

StockWellBeing  
PRIMARY CARE NETWORK



KING'S  
HEALTH  
PARTNERS



HELPING YOU  
**LIVE** A BETTER  
QUALITY OF LIFE  
WITH CHRONIC PAIN



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Helping You Live a Better Quality of Life With Chronic Pain

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# 01 INTRODUCTION

KEYWORDS:

Acute Pain

Chronic Pain / Persistent Pain

Nervous System

If you suffer with chronic pain (also known as persistent pain), you'll understand how much your condition can influence every aspect of your life.

Living with persistent pain can impact your thoughts, your feelings, your memory, your relationships and your enjoyment of everyday life.

It's common for people living with chronic pain to feel confused, frustrated, isolated or lonely. But it's important to understand that you're not alone. It's estimated that between 30%-50% of people in the UK suffer from some form of persistent pain.

And although there might not be an easy way to stop your persistent pain, there are a variety of techniques that can be used to help manage it and help you regain your confidence and enjoyment of life.



## UNDERSTANDING CHRONIC PAIN

Before we start looking at ways to manage persistent pain, it's important to first understand it.

# IS IT REAL?

One of the most frustrating things for people suffering from persistent pain is knowing that what you feel is real, but check-ups, scans and x-rays don't identify any underlying cause. This confusion and frustration can often lead to heightened emotions and sometimes even anxiety and depression. This can trigger your nervous system even more and actually worsen your persistent pain symptoms.

The best advice that we could offer someone suffering with persistent pain is to understand that **what you are feeling** is real. Your nervous system is highly sensitised, and your body is genuinely sending signals of pain.

**YOU'RE NOT IMAGINING IT. YOU ARE BELIEVED. AND YOU'RE NOT ON YOUR OWN.**

## ACUTE PAIN

From a biological perspective, the purpose of pain is to help us protect ourselves. Pain is our body giving us a signal that something is wrong, and that we should either stop doing something (e.g. putting our hand on a hot object) or that we should rest and heal (e.g. if we suffer a sprain or fracture). This kind of helpful pain is often referred to as acute pain. It is often short-term and disappears when the body heals or the source of pain is removed.

## CHRONIC PAIN

Chronic pain is different. It is pain that continues for longer than 3 months, even after the injury or illness that caused the pain has healed. In some circumstances, people experience chronic pain without any previous illness, injury or damage to the body. With persistent pain, our nervous system is often overly sensitive and is sending us real pain signals to help us try and protect ourselves, even though there is no damage to our body.

By following some simple lifestyle advice, you can learn to better manage your pain and regain more control over your life.



# REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

How does this make me feel?

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What questions do I have about this workshop?

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Notes:

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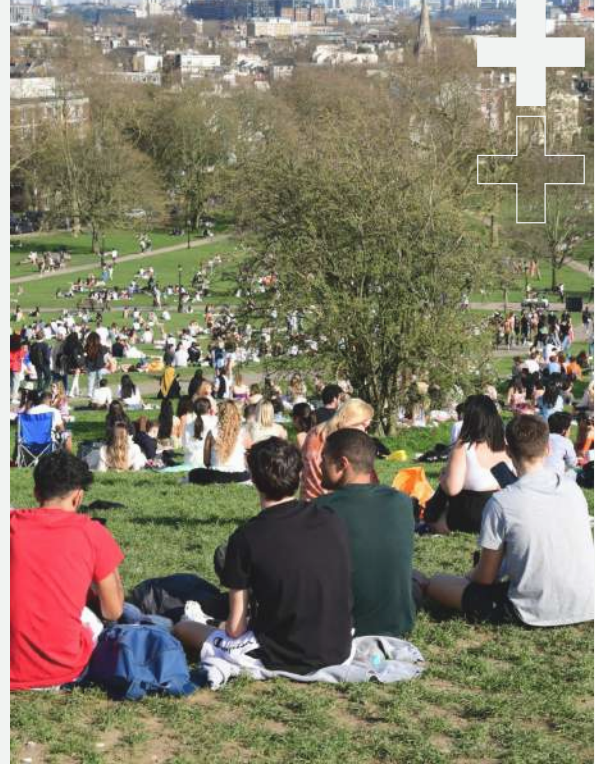
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# 02 MOVEMENT



