Wrightington, Wigan and Leigh Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust

Pain Management Programmes- Participant information

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Participant Information: Pain Management Programmes

For people with chronic pain and carers

What is a Pain Management Programme?

A Pain Management Programme (PMP) is a group treatment which uses education and practice sessions to help people with chronic pain manage their pain and everyday activities better. Chronic pain means long-term pain. By learning to manage their chronic pain in a better way, people find they are also helped to improve their quality of life. Whilst attending a PMP, people develop skills that help them to self-manage their pain. These skills include:

- Learning about managing everyday activities, such as hobbies and work
- How to do gentle exercise
- How to relax both mind and body
- How to avoid overdoing activity and increasing pain
- Understanding the psychological effects of chronic pain
- How to improve confidence to cope with chronic pain

These skills are discussed later in more detail.

Who runs a PMP?

The staff running PMPs are healthcare professionals with additional skills to help you self-manage your pain. Usually, a PMP will have a psychologist and a physiotherapist providing most of the sessions, and other staff such as occupational therapists, nurses, and doctors are often involved.

Who is a PMP for?

PMP treatment is for people with chronic pain, when this causes reduced activity and unhappiness. It is usually recommended after investigations for your pain. People who attend PMPs will very often have tried many different treatments, including medication trials.

For some people, none of these treatments will have worked, while for others treatments may work but are limited by side effects.

How can I get on to a PMP?

People are often referred by their GP, and you could ask your GP to refer you. You can also access a PMP through a specialist. Most commonly, this is organised through a Specialist in Pain Medicine as part of a broader package of care. Your GP may advise you further about local arrangements.

Can everyone with persistent pain attend a PMP?

A PMP can be available to anyone with chronic pain. However, before being invited to attend a PMP, you will need to be assessed to see if it will be helpful for you. This usually involves a discussion with the PMP team and completing some questionnaires. During this assessment, you will have the opportunity to ask questions about the treatment. If you have any special requirements, there will be an opportunity to discuss this with the PMP staff as part of the assessment. This will allow the PMP staff to ensure that extra support is available for you when possible.

What will I do at the PMP?

It is a friendly group environment where you can have positive and confidential discussions with other people who have chronic pain. People often make friends with other group members whilst on the PMP. It is advisable to wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothes when you attend the PMP so that you can do the gentle exercises. The PMP sessions are varied so that you do not have to sit or stand for long periods.

PMP sessions include:

- **Gentle exercise:** In a group setting, you will be guided by an expert on the right sort of exercise for you. You will not be given physiotherapy manipulation as a treatment. Continuing gentle daily exercises after the PMP will help to keep you fit and active and keep pain levels down.
- **Relaxation:** Stress and tension can increase pain and make concentration difficult. The PMP helps you learn how to relax your mind and body. Continuing relaxation after the PMP will help with self-management of stress and pain.

- **Discussion groups:** These confidential and positive group discussions are about self-managing pain and topics include:
  - How pain occurs
  - Medication for pain and how to reduce reliance on medication
  - The effect of pain on the mind and body
  - How to manage stress
  - How to improve sleep
  - The effect of pain on friends and family
  - How to resume hobbies and work
- **Targeting and pacing:** Some people overdo activities on good days and then pay for it afterwards. This leads to frustration, loss of confidence, and increased pain. Bit-by-bit, pacing methods are used to set simple, realistic targets for your activities. Continuing targeting and pacing methods after the PMP will help build up your activities and stamina, and also your confidence.

Are there any side-effects?

There are none as such; however, you may have some muscular discomfort at first, as you start to do gentle exercises. This is the same for anyone who does exercise that they have not done for some time. This discomfort is not caused by your condition getting worse, and it will decrease as you continue the gentle exercises.

Will I be cured?

Your pain will still be there at the end of the PMP, but often people report that their pain is reduced. Although the pain is still there, people are more confident to manage it on a day-to-day basis. They feel emotionally stronger and more able to cope with the pain psychologically. Chronic pain is more than a simple sensation – it is an experience, and many factors influence the experience of pain, some worsening the experience and some lessening it. The aim of a PMP is to help you do more of the things that lessen the experience of pain, and hopefully reduce some of the things that worsen the experience of pain.

What can I expect after completing a PMP?

At the end of a PMP, people are usually more flexible and have increased stamina. They also have increased confidence and feel happier. The aim of a PMP is to help people have

a better quality of life despite having chronic pain. To have long-term benefit, you will need to continue to practice what you have learnt from attending the PMP. This will often include doing regular gentle exercise, regular relaxation, and regularly using targeting and pacing principles for your daily activities.

What support is available after the PMP is completed?

Often people make friends on the PMP and create their own support network for after the PMP. There are pain support groups around the UK, and your local PMP may provide details of those closest to you.

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