait for a referral or travel to a specialist clinic, which might be out of town.

Initial findings from the pilots, supported by NHS England's Elective Care Transformation Programme, show that faster treatment leads to faster recovery. Up to seven in 10 patients were successfully discharged after just one consultation, and one part of the country reduced the number of people requiring long term physiotherapy care by a fifth. The service also helps people to manage their arthritis.

Allowing patients more direct access to the specialist care they need is better for people's health, but also reduces pressure on GPs' time, with one practice freeing up an extra 560 appointments over the course of a year.

The NHS Long Term Plan set out an ambition to reduce the number of hospital appointments by 30%, saving thousands of journeys, reducing traffic and pollution, and making the NHS more efficient. This aim will be supported by a review of how the NHS measures waiting times for non-urgent care.