LIFE WITH CHRONIC PAIN

KEYWORDS:

Persistent Pain Cycle  
Physical Activity  
Over-compensate  
Moderation  
Flexibility  
Boundaries

## PERSISTENT PAIN CYCLE

If you're suffering from persistent pain, it's likely that your condition has prevented you from being as active as you used to be. Maybe you've even stopped participating in certain activities that you used to enjoy. This can result in a very **common cycle for persistent pain sufferers**:



Your pain stops you from being as active



You lose your fitness levels and strength in your muscles



You make a mental list of things you believe you can no longer do



You might feel a lack of confidence, and a sense frustration and anger



This can lead to stress and anxiety



This impacts your nervous system and can actually make your pain worse

But everyone is different.

## OVERCOMPENSATING



Some people that suffer from persistent pain may go through periods where they actually start to feel better. There can be a tendency here to over-compensate for periods where they haven't been as active and overdo their physical activity. This can put too much stress on the body and can also make your pain worse in the long term.

The most important thing to remember is that regular movement and physical

activity can be really helpful to sufferers of chronic pain.

But moderation and flexibility are key. Avoid an 'all or nothing' approach and remember to listen to your body.

If your body is telling you that you're able to push things a little bit further on one day, go for it. If your body is giving signals that you should slow down, that's what you should do.

## BOUNDARIES

Another important point to remember if you start getting back into regular exercise is that you need to be comfortable setting boundaries and expectations with teammates or exercise partners (can be family, friends or professionals).

Some well-meaning teammates may provide encouragement to push yourself harder than you're able to push. Over-exerting yourself probably isn't going to be helpful for the management of your pain in the long term.

On the other hand, if you don't set your expectations on how you'd like to be treated on your return to exercise, your well-meaning exercise partners or teammates might take it too easy on you.

Having people 'go too easy' with you can be negative on two fronts. You'll miss out on the optimum benefit from your exercise, and it can also lead to negative thought patterns about people thinking you can't do what you used to do.

## HOW TO GET MOVING

If you're interested in movement to help with your chronic pain symptoms but aren't yet ready to re-join sports teams or head to the gym, consider some gentle stretching.

The West Suffolk NHS Trust has put together a really valuable guide on the importance of movement to help with chronic pain.

It includes some suggestions for stretching exercises that you can complete in the comfort of your own home that may alleviate your symptoms, including:

KNEES TO CHEST STRETCHES

BACK ARCHES

PELVIC LIFTS

SIT-STANDS

But remember - only do what you're able to do - this may entail some level of discomfort but listen when your body says it is too much.

# REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

What are the key learning points?

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How do these make me feel?

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What questions do I have about this workshop?

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What can I implement to help live better with pain?

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Where can I go to get ongoing support with this?

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# 03 NUTRITION AND SUBSTANCES

KEYWORDS:

- Comfort Eating
- Inflammation
- Healthy Plate
- Anti-inflammatory
- Fibre
- Hydration

The relationships between diet, nutrition, body weight and persistent pain are complex.

## WEIGHT

A 2018 study (Is excess weight a burden for older adults who suffer chronic pain?) showed that people who were obese (with a Body Mass Index of more than 30) were more likely to suffer from chronic pain than people with a normal BMI score.

Unfortunately, being overweight and suffering from persistent pain, can make people prone to comfort eating or eating unhealthily.

Not only is comfort eating bad news for your weight, but many of the 'go-to' foods that people tend to comfort eat are triggers for inflammation. And inflammation can also influence the symptoms of persistent pain.

## SUGAR

One of the main dietary culprits for causing inflammation is refined sugar. This type of sugar is found in many processed foods and drinks, including cookies, cakes, ice cream and soft drinks. So these are all things to avoid or reduce consumption of if you suffer with persistent pain.



