



East Sussex MSK  
Community Partnership

**ESMSK**  
**Newsletter**  
**May 2026**



# East Sussex MSK Community Partnership

## Welcome to our May 2026 newsletter!

This month, we'd like to highlight resources we've recently developed to support your interactions with patients, as well as share some of the work and achievements from our first year as the re-commissioned ESMSK service.

Our first year was slightly unusual, having launched in December 2024. Moving forward, we'll now be working in line with the financial year calendar, making this newsletter the first update for "Year 2" covering April 2026 – March 2027.

Throughout 2026–2027, we'll continue developing our communications with both providers and patients to help ensure we remain connected, informed and up to date with the latest initiatives, developments and progress across East Sussex.

Thank you for your continued support and collaboration.

## This month:

- ❑ [Our First Year](#)
- ❑ [Hip and Knee OA Checklist – Updated for 2026](#)
  - [Hip and Knee OA Poster](#)
- ❑ [MSK Health in the Workplace](#)
  - [GIRFT Physiotherapy Self-Referral Poster](#)
  - [GIRFT Back Pain Videos, links and resources](#)
- ❑ [Staying in Touch](#)



## Our First Year

Over the past month, we've been sharing '**Our First Year**' report, highlighting what East Sussex MSK Community Partnership has achieved between December 2024 and November 2025.

It's been a busy first year supporting people across East Sussex with musculoskeletal (MSK) health (that's bones, muscles and joints) and working alongside partners, patients and communities to deliver joined-up care.

The report gives a snapshot of some of the work we've been doing, the partnerships we've built, and the progress we've made together during our first year.

If you'd like to learn a bit more about ESMSK and what we've been up to, you can read the report here:

 [Our First Year Report](#)

Thank you to all our teams, partners, VCSE organisations and patients who have helped shape our first year — we're looking forward to building on this work in the years ahead.



## Hip and Knee OA Checklist

To avoid unnecessary delays in patient care, we have updated our Hip and Knee OA Checklist.

The updated visual clearly outlines:

- What is required for a Hip or Knee OA referral to be considered
- The criteria for Clinically Effective Commissioning
- Which diagnostics are needed, and when
- What conservative management options should be explored

We hope this provides a clearer and more consistent guide for referrals, helps set appropriate expectations with patients, and supports practices to understand what is - and is not - required before referral, ultimately helping to save time for both referrers and patients.

Including all relevant information allows for optimal triage decisions, avoids referrals being rejected and overall helps us to “Get It Right The First Time!

Please feel free to keep a copy of the visual (on the next page or also [downloadable HERE](#)) handy for future reference.

# Hip and Knee OA Checklist

# East Sussex MSK Community Partnership

## Clinical OA diagnosis



- Isolated hip or knee pain >45 years old.
- Pain related to activity.
- No morning stiffness or stiffness lasting less than 30minutes.
- Pain and stiffness impacting on function.

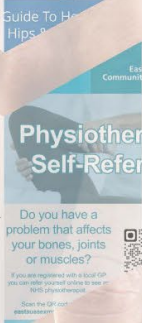
## Self-management information To share!



[eastsussexmsk.nhs.uk/healthy-hips-and-knees/](https://eastsussexmsk.nhs.uk/healthy-hips-and-knees/)

A decision aid booklet to help patients with hip and knee osteoarthritis. The booklet contains self-help, offers weight management and lifestyle information and signposts to supporting services. It also provides exercises and outlines non-surgical treatment options, and even explains joint replacement surgery and what to expect.

## Physiotherapy



Criteria: **Imaging is not required for referral to physiotherapy.**

- ✓ >6 weeks symptoms, despite optimising analgesics.
- ✓ Symptoms impacting ADLs / occupation.
- ✓ Patients can refer themselves for physiotherapy via our website: [eastsussexmsk.nhs.uk/gethelp](https://eastsussexmsk.nhs.uk/gethelp)

*Traditional choose and book referral system is still available for those without tech ability or support.*

## Orthopaedics



- **Check CEC criteria** (see below) are met before considering referral for orthopaedic opinion (Advanced Practitioner or Consultant).
- **X-ray within the last 18 months is required.** Referrals without x-ray may be returned to you.

### Clinically Effective Commissioning (CEC) criteria for THR/TKR:

- Uncontrolled, intense, persistent pain.
- Moderate functional limitations, substantial impact on quality of life.
- Has accessed a Decision aid tool.
- Has had a shared decision making conversation to discuss suitable options.
- Smoking cessation advised if appropriate.\*
- BMI < 35 (ideally), or reasonable attempts have been made to reduce BMI.\*
- Conservative treatment at least 6 months including:
  - ✓ Optimal tolerated doses of analgesia.
  - ✓ Guided exercises and muscle strengthening OR physiotherapy (ineffective in improving pain with bone on bone OA but could still be considered for functional improvements).
  - ✓ Patient education (activity modification and lifestyle adjustment).
  - ✓ Considered use of equipment such as walking aids and orthoses.

