

Delivering ESCAPE-pain in the Leisure Sector Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is ESCAPE-pain and who is it for?

ESCAPE-pain is an evidence-based treatment programme for chronic knee and hip pain, also known as osteoarthritis. It is being implemented widely across England and beyond, supported by NHS England and Versus Arthritis and is currently delivered at 200 physiotherapy, leisure and community centres.

It's a 6-week (12 session) programme, run in groups of between 8-12 people, with each session involving both exercise and a facilitated discussion. It's appropriate for people aged 45+ with a history of chronic joint pain, and suitable for people with a range of symptoms from mild to fairly severe. Each session lasts 1-1.5 hours.

2. Why should we offer ESCAPE-pain?

For participants:

ESCAPE-pain helps people learn about their joint pain and how to manage its symptoms, including importantly how to use exercise to help themselves. By working in a group, they often learn as much from each other as from the facilitator, and many make friendships that continue after the programme.

Participants report improved pain, function and overall wellbeing, which enables them to '[live better and do more](#)' (#LiveBetterDoMore) as they return to activities they had stopped doing and often take up new activities.

For leisure operators:

For operators who already deliver health and wellbeing programmes, ESCAPE-pain can be the 'missing piece of the puzzle' – even though joint pain is recognised as a barrier to exercise, in the UK there are no other comparable musculoskeletal programmes accredited and ready for delivery by fitness instructors.

ESCAPE-pain is a business opportunity. People who go on the ESCAPE-pain programme learn how to become more active, and many go on to use leisure services regularly. As well as delivering the ESCAPE-pain course itself, some leisure operators have set up 'post-ESCAPE-pain' classes, in response to demand from participants.

Older people are a valuable market. While the older adult population are underrepresented in the number of members of leisure centres (*Moving Communities: Active Leisure Trends 2018 report, UK Active Research Institute/DataHub*), once they become members, the average length of membership tends to be longer and visit frequency tends to be higher.

3. In the leisure sector, where are ESCAPE-pain classes typically held?

- Many leisure providers use their leisure centres – the studio, gym or a combination of both – and some additionally offer the programme from community halls, or progress from a community hall to the gym. A studio environment allows the sessions to be run more privately and can sometimes be easier to manage than in a gym.
- If using the gym, this requires more work in the earlier sessions in order to introduce participants to the equipment. If space is available, the education part of each session is best delivered in a private meeting space or the café, if a dedicated space is available.

4. What times of the day / days of the week work best for delivering the sessions?

- The timings of the sessions vary across ESCAPE-pain providers and different participants will have different preferences. The programme is appropriate from the age of 45, but the average age of participants tends to be in the late-60s so it's advisable to schedule the class according to this audience, perhaps avoiding rush hour and late evenings (especially during the winter months). If using the gym, schedule the class at a time when the gym is quieter and less intimidating for older people new to this environment. Data suggests that late morning is the most popular times for older adults to attend leisure centres.
- Don't forget that some of the people wishing to participate in ESCAPE-pain will be working, so if you are able to run more than one programme it may be worth offering them at different times of the day so that participants have more options.

5. How can I ensure people join the programme?

It is really important that you think through how you will attract people to the programme and ensure sufficient time to develop these relationships before starting the first course.

The most common routes for people to access the programme in the leisure sector, is via **referral from the local musculoskeletal pathway** (e.g. from physiotherapy services) or from **Exercise on Referral** routes. Some sites also encourage referral from local falls services or direct from GPs.

The programme is accredited for appropriately qualified fitness professionals to run without clinical support, but to foster greater collaboration, you may wish to consider working in partnership with the local NHS. This could involve physiotherapists or GPs attending or delivering particular parts of the programme.

More detailed information is shown in section 7 below.

Self-referral to the programme via local direct marketing should also be encouraged. Ensure that any people who self-referred are assessed against the ESCAPE-pain eligibility criteria, as well as an appropriate activity readiness assessment or triage – for example, [PAR-Q+](#).

Put ESCAPE-pain posters on display, or play the promotional video, in public areas or in the gym to raise awareness. Some sites have even made T-shirts for staff and produced bunting to promote the programme. Participants may hear about the programme first through younger family members and friends!