LIFE WITH CHRONIC PAIN

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But before you switch out your soft drinks for a seemingly healthy fruit smoothie – think twice. Blending fruits in a smoothie can actually break down the cell walls of the fruits and cause an unnatural spike in sugar.



## THE HEALTHY PLATE

The key to healthy nutrition to help your persistent pain lies in managing a balanced diet that includes the 'healthy plate' proportions:

- One quarter of your plate should be protein
- One quarter of your plate should be starch
- Half your plate should be vegetables.

## ANTI-INFLAMMATORY FOODS

There are also certain foods that have anti-inflammatory properties that you should consider including in your diet if you suffer from persistent pain:

- |             |         |              |          |
|-------------|---------|--------------|----------|
| Olive oil   | Spinach | Almonds      | Oranges  |
| Coconut oil | Kale    | Walnuts      | Sardines |
| Turmeric    | Salmon  | Strawberries |          |
| Tomatoes    | Tuna    | Blueberries  |          |

## FIBRE

It's also important to make sure you include enough fibre in your diet. Fibre can help maintain a healthy gut biome and can help prevent inflammation of other systems in your body.

Good fibre rich foods include:

- |              |          |          |              |
|--------------|----------|----------|--------------|
| Whole grains | Apples   | Berries  | Dried Fruits |
| Nuts         | Avocados | Broccoli | Yam          |
| Fufu         |          |          |              |

## HYDRATION

Staying sufficiently hydrated is also a great way to reduce inflammation in your body and manage symptoms of persistent pain. When we don't drink enough, we are more sensitive to pain.

It's recommended to drink between 1.5 and 2 litres of water daily. Tea and coffee count (but try to opt for low caffeine where possible).

**ALCOHOL  
DOESN'T  
COUNT!**

# REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

What are the key learning points?

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Where can I go to get ongoing support with this?

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# 04 SLEEP

KEYWORDS:

Disruptive Sleep Cycle  
Sleep Hygiene  
Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)



Sleep is really important if you struggle with persistent pain.

## DISRUPTIVE SLEEP CYCLE

The research paper “The association of sleep and pain: An update and a path forward” looks at a wide variety of studies suggesting a link between quality of sleep and the intensity of pain.

This makes it incredibly frustrating that when you suffer with persistent pain, you can often enter an ineffective and **disruptive sleep cycle**:



## SLEEP HYGIENE

To help break this sleep-pain cycle, it's important to look at your **sleep hygiene**:

Get into a routine of sleeping and waking at the same time each day. This helps to promote a natural sleep cycle.

Make your bedroom a relaxing sleep environment. Make sure it is dark, comfortable and free from distractions.

Take regular exercise during the day – even if it is very gentle during flare ups.

Keep a notepad by your bed to jot down any worries to resolve the next day.

Try to avoid daytime naps where possible, but if you do take them limit them to 20-30 minutes.

Try to avoid screen time in the 3 hours before bed. If you do need to use electronic devices, use blue light filters.

Practice mindfulness or gentle relaxation exercises before bed.

## THERE ARE ALSO CERTAIN THINGS YOU SHOULD TRY AND AVOID:



Taking naps after 5pm



Exerting yourself too vigorously in the evening



Consuming caffeine in the evening



Eating heavy meals within 3 hours of going to bed



Watching TV in bed

## COGNITIVE BEHAVIOURAL THERAPY

If you still struggle to enjoy regular restorative sleep, consider cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT). Cognitive behavioural therapy is a structured approach to addressing the root causes of your sleep issues. It can help you understand why you struggle with sleep and how to improve it.

CBT may be helpful for people who have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep, or who wake up too early in the morning. CBT can also help if your sleep problems have been caused by stress or other factors in your life.

The goals of CBT are to help reduce anxiety about sleep, make changes in your thinking patterns that affect how well you sleep, and solve other problems that can interfere with good sleep habits.

## MEDICATIONS

If you're considering medications or supplements to help you sleep, we'd always recommend speaking to a GP first.

Medication can sometimes help you get to sleep, but it should **never be used as a long-term solution**. It's important to get the appropriate medical advice before you begin taking any sleeping tablets - even ones you can buy over the counter.



