The ROYAL MARSDEN
NHS Foundation Trust

Physical Activity Strategy

2023–2028



NHS

Version 1.0



Patient Jacky Phillips and Sarah-Jane Webb (Junior Sister)

Introduction

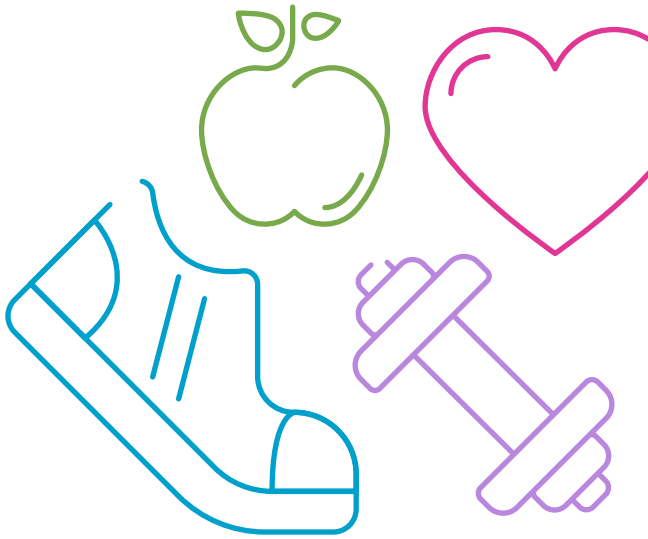
Delivering both excellent patient experience and world leading cancer care is at the core of what The Royal Marsden aims to do. In line with the key ambitions for cancer outlined in the NHS Long Term Plan, the Trust is committed to improving quality of life outcomes and reducing inequity in service provision for people living with and beyond cancer. It is therefore essential that we embed physical activity support and promotion at every level of patient delivery and staff support.

This Strategy aims to support our patients, our employed and our volunteer workforce to meet the physical activity guidelines outlined by the Department of Health and Social Care below for adults:

- For good physical and mental health, adults should aim to be physically active every day. Any activity is better than none, and more is better still.
- Each week, adults should aim to accumulate at least 150 minutes (2 1/2 hours) of moderate intensity activity (such as brisk walking or cycling); or 75 minutes of vigorous intensity activity (such as running); or a combination of moderate, vigorous and very vigorous intensity activity.
- In addition, all adults should aim to complete 2 sessions of strengthening activities each week.
- Adults should aim to minimise the amount of time spent being sedentary, and when physically possible should break up long periods of inactivity with at least light physical activity.

These guidelines present a UK-wide consensus on the amount and type of physical activity that is needed to benefit health across the life course. The guidelines have been updated using the best available evidence and reflect what we know now about the relationship between physical activity and health.

The guidelines apply across the population, irrespective of gender, age or socio-economic status. We know there are clear health inequalities in relation to physical inactivity and therefore interventions to promote physical activity must consider this.



“I would recommend anyone undergoing treatment to be involved in as much physical activity as they are able to undertake as it does support recovery.”

Peter Burton,
patient at The Royal Marsden

Forewords

Physical activity is key for our staff, volunteers and patients alike, and research has shown that appropriate levels of physical activity can boost physical health, as well as mental wellbeing. For this reason, we are delighted to present our new Physical Activity Strategy for 2023–2028.

This strategy recognises the importance of physical activity in all forms. While there is no "one size fits all" approach to activity, what can be agreed is that the benefits of activity apply across the population, irrespective of gender, age or socio-economic status. However, research also shows that while the benefits of exercise are universal, there are clear inequalities in relation to physical activity. As such, this strategy looks at how we can support our people to meet the physical activity guidelines and become a more "Active Marsden".

For our patients, the benefits of physical activity during treatment can reduce symptom burden, reduce risk of other long-term conditions, and have an enormous impact on quality of life. However, more needs to be done to support patients to receive this knowledge and information and to enable them to incorporate positive lifestyle changes into their cancer care.

Staff and volunteers also have an opportunity to role model physical activity behaviour, not only for their patients, but also for their own health and wellbeing. When staff are physically active and well in themselves, they can positively motivate their patients too.

Together, we aim to make a whole hospital approach to physical activity, to incorporate all aspects of physical activity, and become a more 'Active Marsden'.