Stay connected:

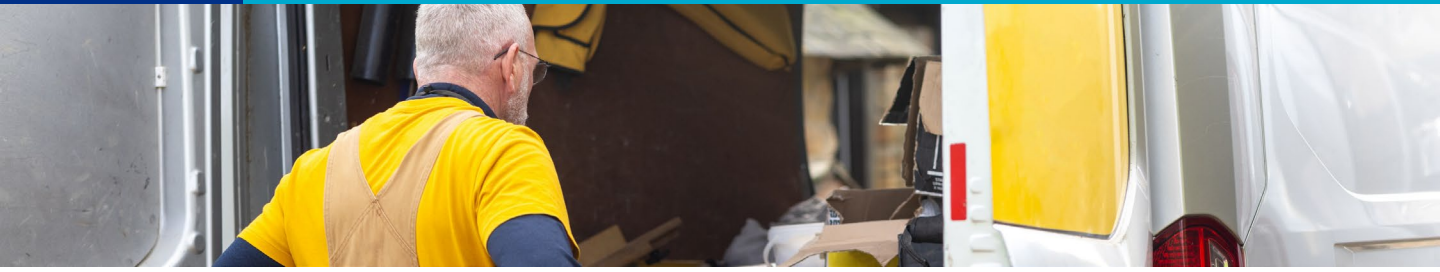


@ESMSK

0300 131 5225

[esht.esmskcontact@nhs.net](mailto:esht.esmskcontact@nhs.net)

\*Consider signposting to **One You East Sussex: [oneyoueastsussex.org.uk](https://oneyoueastsussex.org.uk)**



## Getting It Right First Time (GIRFT) – MSK Health In The Workplace

ESMSK and Sussex MSK Health Brighton & Hove and West Sussex (SMSKH) were recently successful in securing GIRFT funding to trial workplace MSK initiatives across Sussex.

The programme focuses on supporting people whose MSK condition is affecting their ability to work - both those currently out of work due to MSK-related barriers, and those at risk of leaving work because of pain, reduced mobility or reduced confidence in managing their condition.

As part of this work, we have developed targeted resources, posters and educational materials to encourage earlier access to physiotherapy through our self-referral pathway. Updated campaign materials are now being used across East Sussex at outreach events, employer engagement sessions and community venues, with a version of the self-referral poster included on the next page should practices wish to display it locally.

Clinically, we have introduced work-related screening questions into our self-referral form, upgraded referrals from people currently out of work to support earlier intervention, and trialled targeted clinics for patients concerned about potential work absence due to their MSK condition. The pilots continue through May, with outcomes helping to inform future service planning.

Alongside patient-facing work, we have developed shareable videos and resources focused on workplace adjustments and creating more MSK-friendly workplaces. In collaboration with East Sussex County Council's '[Wellbeing at Work](#)' initiative, [Connect to Work](#), [ESTAR](#) and [One You East Sussex](#), we hosted an employer event in Uckfield offering practical advice and discussion around supporting staff with MSK conditions.

Employer feedback has been very positive, with many attendees reporting increased confidence in discussing MSK health and supporting colleagues appropriately following the sessions.

Many of these resources are now available across our websites\* and YouTube\* channels, with further case studies and examples of impact due to be shared over the coming months.

**[\\*See page 8](#)**



# Problems affecting your joints, bones or muscles?

Don't ignore aches and pains, your health matters!  
Self-refer online for Physiotherapy - there's no need to go to your GP first.

Also, find tips, tools and advice to help prevent MSK (Musculoskeletal) issues from becoming a barrier to working safely and working well.



Do you live in  
East Sussex?  
Visit:  
[eastsussexmsk.nhs.uk/gethelp](https://eastsussexmsk.nhs.uk/gethelp)



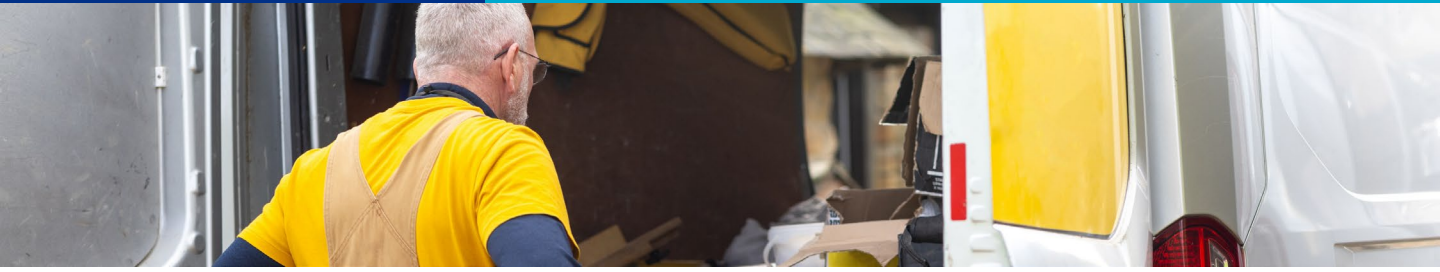
East Sussex MSK  
Community Partnership



Do you live in  
Brighton & Hove and West Sussex?  
Visit:  
[sussexmskhealth.co.uk/self-referral](https://sussexmskhealth.co.uk/self-referral)



Sussex MSK Health  
Brighton & Hove and West Sussex



## **Back Pain Videos and other resources**

 [YOUTUBE - ESMSK and Wellbeing at Work Webinar](#)

 [YOUTUBE - Back pain advice and prevention – For Physical Work](#)

 [YOUTUBE - Back pain advice and prevention – For Desk Workers](#)

 [ESMSK Website – “Health & Wellbeing at Work” – Information & Resources](#)

 [SMSKH Website – “Health & Wellbeing at Work – Information & Resources](#)

 [Horder Healthcare Website – Landing page](#)



## Stay Connected with ESMSK on Facebook and LinkedIn

We'd love to keep in touch! You can now follow us on Facebook and LinkedIn, where we share regular updates on:

- Community events and where you can find us
- New initiatives and service updates
- Opening times and contact information
- Tips and resources to support your health and wellbeing

It's also a great way to engage with us and see how we're working with local communities.

👉 Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/ESMSKCP>

👉 LinkedIn - <https://www.linkedin.com/company/esmsk/>