### ACTIVITY:

You might also consider some muscular relaxation exercises as you wind down in an evening. A useful resource is this [Progressive Muscle Relaxation](#) video.

# REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

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# 05 EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

KEYWORDS:

- Anxiety
- Control
- Socialising
- ACES Framework

When you suffer with persistent pain, it can have an impact on your emotional wellbeing. You might feel frustrated, angry, down or anxious about your condition and the impact it has on your life.










This is perfectly normal. But heightened emotions and a sense of anxiety can have an adverse effect on your nervous system and may make your persistent pain symptoms worse.



LIFE WITH CHRONIC PAIN

## CONTROL

One of the best pieces of advice is to try and come to peace with the things you can't control, and just focus on the things you can control:

 <p>Your attitude</p>	 <p>Your habits</p>	 <p>Your self-care</p>
 <p>Your breath</p>	 <p>Your effort</p>	 <p>Your priorities</p>
 <p>Your perspective</p>	 <p>How you spend your time</p>	 <p>How you talk to yourself</p>

## ACTIVITY

For people still feeling frustrated with the impact that chronic pain has had on their lives, one useful exercise is to **write a letter to your pain**. Explain how you appreciate it trying to protect you, but that you are going to take it on yourself now and no longer need its protection.

## THE ACES FRAMEWORK

The ACES framework is a great way to improve your well-being and balance in your mood.

By setting achievable goals, maintaining connections with loved ones, finding joy in your hobbies, and connecting with spirituality (as far as that is relevant to you), you can create a balanced and fulfilling life.

Taking care of your mental health and emotional wellbeing is important. Incorporating these four elements into your weekly routine can help you feel more grounded and at peace.



### ACHIEVEMENT

Setting yourself realistic goals for what you need to achieve – tasks at home, carer responsibilities, work, study, exercise, stretching...



### CONNECTION

Socialising with family, friends and your community – this can be by phone, online or in person



### ENJOYMENT

Making sure you take time for you to enjoy what you like.



### SPIRITUALITY

Connect with God, saying prayers, doing something charitable, being with nature, or whatever is spiritual and relevant for you.

## SOCIALISING

Another thing you can do to help improve your emotional wellbeing is to take steps to ensure you **continue socialising**. It's common for sufferers of chronic pain to avoid some of the physical activities they previously enjoyed. And depending on your situation, it may not be possible to engage as fully as you once did with other people.

But it's important for your emotional wellbeing that you **don't stop socialising with your family, friends, colleagues and community**. Try to find a way to stay involved with your social circle or consider finding new groups or hobbies that don't aggravate your pain.





# REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

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# 06 RELATIONSHIPS

KEYWORDS:

Communicate  
Belonging  
Communication Styles  
Assertive  
Respect

Persistent pain can affect our relationships and how we communicate with people around us.

## BELONGING

When you suffer with persistent pain it can lead you to be more frustrated, anxious or sad, which changes the way we communicate with people. One of the outcomes is that it can cause us to push people away.

And when we push away those closest to us, it can affect our sense of belonging. So our nervous system enters threat mode and becomes more sensitised, which can lead to increased pain.

There are a lot of different things that can help our communication with those around us and help maintain strong relationships with those closest to us – even though this is not always easy while we are in pain.





# COMMUNICATION STYLES

A good place to start is to understand the different types of communication style we can use, and how each of them impacts our bodies and the people around us.

If you want to have a healthy relationship with your body, it helps to understand how different types of

communication impact the way you feel and the way you act.

There are four basic communication styles: passive, aggressive, passive-aggressive and assertive. Each one has its own unique effect on your emotions, body and relationships

## PASSIVE

communication makes you feel powerless or disempowered. Your nervous system goes on alert to try to compensate for this lack of power and control. This can lead to feeling sad or anxious about the situation—which in turn puts your nervous system back on alert again and more sensitive! This communication style means people walk all over your rights.

communication can negatively impact relationships by causing people to feel angry or hurt by what you're saying. As a result, you may also experience feelings of anger, guilt, sadness or anxiousness, knowing you've upset someone close to you. This communication style means you walk all over others' rights.