Professor Nicholas Van As,
Medical Director



Mairead Griffin,
Chief Nurse



Ione Ashurst,
Head of Therapies and Rehabilitation

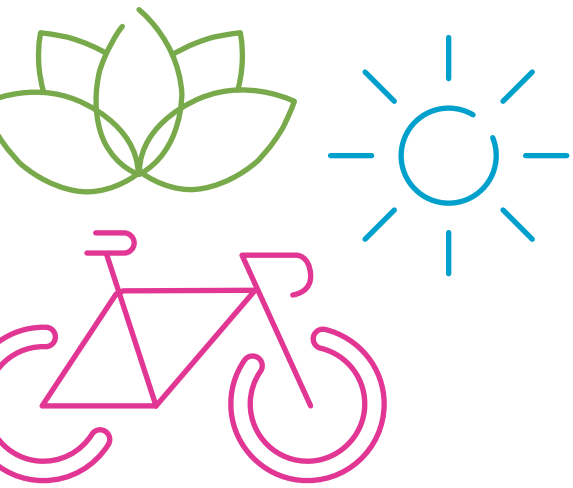
Where are we now?

Cancer is now recognised as a long-term condition and by 2040 there is expected to be 5.3 million people living with cancer in the UK (Macmillan Cancer Support, 2022).

Much work has been done to embed the concepts of personalised care into the cancer pathway in accordance with the ambition set out in the Long-Term Plan (NHS England, 2019) and further endorsed by the proposed Major Conditions Strategy (NHS England, 2024).

It is vital we continue to support the cultural shift towards supported self-management, empowering people to live healthier lifestyles by recognising the needs of the individual beyond their cancer diagnosis.

> “As a world-leading cancer centre, The Royal Marsden has a duty of care to its patients to implement the growing body of evidence which supports the role of physical activity promotion as a routine part of cancer care.”



Peoples experience of physical activity support at The Royal Marsden currently is likely to vary. We have some great champions amongst our staff who routinely promote physical activity with their patients as well as leading by example through cycling into work or participating in the annual Marsden March.

We have also worked hard within Therapies to grow our exercise oncology service for example with the welcome addition of two exercise instructors, physiotherapists dedicated to prehabilitation and living with and beyond cancer, and by collaborating with external gyms to offer 6 week gym programmes off site.

We are expanding our prehabilitation service, where alongside nutrition, emotional wellbeing and medical optimisation support, physiotherapy provides structured exercise support to improve fitness ahead of cancer treatment. In addition, The Royal Marsden is working with peers nationally to contribute to the evidence base on Prehabilitation. We have also invested in physical activity training for staff in strength and conditioning, Pilates and pelvic health which has led to the development of an enhanced exercise offer for patients.

However, we still have some work to do to ensure physical activity is everybody’s business. Despite the evidence to support physical activity in cancer care, the message to empower people with cancer to be more physically active is not consistently shared by all healthcare professionals throughout cancer pathways.

People with cancer are often unaware of how physical activity may reduce their symptom burden whilst on treatment. Whilst we need to be mindful that the mechanisms of causation have not been fully established, the evidence that being active to the recommended levels reduces the risk of other long-term conditions and all-cause early mortality, strengthens the case for support and advice to be embedded throughout the pathway.



Nursing team in meeting in the Outpatients department

In a survey undertaken by Macmillan, 43% of patients reported not being told that exercise was beneficial, and 75% would have like to have had this information from a trusted healthcare professional (Macmillan 2016). We know that there are some similarities to these findings in our own services, from co-design work with people with cancer exploring physical activity provision.

Our 2019 clinical staff survey exploring knowledge, attitudes and behaviours towards physical activity highlighted a number of patients asking for information about being physically active, but staff acknowledged not feeling fully informed or able to support and guide their patients appropriately. There was an assumption by staff that people would not be interested in being active, yet our survey results and patient feedback suggest this is not the case. We do not currently provide any education or training for staff on anything related to Physical Activity.

Staff have an opportunity to role model physical activity behaviour not only for their patients, but also for their own health and wellbeing. When staff are physically active and well in themselves, they can positively motivate their patients too. Supporting staff to increase activity levels will also assist the objectives outlined in The Royal Marsden's Green Plan where active travel was the fifth highest 'green' priority for staff.

> "We get to know our patients over their course of radiotherapy and this rapport means we are well placed to have conversations with them about the benefits of being active."
>
> *Sophie Alexander,*
> *Radiotherapy Research*
> *Superintendent Radiographer*



Jennifer Hewett (Physiotherapist) with patient

“I have seen the importance of exercise during the treatment pathway to help prepare our patients to cope better and recover faster from the challenges of their cancer treatment. I wholeheartedly endorse the plans for an ‘Active Marsden.”

Dr Susanna Walker,
Consultant Anaesthetist

Our vision

We will ensure an **'Active Marsden'** through physical activity for all.

To become an Active Marsden: All patients and staff will be aware of the benefits of physical activity, as well as the opportunities and support available to incorporate it into their lifestyle.

We recognise this is ambitious and requires potential changes to knowledge, attitudes, and behaviour. We will promote physical activity at every opportunity and support people to make positive changes which are personalised to them. The impact of this culture change will be seen in the improved health and wellbeing of both our patients and staff.