6. How can I retain participants and encourage them to stick to the programme?

- Make sure that participants receive clear information before starting the programme, and that they understand they are expected to commit to attend the programme twice a week for 6 weeks.
- It's useful to give them a handout (in our resources there are leaflets and infographics) for them to take home so that they can think about the programme in their own time before committing to start. Encourage them also to look at the website www.escape-pain.org, or the app or online programme, to get an idea of what is involved.
- Some providers give participants a 'commitment card' at the beginning of the programme which gives them the dates of the sessions and stresses the importance of attending the whole course.
- It can be really helpful to invite previous ESCAPE-pain participants to act as 'participant advocates' and to join the first session of a new cohort. Hearing from a 'graduate' of the programme can be really powerful. Ask the 'graduate' to describe to new participants what they learnt from the programme and the impact it has had on their joint pain. For one provider this has led to 100% retention in their class.
- Giving participants a 'certificate of completion' at the end of the programme and turning it into a celebratory event may also encourage retention.
- If participants start the programme but then miss a session or two, contact them by phone to understand why, and support them to come back, if appropriate.
- Some providers also make reminder phone calls in advance of the first class.
- Participants often tell us the facilitator is the key to their success – choosing the right facilitators to be put forward to be trained in ESCAPE-pain is therefore vital.
- Have a look at the participant videos on the ESCAPE-pain website where people talk about their experience of ESCAPE-pain. These can also be found on YouTube. Play these at the first session or use as a recruitment tool to attract participants.
- Stimulate a positive group dynamic as far as you can – offer a drink and a snack if possible or encourage the class to go to the café together before or after the class.
- In general, if participants are going to drop out, this tends to happen after 2-3 sessions. Therefore, the first few sessions are extremely important to encourage participants to commit to the programme. Ensuring people understand they need to complete the programme to experience the benefits is important.

7. How can I promote the programme?

It's helpful to use a range of promotional strategies when trying to promote the programme and increase awareness of it. Promotion should not only be focussed on increasing enrolment but also on providing enough information, so people know what to expect if they attend.

- We recommend you use the existing marketing materials provided by the HIN and edit them with your location, contact details, how to join a class, referral pathway etc. The resources aim to raise

awareness of the programme and help participants understand what to expect. They include: A4 tri-fold leaflet, A4 poster, A3 poster, participant welcome email/letter. There is also an 'Information for Referrers' resource.

- Meet with local GPs to explain the programme, its benefits and your referral process. Provide GP practices with flyers and posters to display and ask them to recommend the programme during their consultations.
- Meet your local Physiotherapy Departments to explain the programme, its benefits and your referral process. Provide the FCP with flyers and posters to display and ask them to recommend or refer in to the programme.
- Meet your local First Contact Practitioner (FCP) to explain the programme, its benefits and your referral process. Provide them with flyers and posters to display and ask them to recommend or refer in to the programme.
- Offer taster sessions or information events to promote the programme.
- Ask your local hospital's communication team to include an article about the programme in their GP newsletter.
- Inform your local CCG that you're running the programme. Ask if they can include an article in their GP newsletters or any other GP distribution list.
- Put up the A4 + A3 posters in your/other leisure centres.
- Contact your local council and speak to the departments linked to healthy ageing and physical activity etc. This will typically be the public health department and the leisure management department. They often advertise opportunities across their patch via newsletters, social media accounts, website articles etc.
- Send a press release to any local free papers and magazines.
- Post an article on your organisation's website.
- Tweet to your local population from your organisation's account.
- Add a message to any relevant Facebook groups or post on your own organisation's account.
- Use targeted text drops – if available.
- Connect with relevant local community groups such as Versus Arthritis support groups, Age UK, Arthritis Action or any pain management support group. Arrange to speak at one of their meetings to explain the programme.
- Put up posters in local libraries, hairdressers, supermarkets and community centres and halls.
- Host a stall in a shopping centre, library or the hospital to promote to members of the public who don't attend health centres regularly.

8. Can we charge for the programme? And how much?

The decision to charge, and how much to charge, is at the discretion of the provider organisation and determined by its need to cover running costs and/or break even.

Where the programme is currently being charged to the participant, the cost ranges from £24 - £60 for the full 12 session programme.

Sites that have successfully charged for the programme have included other benefits as part of the package. For example, some sites offer free swimming membership for the duration of the ESCAPE-pain programme, while others offer a reduced rate for refreshments, or a reduced-price membership at the end of the Programme.

