



CONNECT HEALTH Bee-inspired

Alison Byrne, MSK Physiotherapist and team leader at Connect's MSK service in Hammersmith & Fulham, talks about her first year at Connect



“If you are willing to work hard and provide evidence based practice to give best patient care, there are great opportunities for development and career progression within Connect.”

If MSK is the route you want to go down, Connect provides the best opportunities with excellent training by experienced MSK clinicians

I was Taped over to Connect in May 2016, having previously been a locum in the service. I had applied for a permanent job at the Trust in Jan 2016 knowing that Connect were taking over in May 2016. It's fair to say there was a lot of bad feeling and hearsay that our community MSK NHS contract would be taken over by a private care provider.

The main changes we were advised would take place early on, were that the service would be reformed and appointment lengths would be reduced from 45mins to 30mins for new patients and from 30mins to 20mins for follow up appointments.

I was a little apprehensive about these changes as we see a diverse patient population who often present with complex presentations. My fear was that I would not be able to offer quality care to these patients with the proposed reduced appointment lengths.

At the time, I wasn't aware of the positive changes that would be made alongside the reduction in appointment lengths.

Our team at the time consisted of about 8 physios and 6 locums. Currently we have a consultant physiotherapist, 16 physios/CATS, 2 rehab therapists, 2 consultants and 2 locums. After successful recruitment **we have been able to reduce our reliance on locum staff and build a cohesive MSK team of permanent staff.**

Three months into the new contract we had a management change which resulted in a new operations manager and a new clinical lead for our service. With this new management team in place there were many positive changes in a short space of time. The main service changes were the introduction of patient classes and the use of Hammersmith gym as a rehab facility for patients. **Both of these pathways immediately improved capacity and reduced waiting times for patients.**



Patient education sessions were also introduced which were an effective way of giving a group of patients good care in a short space of time with key messages supported by the best clinical research.

Change in service structure dramatically reduced waiting times

Previously in the old service there was a 12-16 weeks waiting list for new patients so by the time patients were offered an appointment their symptoms were often chronic and in many cases they would need onward referral to secondary care for pain clinic which resulted in further waiting times for our patients.

When Connect took over the contract they brought in a service called PhysioLine which was designed to triage, assess and treat patients via telephone consultation. As the telephone consultations are quicker than a full assessment **this has resulted in patients getting their first contact quicker than they would have done previously** and patients being given excellent advice over the phone which empowers them and encourages them to self manage with advice and exercise. PhysioLine has been really successful and has meant that urgent patients get seen quicker and patients are directed to the right service for their individual needs in the shortest amount of time. As we have a self-referral system, it is very easy for patients to contact us and this also helps to reduce GP appointments for MSK conditions if patients can self refer without seeing a GP first.

Best thing about Connect - for me it's the opportunity to develop

There is a nice sense of openness with Connect. Any opportunities are emailed to the entire team. If you are willing to work hard there are great opportunities. Since joining Connect I have become a team leader and have been involved in development programmes which I'm really enjoying and finding extremely beneficial as a physio.

Connect also promotes flexible working with all staff. I think it is a huge benefit and promotes a good work/life balance. **I work 4 days a week and have the option to work from home one day per week** also. I typically do one gym day, 2.5 clinical days and a day in my team leader role.

Advice to others considering a career at Connect

If you are willing to work hard and you know that MSK is the route for you then you will do really well with Connect.

Connect is particularly good for new graduates as there are excellent training programmes for newly qualified physios specifically the ADP (Accelerated development programme). In-service training is particularly strong within Connect and there is an excellent supervision structure in place to help clinicians continually develop and grow through the use of evidence based practice.

If you'd like to find out more about working at Connect, contact hr@connecthealth.co.uk



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