Committing to physical activity as an essential element of cancer care and delivering this strategy will provide a foundation from which more structured pathways such as Prehabilitation and stratified follow up can build on.

The adoption and implementation of this strategy will be a truly world-leading example of a whole-systems approach within cancer provision for other healthcare providers, and we will endeavour to share this work widely.

Trust values

The Royal Marsden Physical Activity Strategy epitomises all four Trust values:



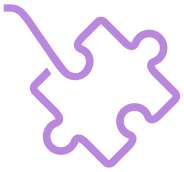
Pioneering change

Leading the way to ensure an 'Active Marsden' and acting as a flagship to other Trusts.



Pursuing excellence

Offering outstanding quality by improving the knowledge and skills of clinical staff in relation to physical activity advice and prescription.



Working collaboratively

Seeking to work in local, national, and international partnerships to encourage physical activity.



Showing kindness

Valuing and respecting choices and personalising our approach to our staff and patients' physical activity needs.

“Even when I haven’t had the desire or energy to do anything or time has been short, just doing something around the house or going for a 10-minute walk outside in the fresh air has helped me feel a little bit brighter, stronger and more comfortable.”

Diana King,
patient at The Royal Marsden

Strategic priorities

To lead a change in attitudes, beliefs and behaviours.
Encouraging everyone to incorporate physical activity into their lifestyle, ensuring an 'Active Marsden'.

To develop a skilled and effective workforce.
Clinical staff and volunteers will be trained on the Department of Health physical activity guidelines to ensure they feel confident in giving advice to patients. This will include awareness of the benefits, safety considerations, and behavioural change approaches which respect people's beliefs and preferences, along with appropriate signposting options.

To enhance physical activity friendly environments.
Providing the means to enable patients to maintain their daily routines and encourage use of our resources to promote further physical activity, function, and recovery on our hospital sites. Encourage physical activity within the working day for staff and volunteers and promote active commutes wherever possible.

To work in partnership.
To ensure a wide variety of attractive and accessible opportunities are available to enable both people with cancer and our workforce to take part in physical activity. Collaborate with external stakeholders and networks to share learning and champion physical activity within cancer care.

To explore digital support.
To use digital partnerships to enable people with cancer to be more physically active through consistent messaging via MyMarsden and timely availability of web-based resources and support. Empower staff to routinely promote physical activity in clinical practice with digital resources.





Eat, Drink and Move Volunteer Teresa Barnard speaking with a patient

In creating an ‘Active Marsden’

We will:

- Implement this Physical Activity Strategy that addresses all aspects of a ‘whole hospital approach’. There will be clear accountability for the implementation of the action plan and appropriate funding will be sought to make continuous improvements towards the goals of the Physical Activity Strategy.
- Achieve Executive Board endorsement to the Physical Activity Strategy and obtain Board-level sign-off and ongoing support.
- Promote the role of physical activity champions with representations across all staff groups.
- Consider the physical activity needs of our staff and volunteers, including those with protected characteristics, to create a culture change towards a more active workforce.
- Promote a culture where staff know they should talk to their patients about physical activity and healthy lifestyles.
- Work to ensure physical activity is promoted within commissioned healthcare services.
- Use the Implementation Working Group to implement, monitor and review the Physical Activity Strategy, and provide governance.

Evaluating impact

This strategy is supported by a comprehensive action plan and the implementation working group is responsible for overseeing timelines, responsibilities, and reporting mechanisms.

An evaluation plan for measuring impact of this strategy will be communicated appropriately to the Trust. Evaluation may take the form of audit, quality improvement or more in-depth exploration of patient experience as indicated by the individual action plans.

Outcomes evaluated may also be related to other quality improvement work within the Trust and it is, therefore, important that there is adequate co-ordination and communication between different disciplines/services. Outcomes will be discussed and presented to the Trust in relevant meetings.

These include, but are not limited to:

- Harm-Free Care Committee
- Integrated Governance Risk Management Committee (IGRM)
- Nursing, Allied Health and Pharmacy Advisory Committee (NAHPC)
- Health and Wellbeing Forum
- Patient and Carer Advisory Group (PCAG)
- Rehabilitation and Prehabilitation Steering Group
- Green Matters Forum
- Falls Group.



Patient Naz Kotadia with Adrian Fautly (Cancer Exercise Specialist)



Authors (Revised edition January 2024)
Sarah Dewhurst – Physical Activity Strategy Implementation Working Group Chair
Siobhan Cowan-Dickie – Associate Lead of Therapies

Authors (Original edition 2019–2023)
Katharine Malhotra – Physiotherapist, Lecturer Practitioner and Darzi Fellow
Dr Clare Shaw – Consultant Dietitian