

Pain Clinics, Pain Management and Functional Restoration Programmes

- ◆ These traditional NHS services are increasingly being reshaped either by integrating them with other services (eg "Community MSK Services) or renaming them.
- ◆ As of 2026, Pain Clinics and Pain Management Programmes (PMPs) are still available on the NHS but there are significant variations across the four home nations in how to access treatment. The Integrated Care Board (ICB) model adopted in England gives autonomy to these regional divisions when deciding the provision of services, potentially leading to more variation in patient experience across England.
- ◆ Functional Restoration Programmes are not as prevalent as PMPs although they are available in some areas.
- ◆ Information about your local clinics and programmes can be found starting from your country's NHS website. The four home nations all have different models:
 - Scotland has 14 Regional Health Boards
 - Wales uses 7 Local Health Boards to deliver all NHS services
 - N. Ireland has five Health & Social Care Trusts under a single structure
 - England replaced CCGs with 42 ICBs in 2022 – reducing to 26 by 2027 – where commissioning of services is under the control of each ICB

A General Note

As mentioned above, NHS services are delivered differently across the UK and, as with most things, change is likely to be constant as the NHS strives to improve its services. It is difficult to offer advice to individuals when so much depends on where you live. If possible, use the NHS websites where you live (and the individual ICB ones if you live in England) to find information on what is offered in your area.

Pain Clinics

People with persistent pain may be able to attend a specialist Pain Clinic for assessment and possible pain management, together with advice on living an active life despite their pain. The clinics are often based in hospitals, although not all hospitals have one. The treatments offered vary according to which clinic you attend. At some clinics a consultant with an interest in pain will prescribe drugs or give injections to try to control pain. Other clinics have teams of doctors, psychologists, nurses, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and others.

There can be great variation on what is available in your area: this applies to all four home nations.

Pain Management Programmes

A pain management programme (PMP) is a psychologically based rehabilitative treatment programme for people with chronic pain. The programmes can be helpful for people who are experiencing persistent pain which causes distress, disability, and has a negative impact on their quality of life.

The programmes are delivered in a group setting by a multi-disciplinary team of healthcare professionals and aims to teach approaches to help people cope with and live an active life despite their pain. It aims to reduce disability and distress caused by persistent pain by teaching physical, psychological and practical techniques for self-management. Unlike Pain Clinics, the primary aim isn't necessarily to reduce pain levels; however, improvements in pain following Pain Management Programmes have been demonstrated. The length of programmes can vary, but on average last two to four weeks. Some programmes are residential for part or all of the duration.

Again, there will be significant variation in what is delivered, and how, particularly in England – reforms are expected to strengthen access and consistency following the significant strain put on these services, post COVID.

Functional Restoration Programmes

Traditionally, a Functional Restoration Programme (FRP) takes a physical therapy or sports medicine approach to helping people affected by persistent pain. The main aim is restoring physical function through targeted increases in physical performance. The programmes are delivered in groups and often based within orthopaedic or physiotherapy services. FRPs may use some of the psychological approaches used in Pain Management Programmes but they don't necessarily have the direct involvement of a professional psychologist.

Nowadays, this model might be deployed under a variety of different names but is still based largely on the same structure. As before this service tends to be less widely available.

Finding your nearest service

Information about local Pain Clinics, Pain Management Programmes, and Functional Restoration Programmes can be found by consulting the NHS website, depending on where you live in the UK. Remember that websites change regularly so you might have to use search functions to find your services.

England: Starting from the NHS website for England www.nhs.uk, by then clicking on NHS Services (top of the screen) and scrolling down, there is currently an option to refer yourself to community musculoskeletal (MSK) services. This option is available if you live in England and are registered with a GP. Bear in mind that where you live can always affect which services you can access easily.

If you want to know more about the services your ICB provides, use the search bar at the very top of the screen to enter "ICB" and you should get a link to find your local board. Each board has its own site but there should be further information on the services offered.

Wales: You can find out about services in your area by contacting your local health board. Contact details of all health boards can be found on the NHS Wales website www.wales.nhs.uk. Choose the link "About Us" then 'Local Health boards' and select your local board for contact information.

Scotland: For information on health services in your area, visit the NHS Scotland website www.scot.nhs.uk, choose the 'Organisations' tab and select your local healthboard for contact details.

Northern Ireland: For information on health services in your area, visit www.hscni.net, choose the "Employers" link and select the one of the five Health and Social Care Trusts for your area for contact details.

Relevant Information

BackCare Factsheets - [Self Management](#)

Useful Associations/Groups:

Action on Pain, Arthritis Care, British Pain Society, Pain Concern, Pain Relief Foundation