9. How can you help your participants to sustain their behaviour changes after the programme has ended?

- To encourage sign-up at your centre, offer a discount or membership package.
- Consider what other local services and facilities are available and signpost to these – for example other self-management programmes.
- Promote the free **ESCAPE-pain app** ([iOS](#) and [Android](#)) which was developed to replicate the programme, and includes education and exercise videos. The app is a helpful reminder for participants who have completed the programme, to help them continue exercising at home, or can be used by those who aren't able to attend the programme.
- Promote **ESCAPE-pain Online** – this is the web-based version of the app. It is also free to use and is best viewed on a computer. ESCAPE-pain Online is especially helpful for those who don't have smartphones or if they do, for those participants who would benefit from the larger screen. ESCAPE-pain Online can be accessed [here](#) on the website and by clicking on the 'Access ESCAPE-pain Online' button.
- Promote the [ESCAPE-pain Website](#) – the website was initially developed for sites/facilitators but also has information directed at participants:
 - Class locations and site map
 - Access to the education and exercise videos without having to follow a set programme – these are accessed by creating an account on the website
 - Information about the above-mentioned app and ESCAPE-pain Online
 - Personal stories
- As a provider you can also use the resources on the website as part of the sessions or to promote self-management and physical activity. Show the app or ESCAPE-pain Online during the first session and in following sessions to help participants become familiar with it so they are more likely to use it to maintain their exercise after the programme has finished.

ESCAPE-pain in the leisure sector: Bury Council

Case Study: BEATS, Bury

Background

ESCAPE-pain is delivered in Bury as part of BEATS, an exercise referral scheme for people with a recurring illness or medical condition who would benefit from an exercise programme. It is a partnership between NHS Bury and Bury Leisure. The programme is currently delivered with a Sport England grant, however long-term sustainability routes have now been identified and tested for the provision to continue beyond the grant.

Referral Pathways and Recruitment

ESCAPE-pain fits within the new integrated wellness model for Bury. The local physiotherapy department refers into the programme but remain involved by attending some of the sessions.

Referrals also come from GPs and Multidisciplinary teams part of the Integrated Neighbourhood Teams and from the Falls, Fracture and Fragility Implementation Delivery group.

In addition, ESCAPE-pain is a recurrent item on the wellbeing timetable and participants are able to self-refer by paying a subsidised free upfront.

Sustainability

To date 100% of completed ESCAPE-pain participants have gone onto further exercise programs. The four ESCAPE-pain cohorts delivered to date have generated a net worth of £8K over 12 months, with the potential of going up to £10K when gym memberships continued in year 2 and year 3 are taken into account.

Other sustainability options include accessing transformation funds via the Integrated Neighbourhood Teams, pump priming from the Falls, Fracture and Fragility Implementation Delivery group and charging participants who self-refer to the programme.

This summary has been developed by the Health Innovation Network and approved by Lee Buggies, Principal Wellbeing Officer at Bury Council. For more information please contact Lee Buggie on l.buggie@bury.gov.uk or 0161 253 5122.

ESCAPE-pain in the leisure sector: Mytime Active

Case Study: Mytime Active, Bromley

Background

Mytime Active is a social enterprise with charitable objectives. The organisation manages sport and leisure contracts across the UK and has a significant presence in Bromley, Greater London, where the company operates from 4 main leisure centres plus 40 community sites and venues.

Prior to introducing ESCAPE-pain, Mytime Active already had a fairly comprehensive offer for older people but did not deliver anything specifically focusing on joint pain/arthritis.

Referral Pathways and Recruitment

ESCAPE-pain referrals come via the Exercise on Referral (EoR) route - people referred into EoR are triaged, and any who fit the criteria for ESCAPE-pain are offered ESCAPE-pain first, as a means of preparing them to benefit more strongly from the EoR when they do join. Referrals are also received from local physiotherapy services and the falls programme. Because of their long-term presence in the borough, there are existing strong relationships with local primary care services and promotion of ESCAPE-pain was undertaken with these services both in person and through use of promotional materials such as flyers and posters.

Sustainability

There is currently no charge for ESCAPE-pain as Mytime Active is in receipt of a grant to support implementation of the programme. However, the ESCAPE-pain course has been well received by both participants and the organisation and Mytime Active plan to incorporate it as part of their core offer, to sit alongside their Fresh Start exercise referral and Heart Smart cardiac rehabilitation programmes. These classes incur a fee of £5.10 per person and the pricing for ESCAPE-pain is likely to mirror that pricing structure.

For the purposes of the Sport England funded courses, ESCAPE-pain has been run in community venues; as it becomes a paid for service, it will also run from a new Mind and Body wellbeing studio at the Beckenham Spa leisure centre facility.

Mytime Active are also running two maintenance classes a week for participants who have graduated from ESCAPE-pain, run on a 'pay as you go' basis which are charged at £5.10 per session.

This summary has been developed by the Health Innovation Network and approved by Mytime Active. For more information please contact Diane Friday, Active Lifestyles Programme Manager at diane.friday@mytimeactive.co.uk.

