



The British Pain Society

Participant Information for Pain Management Programmes

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Foreword

In 1997, the Pain Society (now the British Pain Society) published *Desirable Criteria for Pain Management Programmes* to provide information and guidance to those involved in developing and running such programmes. The third revision of that document, published in 2013, aims to provide updated guidance on what a pain management programme (PMP) is, its position within care plans for people with persistent (non-cancer) pain and desirable content.

This accompanying document, *Participant information for Pain Management Programmes*, provides information specifically for people with persistent pain and their carers.

In this document, we use the term *persistent pain* which is sometimes called *long term pain*. Professionals more commonly use the term *chronic pain*.

Participant information for Pain Management Programmes

What is a Pain Management Programme?

A pain management programme (PMP) is a group treatment which uses education and practice sessions to help people with persistent pain to manage their pain and everyday activities better. Persistent pain is pain that continues for more than three months. It can be disabling and frustrating, and can affect your relationships with family, friends and work colleagues.

If you learn to manage your persistent pain in a better way, you may find your quality of life also improves.

While attending a PMP, you will develop skills that help you to deal with and manage your pain. These skills include:

- learning about managing everyday activities, such as hobbies and work;
- how to do gentle exercise;
- how to relax both your mind and body;
- how to avoid overdoing activity and increasing your pain;
- understanding the psychological effects of persistent pain; and
- how to improve your confidence to cope with persistent pain.

These skills are discussed later in more detail.

Who runs a PMP?

PMPs are run by healthcare professionals with special skills to help you manage your pain. Usually, a psychologist and a physiotherapist will provide most of the PMP sessions, and other staff such as occupational therapists, nurses and doctors are often involved.

Who is a PMP for?

PMP treatment is for people with persistent pain, which is causing *reduced activity* and *unhappiness*. It is usually recommended after you have had all appropriate investigations for your pain and tried other treatments.

How can I get onto a PMP?

People are often referred by their GP and you could ask your GP to refer you. You can also ask a specialist to refer you to a PMP. This is usually organised through a specialist in pain medicine as part of a broader package of care. Your GP can give you more advice about local arrangements.

Before being invited to attend a PMP you will need to be assessed to see if it will be helpful for you. This usually involves a discussion with the PMP team and you may need to fill in some questionnaires.

During this assessment you will have the opportunity to ask questions about the treatment.

Can everyone with persistent pain attend a PMP?

Not everyone can benefit from a PMP and this is why you will need an assessment before you are invited to attend. You will not be invited to join a PMP if you:

- have a medical problem which needs treatment;
- have severe depression or someone close to you has recently died;
- are unable to understand the spoken language of the PMP;
- have drug or alcohol problems;
- are waiting for further investigations or treatments which you expect will solve your pain problem;
- are unable to join in group therapy; or
- are waiting for a disability to be assessed or have work or family commitments.

What will I do at the PMP?

A PMP is a friendly group environment where you can have positive discussions with other people who have persistent pain. People often make friends with other group members while they are on a PMP.

You should wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothes when you go to the PMP so that you can do the gentle exercises.

The sessions include the following:

- **Gentle exercise:** In a group setting, an expert will guide you on the right sort of exercise for you. You will not be given physiotherapy manipulation as a treatment. Continuing gentle daily exercises after the PMP will help to keep you fit and active and help keep pain levels down.
- **Relaxation:** Stress and tension can increase pain and make it difficult to concentrate. The PMP helps you learn how to relax your mind and body. Continuing relaxation after the PMP will help you manage your stress and pain.
- **Discussion groups:** These confidential and positive group discussions are about managing your own pain. Discussion topics include:
 - how pain occurs;
 - medication for pain and how to rely less on medication;
 - how pain affects your mind and body;
 - how to manage stress;
 - how to improve sleep;
 - how your pain affects your friends and family; and
 - how to continue hobbies and work.

- **Targeting and pacing:** Some people overdo activities on good days and then pay for it afterwards. This leads to frustration, loss of confidence and increased pain. Pacing methods are used to set simple, realistic targets for your activities. Continuing targeting and pacing methods after the PMP will help build up your activities and stamina, and also your confidence.

The PMP sessions are varied so that you do not have to sit or stand for long periods.

Are there any side effects?

You may have some muscular discomfort at first, as you start to do gentle exercises. This is the same for anyone who does exercise that they have not done for some time. This discomfort is not caused by your condition getting worse, and it will reduce as you continue the gentle exercises.

Will I be cured?

Your pain will still be there at the end of the PMP, but often people report that their pain is reduced. Although the pain is still there, people are more confident to manage it on a day-to-day basis. They feel emotionally stronger and more able to cope with the pain psychologically.

What can I expect at the end of a PMP?

At the end of a PMP, people are usually more flexible and have increased stamina. They also have increased confidence and feel happier. The aim of a PMP is to help you have a better quality of life, despite having persistent pain. To have long-term benefit you will need to continue doing regular gentle exercise and relaxation and regularly use targeting and pacing principles for your daily activities.

What support is available after the PMP?

Often people make friends on the PMP and create their own support network for after the PMP.

There are pain support groups around the UK and your local PMP may provide details of those closest to you.

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Competing interests

Members of the group have registered all competing interests as follows:

Amanda Williams has carried out paid teaching and consultancy for Pfizer, Astellas, Reckitt Benckiser and Janssen. She does not consider that any of this work influenced her work on the guidelines, nor could her contribution to the guidelines have any benefit or disadvantage for any of these companies.

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