

What helps people with musculoskeletal pain stay in the labour market, if they are self-employed, flexible or portfolio workers? Patients' and First Contact Practitioners' views (FocalPoint)

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Participant Information Sheet

Introduction:

You are being invited to take part in an interview as part of the FocalPoint study. Before you decide whether you would like to take part, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Please read the following information carefully and, if you wish, discuss it with others. You can ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Please take time to decide whether you wish to take part after reading this information carefully.

What is the purpose of the study?

Persistent musculoskeletal (MSK) pain is a major health problem, with over 20 million people in the UK living with a MSK condition, such as arthritis or low back pain. We know that for patients with MSK pain being engaged in safe, appropriate work can be beneficial. At present in the NHS when people first consult their GP with an MSK problem, they are given a consultation with an NHS First Contact Practitioner (FCP) - an experienced physiotherapist who is specially trained in the assessment and diagnosis of MSK conditions.

We want to understand both patients' and FCPs' experiences of these consultation sessions, and especially where these include discussions around supporting people to return to work. In particular, we are keen to understand how return to work could be facilitated for people working in flexible employment situations, such as freelance / contract workers or those working in the 'gig-economy' or under a zero-hours contract.

Why have I been invited to participate in an interview?

We are looking to interview people who have musculoskeletal pain, who have had an appointment with an FCP in the two years, and who either have worked, or are currently working, in a flexible employment situation, such as being in self-employment, in freelance or contract work, a 'gig-economy' job or under a zero-hours contract. Participants must be at least 18 years old.

You have been informed of this study either because someone has brought the study advertisement to your attention, or you have come across this through one of several general advertisement channels such as social media, email or a study flyer.

Do I have to take part in an interview?

No. It is up to you to decide whether to take part. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason. Deciding to withdraw at any time, or a decision not to take part, will not affect the standard of care you receive.

What will taking part involve?

Registering your interest to participate

If you are interested in taking part, we would first ask that you complete the online 'Expression of Interest' (EOI) form, which can be accessed using the web address provided on the advertisement materials you have received, or on our study website at <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/FocalPoint>. This form will ask some basic questions about you, your work, and your musculoskeletal condition.

If it is more convenient to do so, you may arrange with a member of the research team for them to complete the form on your behalf by asking you questions over the phone. In such cases these calls will be recorded and stored on secure University of Aberdeen servers. The research team member will check you are happy with this process prior to starting the recording.

Consent and interview scheduling

After you complete the form, a member of the study team may then contact you to discuss the study further. Completion of the form does not guarantee you will be contacted, as depending on interest we may receive more people wishing to participate than we are able to interview.

If contacted, a research team member will discuss with you whether you would like to participate in an interview, check you are eligible for the study, and answer any questions you might have about this research. If you still wish to participate we will provide you with a copy of the study consent form, and another copy of this document for you to review prior to consenting. We will arrange a separate time to go through the consent process with you after giving you time to look over these materials. Consent will take place either over the phone or virtually via Microsoft Teams at your request. You can download Teams for free, or you can alternatively access the interview session via weblink. Consent will be audio recorded and you will be provided with a signed copy of the completed consent form for your records.

Interview process

If you are happy to proceed we will also arrange a suitable time at your convenience to conduct an interview. Interviews will take place virtually via Microsoft Teams and will be audio recorded. The interview will ask about your work and your experiences of your FCP consultation(s), and to what extent you feel that these sessions could be used to support your working life. The length of the interview will vary depending on the precise topics covered and how much detail you wish to give, but we anticipate these should last approximately 45 minutes.

The audio recording of the interview will be sent electronically via a secure link to an external company approved by the University of Aberdeen in order for this file to be transcribed for analysis.

Reminders and contact attempt

If you have indicated to us that you are interested in the study (for example where you have contacted us via email, or where you have given us contact details but we do not have a complete response to the EOI form) we may contact you once as a reminder, with instructions on how to proceed if you are still interested in participating. If we do not hear back from you after this we will assume you have changed your mind and no longer wish to participate in the study.