ESCAPE-pain in the leisure sector: Winchester City Council and Places Leisure

Case Study: Winchester City Council and Places Leisure

Background

This model of delivery is an excellent example of successful collaboration between local primary and secondary care providers, a local authority, and a leisure trust.

This project was initiated by a local General Practitioner (GP) who sits on the Exercise-on-Referral Board.

The delivery of ESCAPE-pain started in Winchester in February 2019 at River Park Leisure Centre. Exercise professionals delivered the programme with additional input from GPs and Physiotherapists who facilitated the education components, specifically focusing on Heat & Ice, Drug Management and Managing Flare-ups.

Referral Pathways and Recruitment

Referrals are received by GPs via the Exercise-on-Referral scheme, as well as Physiotherapists and other healthcare professionals. Time and resources were invested to ensure that local GPs were aware of the programme, including a launch event held at a local surgery. The GP who initiated the project played a key role in successfully engaging other GPs in the area.

Early conversations with the local physiotherapy department ensured that there was not a duplication of services. Physiotherapists also agreed to refer into the ESCAPE-pain classes. They remain actively involved in the programme as they co-deliver two of the twelve education sessions.

Recruitment has been successful, on average 70-90% of the courses are full. Self-referrals are being explored as an additional option.

Sustainability

Participants are charged £36 for the 12 sessions which is paid in full. This covers the costs of the facilitator and also generates an income. The venue is provided free of charge by the leisure centre. There is capacity for ten participants and a minimum of six is needed to make it financially viable. To date, the cohort sizes have met this target.

There has been no resistance to the charges from GPs or physios as this is in line with other local programmes.

Participants who complete ESCAPE-pain are offered an additional six weeks on the exercise referral scheme by Places Leisure at a reduced rate, and on average 68% continue to exercise within the leisure centre.

This summary has been developed by the Health Innovation Network and approved by Chloe Davanna. For more information please contact Chloe Davanna on cdavanna@winchester.gov.uk or 01962 848 493

ESCAPE-pain in the leisure sector: East Cheshire

Case Study: Everybody Sport and Recreation, East Cheshire

Background

Everybody Sport and Recreation ('Everybody') is a health and wellbeing charity based in Cheshire East that improves people's lives through physical activity & healthy recreation. They started to deliver ESCAPE-pain in 2018 with a grant from Sport England and the programme now runs over multiple sites.

A video of ESCAPE-pain participants talking about how attending the class at *Everybody* has transformed their lives can be seen [here](#).

Referral Pathways and Recruitment

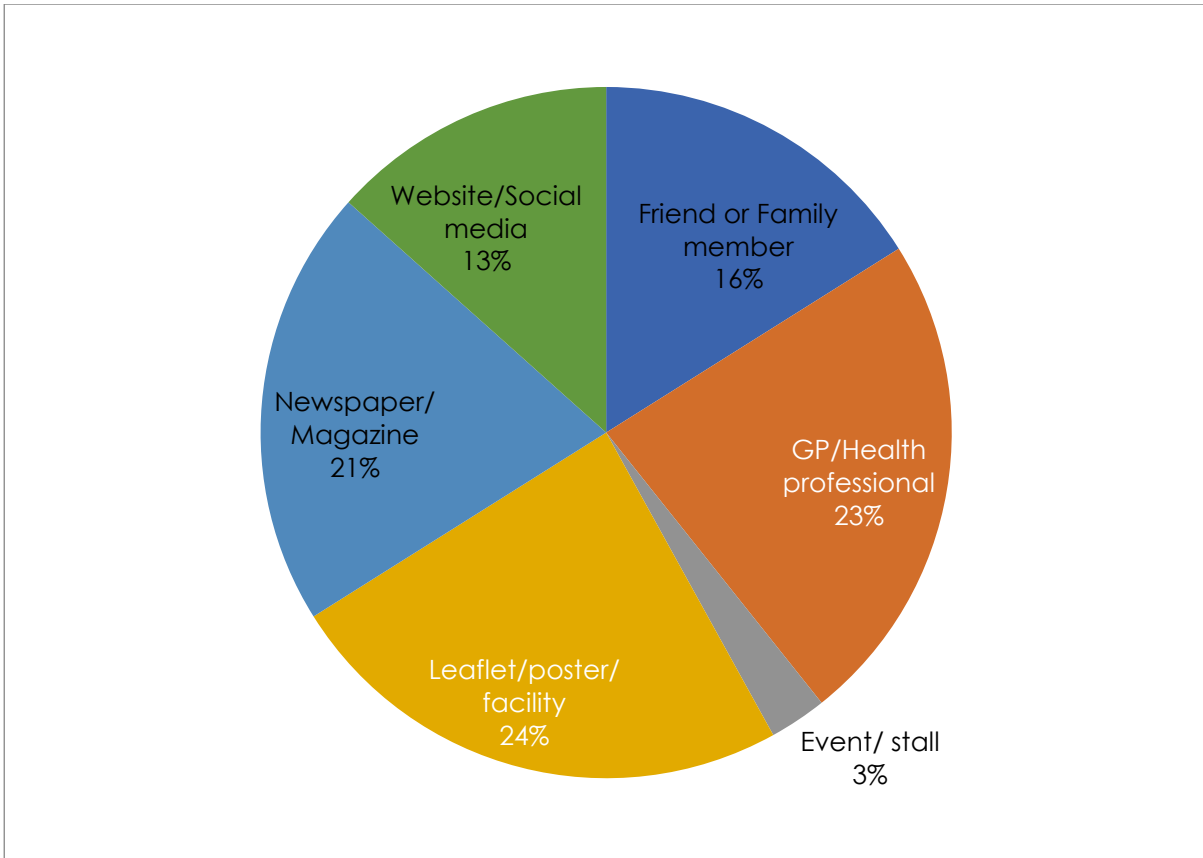
Everybody was expecting delivery of the programme to be challenging at first, as ESCAPE-pain was a new service, but felt that achieving referrals would be straightforward, as existing, well-established pathways were already in place for similar programmes.

