East Sussex MSK Community
Pain Service

East Sussex MSK Community Pain Service Referrer Information Pack

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Service overview

The **East Sussex MSK Community Pain Service** provides multidisciplinary support for people living with persistent musculoskeletal pain. It brings together clinical expertise, personalised care, pain education, rehabilitation, medication optimisation and community support to help people understand and manage their pain, build confidence and improve their quality of life.

The service is most appropriate for people who are ready to explore evidence-based approaches to managing persistent pain. It supports them to understand their pain, reduce fear and uncertainty, build confidence, manage pain and flare-ups, and focus on the goals, values and activities that matter most to them.

Who is the service for?

The service is for people aged 16 and over whose persistent musculoskeletal pain has lasted for more than three months and is significantly affecting daily life, wellbeing, work, education, or family and community life. Before referral, they should have had an appropriate clinical assessment, with serious underlying causes excluded, and further medical intervention should be unlikely to offer the most helpful next step.

Refer people who:

- ✓ Are aged **16 years and over**
- ✓ Are registered with an **East Sussex GP Practice** (excluding Brighton & Hove) or otherwise meet commissioned eligibility requirements
- ✓ Have **persistent musculoskeletal pain**, usually lasting longer than 3 months
- ✓ Are experiencing a significant impact on daily life, wellbeing, work, independence, relationships or participation in normal activities

Consider referral where the person may benefit from support with:

- Function, activity and independence
- Understanding and managing pain
- Emotional wellbeing and adjustment
- Medication optimisation
- Supported self-management
- Participation in work, family, social and everyday life

The service supports people with persistent musculoskeletal primary or secondary pain, including chronic MSK-related pelvic pain.

Referral Criteria and Exclusions

Before you refer

Please ensure:

- ✓ The predominant presentation is persistent musculoskeletal related primary or secondary pain, including chronic MSK- related pelvic pain.
- ✓ The individual understands this is a **persistent pain service**, focused on understanding pain, improving function and wellbeing, and supporting people to live well with persistent pain.
- ✓ An appropriate clinical assessment has been completed.
- ✓ All clinically indicated investigations have been completed and reviewed.
- ✓ There is no suspected serious, progressive or time-critical pathology requiring investigation or management elsewhere.

Important

The service is not commissioned as a diagnostic service.

Where further investigation is required to establish the presenting condition or exclude alternative pathology, this must be completed before referral.

The Service is not an injection service.

Where injection therapy is being considered, referrals will be clinically reviewed and the most appropriate management approach agreed with the patient. Please avoid advising patients that an injection will definitely be offered. For detailed guidance on intervention pathways, shared decision-making and procedures that remain within specialist services, see the Referrer Pathway.

Eligibility principles

Referrals are considered according to the person's overall clinical presentation, impact of pain and individual need - not pain severity alone and not whether a prescribed sequence of treatments has been completed.

The service is not appropriate where:

- The person does not meet East Sussex eligibility requirements
- The person is in a prison, young offender institution, immigration removal centre or other custodial setting
- The person has persistent non-MSK pain (e.g. visceral pain)
- There has been insufficient assessment or investigation to establish persistent MSK pain as the appropriate pathway
- There are new, unexplained, progressive or concerning symptoms requiring assessment elsewhere
- Clinical information suggests an alternative diagnosis requiring another specialist pathway

Where another pathway may be more appropriate

Patients may be redirected if:

- The predominant problem is an acute or non-persistent MSK condition.
- Further investigation or management is required first.
- Another specialist pathway is more appropriate.
- The primary need is a procedure or intervention outside the commissioned scope of the service.

Where possible, patients will be redirected internally rather than having referrals returned.

How to Refer

Referrals should be made via the **East Sussex MSK Single Point of Access (SPOA)** using the agreed referral route and e-RS service. All referrals will be clinically triaged to ensure people access the most appropriate part of the East Sussex MSK pathway

Before submitting a referral

Please ensure:

- The person's primary presentation is **persistent musculoskeletal pain**, including chronic MSK-related pelvic pain.
- Pain has persisted beyond the expected period of healing, usually **three months or longer**.
- Appropriate clinical assessment has been completed.
- All clinically indicated investigations have been completed and reviewed.
- There is no suspected serious, progressive or time-critical pathology requiring assessment through another pathway.
- The referral contains sufficient clinical information to enable safe triage and pathway allocation.
- The person understands that this is a **persistent pain service** focused on improving function, wellbeing, confidence and supported self-management, rather than a diagnostic service.

What happens next?

Once received, referrals are reviewed through a single point of accesses (SPOA) and may result in one of the following outcomes:

Accepted to the ES Community MSK Pain Service
The person's needs are appropriately met within the persistent pain pathway.

Redirected within the wider East Sussex MSK pathway
The referral represents an appropriate MSK need, but another part of the pathway is better placed to meet it.

Directed to an alternative service/pathway
The person's principal need sits outside the MSK/persistent pain pathway or requires urgent/specialist care elsewhere.

Further information or clinical discussion required
Where appropriateness is unclear, further information, Advice and Guidance or clinician-to-clinician discussion should be considered before returning or declining the referral.

Referral Route & Contacts

Item	Details
Before 2 November 2026	If you have an urgent clinical enquiry, please follow your usual escalation route or contact the appropriate existing service.
From 2 November 2026	The new referral route applies from this date.
e-RS service name	**EAST SUSSEX PAIN SERVICE - MSK - Here – A7G2Q**
Finding the service in e-RS	The service is registered at **177 Preston Road**. If you search by distance, it may therefore appear further down the results list. **Recommended search:** Where available, search by Service Provider Organisation, enter BICS Gateway, then select EAST SUSSEX PAIN SERVICE - MSK - Here - A7G2Q.
Referral queries	Here.eastsussexpainenquiries@nhs.net **Please note:** while the new service launches on 2 November 2026, this inbox may not be fully monitored during the first few days while staff complete essential training. Responses may therefore take a little longer than usual.

Service website	www.EastSussexPain.org.uk (live from 2 November 2026)

Frequently Asked Questions

Is this a diagnostic service?

No. Appropriate assessment and diagnostic investigations should be completed before referral.

Does pain need to be severe?

No. Referral decisions are based on the overall impact of pain and likely benefit from a persistent pain approach.

Does a patient need to have completed every previous treatment option?

No. Eligibility is based on presentation, impact and need, rather than completion of a specific treatment sequence.

Will referrals be rejected if another pathway is more appropriate?

Not usually. Where possible, referrals will be redirected internally to the most appropriate service.

Can people with chronic MSK-related pelvic pain be referred?

Yes.

What if I am unsure whether a patient is suitable?

Provide as much relevant clinical information as possible. Further information or clinician-to-clinician discussion may be requested where appropriateness is unclear.

Quick Referral Checklist

Before submitting a referral, please check:

☐ Patient is aged 16+

☐ Meets East Sussex eligibility requirements

☐ Persistent MSK pain is the predominant presentation

☐ Pain has persisted beyond expected healing time (usually >3 months)

☐ Appropriate assessment and investigations completed

☐ No red flag, serious or time-critical pathology suspected

☐ Sufficient information included to support safe triage

☐ Patient understands the purpose of a persistent pain service and is willing to engage with a supported self-management approach

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