



GP Exercise Referral Information

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Introduction

This document provides information about the exercise referral schemes available at Hambleton's and Richmondshire's leisure facilities.

It will provide background information about exercise referral and outline the referral criteria, and the process of referral.

The detrimental effects of an inactive lifestyle are increasingly apparent and it is widely recognised that inactivity can elevate the risk of developing a wide range of health problems, such as; type 2 diabetes, CHD, hypertension, cancer, stroke, obesity, and osteoporosis (DH, 2000).

There are a number of key national documents which provide further information about the benefits of an active lifestyle:

- Be Active, Be Healthy: A plan to get the nation moving (DH, 2009)
- Lets Get Moving: A new physical activity care pathway for the NHS Commissioning guidance (DH, 2009)
- Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives: a cross governmental strategy for England (DH, 2008)
- At least 5 a week: Evidence on the impact of physical activity and its relationship to health (DH, 2004)

On average, an inactive person spends 38% more days in hospital than an active person, and has 5.5% more family physician visits, 13% more specialist services and 12% more nurse visits than an active individual (DH, 2009). The risk of CHD amongst sedentary people is nearly two-fold (DH, 2000).

Health professionals can play a significant role in supporting individuals to change their lifestyle. One in four people in England say they would be more active if they were so advised by a doctor or nurse (DH, 2009).

Background

An exercise referral allows Primary Health Care professionals to refer individuals with a variety of medical conditions and/ or a history of sedentary lifestyle, who would never normally consider participating in regular physical activity, to a short-term, supervised programme of physical activity. The aim of this short-term intervention is to promote long-term adherence, by encouraging lifestyle changes, through which more physical activity will be incorporated into their lives.

The scheme may be seen as an alternative or an adjunct to the prescription of drugs for certain conditions, and may ultimately reduce patient visits to the doctor.

Exercise referral relies heavily on the professionals involved as a powerful motivator in encouraging an individual to take up the supervised exercise programme, and indeed, to continue with physical activity in the long-term.

For health professionals, the schemes offer a practical approach to promoting physical activity, with a view to preventing and managing a range of medical conditions.

Aims of our GP exercise referral scheme

- To allow individuals who have a range of mild to moderate physical or mental health problems to participate in a structured physical activity programme in a safe, supervised environment.
- To offer a programme of physical activity, which looks at the individual needs of the referred patient rather than a general approach to certain target groups.
- To raise awareness of the physical, psychological and social benefits of physical activity with individuals who are not normally physically active.
- To promote long-term participation in regular physical activity by developing the individuals confidence in being active.
- To improve participants health, well being and quality of life.

Ethical and legal responsibility

The National Quality Assurance Framework (DH, 2001) sets out guidelines for exercise referral, with the aim of raising standards and improving the quality of local schemes across the country.

It is recommended that all professionals involved with exercise referrals schemes familiarise themselves with this document as it sets out clear roles and responsibilities for each individual. Please refer to the full document, which can be found at www.doh.gov.uk. The following points are taken from pages 12-16 of the National Quality Assurance Framework (DH, 2001):

- All professionals involved in exercise referral have a duty of care.
- Where the health professional is concerned, the law would expect reasonable care and skill to be shown in undertaking an assessment of the risks and benefits to the patient exercising. The assessment should take account of past and present medical status, family history and medication.
- The role of the health professional is to make a referral into a system which is quality assured and to retain overall clinical responsibility for the individual patient. By making a referral to an appropriate person or dedicated facility where qualified exercise staff is available, the health professional is NOT assuming responsibility for the administration or delivery of the exercise programme.
- The health professional is responsible for ensuring meaningful transfer of relevant information to the exercise leader. The health professional must make a professional judgment as to what information must be disclosed to the exercise leader to enable them to tailor a safe and effective exercise programme that will meet the needs of the patient.
- When the individual is specifically referred for exercise by the health professional, responsibility for safe and effective management, design and delivery of the exercise programme passes to the exercise professional.
- Where the exercise professional and the manager of the facility are concerned, the law would expect reasonable care and skill to be shown in minimising any potential risks involved in participation of the exercise programme.

N.B Hambleton's and Richmondshire's Schemes are facilitated by instructors who hold the Wright Foundation Exercise Referral Qualification (or equivalent), which has been recognised by REPS (Register of Exercise Professionals), as a quality training provider.

Referral criteria

Exercise referral schemes aim to improve the physical and mental health of participants. Though they are aimed at people with a range of existing, low to moderate risk medical conditions, they should also be viewed as a key role in primary prevention. The scheme is available to patients who meet the following essential criteria:

- Sedentary or physically inactive (less than 30 minutes activity per week)
- Low to moderate risk health conditions
- Aged 16 years or above
- Would benefit from being more physically active
- Keen to do facility based exercise

The following mild to moderate health problems are recommended reasons for referral onto the scheme:

- Overweight/ Obesity
- Hypertension
- Mild to moderate mental health problems (e.g. depression, anxiety or stress)
- Diabetes I and II
- Arthritis
- Osteoporosis
- Asthma
- Post physiotherapy musculoskeletal conditions e.g. knee, hip, shoulder etc
- Family history of heart disease

N.B. If you have a patient that does not fit these criteria but you feel that they could benefit from participating in our exercise referral scheme, please contact us and we can discuss whether or not it is an option.