Similarly, where you have indicated willingness to participate, we may make reasonable attempts to contact you, for example in order to discuss eligibility or schedule a consent appointment or interview time. We will make no more than three attempts to contact you across communication channels, unless you have otherwise indicated willingness to continue at an intervening point of contact. At our last contact attempt we will, if possible, leave a message letting you know we tried to contact you and will assume if we don't hear back from you that you have changed your mind and no longer wish to participate in the study.

What if I register my interest but am not required for the study?

Depending on the level of interest we receive, it is possible that not everyone who is eligible will be contacted by the study team. If you are not selected, we will contact you by email to notify you of this. Please note if we do not receive an email address for you we will be unable to send you this notification.

What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part in an interview?

We expect that taking part in an interview will take up approximately 45 minutes of your time, although this will vary from individual to individual. Some people may find talking about their condition or their work to be upsetting or stressful. If you find any part of the discussion upsetting or uncomfortable you are always free to take a break or to leave the call. Should you choose to leave the interview after it has begun, the research team will contact you to check in and to provide you with sources of support, and if you wish to rearrange to continue the interview at a later point you will be able to do so.

What are the possible benefits of taking part in an interview?

We do not anticipate that there will be any direct benefit to you if you decide to take part. However, we hope that the findings from this study will help improve patient care and help to support people with MSK pain to return to work and stay in work for as long as they wish to do so.

How will we use information about you?

We will use information from you for this research project, including your name and contact details. Information provided via the Expression of Interest form will only be used in order to contact you regarding participation in the study and consent, and also to make sure we speak to people with as broad a range of experiences as possible.

People who do not need to know who you are will not be able to see your name or contact details. If you were initially directed to the study by your FCP they will not know that you have chosen to participate unless you wish to tell them. Interviews and consent will be audio recorded, and interview audio will be transcribed by an approved external provider. Audio transcripts will be anonymised, and you will only be identified via a code number.

We will keep all information about you safe and secure. Once we have finished the study, we will keep some of the data so we can check the results. We will write our reports in a way that no-one can work out that you took part in the study. All study documentation will be kept for at least 6 years after publication of the study data.

What are your choices about how your information is used?

You can stop being part of the study at any time, without giving a reason, but any responses you have provided up until that point will still be used in the study analysis.

If you agree to take part in this study, you will have the option to be notified about future research studies.

Where can you find out more about how your information is used?

You can find out more about how we use your information:

- at www.hra.nhs.uk/information-about-patients/
- by asking one of the research team
- by sending an email to dpa@abdn.ac.uk
- by ringing us on 01224 272596

What will happen to the results of the research study?

We hope results from the interviews will be used to inform changes to FCP consultations. They will also be published in academic conferences and journals and in summary format on our website.

Anonymised quotations from interviews may be used in these publications. When this happens, it will not be possible to identify individuals. We will also use data that you provide in the initial Expression of Interest questionnaire to describe the broad range of characteristics of the people we interview (for example how many men we interviewed, how many people were working under zero-hours contracts, etc). This data, along with data collected from the interview, will be stored securely on University of Aberdeen servers which only the research team have access to. We will send you a summary of our findings after the study has been completed if you would like to receive this.

Who is organising and funding the research?

The study is organised by the University of Aberdeen and funded by the NHS Grampian Endowment Fund.

Who has reviewed the study?

All research in the NHS is looked at by an independent group of people, called a Research Ethics Committee, to protect your interests. This study has been reviewed by London - Harrow Research Ethics Committee.

What can I do if there is a problem?

If you have a concern about any aspect of the interviews, please contact the study team in the first instance, who will do their best to answer your questions.

If you remain unhappy and wish to complain formally, you can do this by contacting the Research Governance Team at the University of Aberdeen via:

researchgovernance@abdn.ac.uk

Who can I talk to about the study?

You can contact our research team using the contact details below:

focalpoint@abdn.ac.uk

01224 437 863