

NMOP Physiotherapist Prescribing Pilot Service

Overview

The Non-Medical Optimisation Programme (NMOP) Physiotherapist Prescribing Pilot was implemented in Northern Ireland to test the impact of enabling **physiotherapist independent prescribers** to prescribe medicines and appliances using **HS21 prescription forms** at the interface between secondary and primary care.

The pilot aimed to:

- Improve **timely access to treatment**
- Reduce duplication within prescribing pathways
- Reduce the need for **GP prescribing and follow-up** following physiotherapy assessment

Project Overview

The pilot operated between **November 2020 and June 2021** within the:

- **Southern Health and Social Care Trust**
- **South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust**

A total of **19 physiotherapist independent prescribers** participated across a range of clinical settings.

Prescriptions issued during the pilot were:

- Dispensed via **community pharmacies**
- Supported by **electronic treatment advice notes (eTAN)** shared with GP practices to support continuity of care

Key Outcomes

Prescribing Activity and Pathway Change

By the final audit period:

- **79% of prescribed items** were issued directly by physiotherapist prescribers using HS21 prescription forms
- This removed the need for GP follow-up for those prescriptions
- Demonstrated a clear **shift of prescribing activity away from GP practices** within pilot pathways

Access and Timeliness of Care

The pilot reduced the number of steps required for patients to access medicines and appliances, resulting in:

- **Improved timeliness of care across all service areas**
- An average reduction of **approximately two steps in prescribing pathways**

Significant improvements were seen in specific pathways, including:

- **Lymphoedema garments**, where access times reduced from **3–6 weeks to approximately 7–10 days**
- Medicines access reduced to **as little as 1–4 days** in some pathways

Patient Experience

Patient feedback demonstrated:

- **High levels of satisfaction (97%)**
- Positive experiences of communication and involvement in care decisions
- Reported benefits including:
 - Reduced need for GP appointments
 - Faster access to treatment
 - Ability to receive care, advice, and prescriptions within a single consultation

Clinical Practice and Governance

The evaluation identified:

- Strong confidence in **governance arrangements** among prescribers and stakeholders
- **High compliance with the Northern Ireland Formulary**
- **No safety concerns** identified during the pilot

Achievement of Pilot Objectives

The pilot demonstrated that physiotherapist independent prescribing within defined pathways can:

- Reduce duplication in prescribing processes
- Improve access to medicines and appliances
- Reduce the need for GP follow-up within pilot pathways
- Streamline care and improve efficiency in patient journeys

While the evaluation did not quantify system-wide GP workload impact, it confirmed clear improvements within pilot pathways.

Partners Involved

The pilot was delivered in partnership with:

- **Medicines Optimisation Innovation Centre (MOIC)** – service evaluation
- **Southern Health and Social Care Trust**
- **South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust**
- **Community pharmacies across Northern Ireland**

Pilot Duration

November 2020 – June 2021