This scheme is not appropriate for high risk individuals. Clinical judgement will be important but usually individuals with the following will not be suitable for referral:

- Unstable angina
- Unstable hypertension or
- Unstable diabetes
- Severe coronary heart disease or early post myocardial infarction/coronary artery bypass graft/angioplasty. Cardiac Phase 1,2,3
- Unstable and/or severe mental health problem
- Pregnancy if previously been sedentary

Our instructor will contact the referring health professional if we require further advice or clarification on any medical condition or medication. Exercise instructors reserve the right to refuse to support any patient whom they feel unqualified or unconfident to deal with.

Making a referral

We accept referrals from health professionals who:

- have knowledge of the patients medical history, current health status and medication
- can make a clinical judgement as to the suitability of the scheme for the patient
- can provide the necessary information about the patient (e.g. address, telephone number, date of birth, blood pressure).

NB. Any health professional who refers a patient to the scheme must inform the patients GP via an individually agreed protocol.

We ask all health professionals who want to refer patients to our scheme to sign a commitment form (appendix 1) and return it to the appropriate facility so that we know that all referrals are made based on the information in this document.

Cost arrangements

Individuals who have been referred by a health professional have the choice of payment methods. Facilities usually offer a discount and participants should contact the leisure facility directly to ascertain the cost. In some cases it is cheaper to take out monthly membership rather than pay per visit.

There is no cost implication for referral for the health professional.

The referral process

Individuals are referred to the Exercise Referral Scheme via a referral form (Appendix 2), which is completed by the health professional and then sent directly to the exercise facility by the health professional. The patient is also given an information leaflet outlining the details of the scheme (Appendix 3).

The referral form must clearly state relevant information about the patients' health status including baseline blood pressure (BP), heart rate (HR) and current medication.

The information on the form will be used to design the exercise programme and it is the responsibility of the health professional to pass on all relevant information as part of their duty of care.

The facility will arrange a convenient appointment time for an initial consultation with the GP referral trained exercise professional and at this consultation appropriate fitness assessments will be completed.

At the consultation, the patient will be asked to sign a consent form (Appendix 4), confirming that they wish to take part in the scheme and that they have had relevant information passed on to them, that the potential risks involved have been explained and that they will in turn communicate any changes in condition or treatment to the exercise professional. The patient should inform the exercise professional of any changes to their health so they can change the frequency, intensity or duration of activity. The consent form informs them that if at any time they should feel undue pain, shortness of breath or experience excessive discomfort that they should stop the activity and inform an exercise professional of the symptoms. The form also advises them that they are free to leave the scheme at any time but should inform their exercise professional if they wish to do so. The exercise professional will countersign the consent form to sign that he/she has explained relevant information about the scheme. The patient should understand the risks and benefits of exercise.

A 12-week programme of physical activity is developed that will be tailored specifically to the needs of the individual and medical conditions they may have as detailed on the referral form. The programme of physical activity for each patient is based on information from the referral form and information gained at the initial assessment, the reason for referral, and goals of the referred patient.

The individual continues with the exercise programme for a 12 week period, attending as often as they wish (usually 2-3 times a week) with a further assessment at weeks 6 and 12.

The programme of physical activity will be updated and modified as necessary throughout the 12 weeks. The patient will have a responsibility to inform the exercise professional and GP, of any physical and or psychological changes during the program.

In some cases, the GP may consider issuing a repeat referral to an individual. A repeat referral can be given to the patient if negotiated with the GP, the leisure facility and the patient.

Please see appendix 5 for a brief overview of the exercise referral process.

Contact details

Aldbrough St John
Doctors Lane Surgery
Richmond
DL11 7TH
Tel: (01325) 374332

Bedale Leisure Centre
Firby Road
Bedale
North Yorkshire
DL8 2AT
Tel: (01677) 427272

Colburn Sports and Recreation Centre
Catterick Road
Colburn
DL9 4QH
Tel: (01748) 835660

Hambleton Leisure Centre
Stone Cross
Northallerton
North Yorkshire
DL6 2UZ
Tel: (01609) 777070

Lesley Williams
Active 4 Life Officer
Hambleton & Richmondshire District councils
Civic Centre
Stonecross
Northallerton DL6 2UU
Tel: (01609) 767242

Richmond Pool (swim referrals only)
Old Station Yard
Richmond
N Yorkshire
DL10 4JD
Tel: (01748) 824581

Stokesley Leisure Centre
Great Broughton Road
Stokesley
North Yorkshire
TS9 5JJ
Tel: (01642) 711140

The Galtres Centre
Market Square
Easingwold
YO61 3AE
Tel. (01347) 822472

Thirsk & Sowerby Leisure Centre
Chapel Street
Thirsk
North Yorkshire
YO7 1LT
Tel: (01845) 522447