In practice, the opposite was true: staff found ESCAPE-pain easy and enjoyable to deliver, but initially struggled to get referrals from the MSK pathways.

Everybody engaged with their local CCG and MSK leads to overcome the initial resistance encountered from health professionals who were reluctant to refer into a programme for the management of osteoarthritis delivered in the leisure sector, and this eventually led to ensuring a flow of referrals into the service.

In addition, they put in place a comprehensive marketing campaign, including posters, leaflets, T-shirts and advertising in local media, which allowed them to directly recruit participants into the programme.

Marketing has been successful, and participants have been recruited from a variety of methods, as this slide from *Everybody* demonstrates an approximate evaluation of referral sources:



Sustainability

Everybody, with the help of their local Academic Health Science Network has presented a business case to their CCG to be able to continue to deliver the programme beyond the Sport England grant. The business case has been approved and *Everybody* has been commissioned to deliver a 1-year pilot programme initially, with the possibility to extend for a further three years. Other local CCGs are looking to replicate this approach.

This summary has been developed by the Health Innovation Network and approved by Everybody Sport and Recreation. For more information please contact Everybody Healthy on: ebhealthy@everybody.org.uk or phone: 01270 685589.

Participant Case Study from Everybody Sport and Recreation - Pauline

Pauline, 77, an ex-nurse and charity worker was at an all-time low, she felt down constantly and was upset that she was unable to live the life that she wanted. She was riddled with self-doubt and lived her life fearful because of her arthritis.

Her constant pain made her unable to manage at home, and she believed full-time residential care was the way her life was going.

Pauline became desperate and claimed she had "*lost all positivity*". Her daughter suggested ESCAPE-pain and brought her a leaflet. Although reluctant, Pauline decided to take the plunge and called straight away.

Pauline completed the 6-week funded ESCAPE-pain programme, with Everybody Sport and Recreation at the Crewe Lifestyle Centre. Her life has been transformed and she feels incredibly thankful for the support she has received, Pauline now goes to the gym regularly as well as attending the follow-on class with all the friends she made on the programme.

In the first two weeks, Pauline couldn't understand how 2 sessions a week could help her, and questioned how this works, was it just a gimmick? She felt her pain was so severe that nothing other than medication could help her.

Pauline didn't think ESCAPE-pain could help her, and she wanted to quit in her first week, she didn't believe that these exercises would help, but the support from Lifestyle Coach Gavin and the others on the programme helped her motivation to continue.

By week 3, Pauline had noticed a real difference in herself, physically – she felt more mobile and her pain was reduced, usually taking 8 strong painkillers a day, she had reduced this to only 2. She no longer felt reliant on her walking stick and was excited about how she would improve even more. She felt a lot better mentally and could feel herself becoming more like her old self, she was positive about the future and happier about her life.

Pauline has now completed 6 weeks of ESCAPE-pain and feels back to her old self, she is excited about her future and now lives without fear, even getting back into the garden and walking up and down the stairs unaided. Speaking on her experience she said, "*I am now mended*".

Pauline now wants to support others who are unsure about completing ESCAPE-pain and recently spoke to a group on their first session to explain her experience and how it can help them. Pauline wants everyone to have the opportunity to change their life the way she did and is so grateful for the opportunity to complete the programme.