Appendix 1

Exercise Referral Scheme Commitment Form

For Health Professionals

1. It is the responsibility of the Health Professional to make an exercise referral only for suitable patients who fall within the inclusion criteria outlined in this document.
2. Professionals involved in the scheme (GP/Health Professional & Exercise Professional) are all expected to practice within the standards and Codes of Practice of their respective Professional Regulatory Body to ensure patient well being and safety. They will also be responsible for communication and transfer of accurate and up to date information.
3. The confidentiality of patient information will be respected and referrals will operate in accordance with statutory legislation and conditions.
4. It is the Exercise Professionals responsibility (GP referral trained only) to tailor and supervise an exercise programme at the appropriate level of exercise for each client. The instructor/ employers public/ employee liability insurance will cover the exercise programme.
5. It is the GP's/ Health professional and Exercise Professionals responsibility to advise the patient and raise his/her awareness that it is the patients' responsibility to follow the exercise programme and seek advice from a qualified GP referral professional if amendments to their programme are required. It is also the patients' responsibility to inform GP/Health professional and the Exercise professional if their medical condition changes.

I have read the information & guidelines for Hambleton and Richmondshire's exercise referral scheme and I agree to the above conditions.

To be signed by each GP/Health Professional involved in the scheme.

Signature: Print name:

Contact details (including name of workplace, address and phone number):
.....
.....
.....

Date:

Please sign and return to: L Williams, Active 4 Life Officer - Civic Centre, Stonecross, Northallerton DL6 2UU

Appendix 2

GP Referral Scheme Referral form

Patient details

Surname:	First Name:
Address:	Tel Number:

Reason for referral

Overweight BMI > 25 – 29.9		Hypertension	
Obese BMI ≥ 30		Long Term Sedentary Lifestyle	
Diabetes Type I		Family History of Heart Disease	
Diabetes Type II		Asthma	
Psychological Conditions (mild to moderate depression, anxiety, stress) Specify		Impaired strength / mobility / arthritis Specify	

Other reason for referral (please print clearly)

.....

Significant medical history (Please print clearly)

.....

Current medication (Please print clearly)

.....

Possible effects of current medication and/ or diagnoses on patients safe/ comfortable conduct of exercise:

Heart Rate not an indicator of exercise intensity

Suppression of pain

Blood pressure/ Heart rate

BP

HR

Additional comments

.....

GP/Nurse Signature**:	Print Name:	Patient Signature*:
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* Patient's declaration - I have not withheld any relevant information and will advise my GP/Nurse of any changes to my health. I also agree to the information being used for monitoring/evaluation purposes.

**GP Signs to say that the above information is correct at date of referral and that they know of no known reason why this patient cannot exercise under the direction of a GP exercise referral trained instructor.

Date of referral:

This form is to be taken to the leisure facility by the patient and a copy should be retained by the GP for their notes.

Appendix 3

GP Referral Scheme Informed consent form

The exercise programme that you will be following will be individually designed for you by the GP Exercise Referral trained professional. The programme will be based on your present activity and fitness levels and the information given by your GP or Health Professional.

The activities you will be taking part in and potential risks involved will be explained and discussed with you. Please feel free to ask any questions about your programme at any time. Should you wish to alter your activity programme set by your GP Exercise Referral trained professional on any level, be it frequency of activity, intensity of activity or duration of activity or if you wish to try different equipment or activities then you must discuss this with a GP Exercise Referral trained professional before changing your individually designed programme.

If during the programme your physical or emotional condition changes or if your GP or Health Professional changes your medication or treatment programme, it is your responsibility to inform the GP Exercise Referral professional.

If at any time you feel undue pain, shortness of breath or experience excessive discomfort you should STOP the activity and inform the GP Exercise Referral professional of your symptoms. YOU ARE FREE TO LEAVE THE SCHEME AT ANY TIME.

I agree to take part in the exercise programme, which has been individually designed for me by the GP Exercise Referral trained professional and I will inform him/her of any changes in my condition either physically or psychologically as stated above, or if I wish to change my programme in any way.

The design, purpose, benefits and risks of the programme have been explained to me. I understand that I may withdraw from the scheme at anytime; however, if I do withdraw I will inform the GP Exercise Referral Professional.

Date:	Patient Name:
Patient Signature:	
Date:	GP Name:
GP Signature:	

Appendix 4

Brief overview of process



References

Department of Health. (2001) **Exercise Referral Systems: A National Quality Assurance Framework**. London: HMSO.

Department of Health. (2004) **At least 5 a week: Evidence on the impact of physical activity and its relationship to health**. London: HMSO.

Department of Health. (2008) **Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives: a cross governmental strategy for England**. London: HMSO.

Department of Health. (2009) **Be Active, Be Healthy: A plan to get the nation moving**. London: HMSO.

Department of Health. (2009) **Lets Get Moving: A new physical activity care pathway for the NHS: Commissioning guidance**. London: HMSO.



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Richmond, North Yorkshire, DL10 4JE
Tel: 01748 829100
Fax: 01748 825071
www.richmondshire.gov.uk