## AGGRESSIVE

## PASSIVE-AGGRESSIVE

communication often causes people to experience sadness or anxiety because they feel like they're unable to express themselves clearly without hurting someone else's feelings. This communication style is a more subtle and indirect way of walk all over others' rights.

communication is a way of expressing yourself and standing up for your rights in a respectful and non-aggressive manner. It involves being clear and direct in expressing your needs and feelings, while also considering the needs and feelings of others. Assertive communication is beneficial because it allows you to express yourself honestly and openly, without violating the rights of others. It also helps you to set boundaries and maintain your self-respect.

## ASSERTIVE

So whenever you're communicating, it's important to try and use an assertive communication style. Others may still interpret us as being aggressive but it is important to feel we can be honest, dignified and content with our communication style.

# BOUNDARIES

But it's not just about how you communicate with other people. It's important to set boundaries and communicate these in a respectful way for the way that other people talk to you, and the expectations they place on you.

Establishing boundaries is important because it helps you to understand what your limits are, and when to say no. It also lets people know what you are and are not comfortable with. If you don't have boundaries, it can lead to feeling like you have no control over your life. And if someone doesn't respect your boundaries, it can make you feel like they don't respect you as a person.

We've put together a list of 7 steps for better communication when you're in conversation with other people, that ensures you remain assertive and mindful of your boundaries.

- 01 Check-in with how you feel - has a boundary been crossed?
- 02 Express what you feel
- 03 Use 'I' language, for example "when I hear you say this, I feel..."
- 04 Ask clarifying questions if you need to
- 05 Re-state what you've heard
- 06 Pause
- 07 Say what you need



# REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

What are the key learning points?

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How do these make me feel?

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What questions do I have about this workshop?

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# 07 TRAUMA

KEYWORDS:

Trauma  
Mental Wellbeing  
Anxiety

Trauma can have a significant impact on our mental wellbeing. It can be a major cause of anxiety which is known to influence persistent pain.

When we're in a situation that feels unsafe, our nervous system goes into fight-or-flight mode. This is a normal response to an abnormal situation, and it's something that happens automatically. Our bodies are designed to protect us in these situations.

The problem is that if you end up in this state of hyper-awareness for too long, your body can start holding onto the pain from trauma even when you are not in the same danger.

## TALKING ABOUT TRAUMA

Another method that might be recommended by a professional is to talk about your trauma in a safe environment. Often people try to push memories away, but to heal we need to hold onto a painful memory long enough for us to process it and update the meaning of the memory to stop it feeling like it's happening again.

The positive news is that trauma can often be channelled into something positive.

When dealt with in a constructive way, the energy, frustration and anger can be addressed and channelled into making positive changes in your life and those of others.



## IMPACTS OF TRAUMA

Trauma can also have an impact on other areas of your life that can influence your experience of chronic pain. It's common for people to experience changes in appetite and suffer from sleeplessness, both of which have a bi-directional relationship with persistent pain.

When people talk about trauma, it's often associated with a large event like an accident, attack, bereavement, divorce or redundancy. But trauma can also accumulate over a period of time, from a series of ongoing events such as bullying at work or being in an abusive relationship.

*But trauma can also accumulate over a period of time, from a series of ongoing events such as bullying at work, being in an abusive relationship or discrimination.*

Whatever the source of trauma, if you feel that you're struggling with your mental wellbeing because of traumatic events – it's important to talk to a GP or healthcare professional. It isn't something you should be dealing with on your own.

Advice from healthcare professionals might include grounding strategies that help you to differentiate between the traumatic event and the present.

# REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

What are the key learning points?

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How do these make me feel?

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What questions do I have about this workshop?

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Where can I go to get ongoing support with this?

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# 08 COMMUNITY AND SOCIETY

KEYWORDS:

Support  
Community Resources  
Lambeth

It's easy to feel frustrated, isolated and lonely when you're dealing with persistent pain. **But you're not alone.**

## SUPPORT

There are many people going through a similar thing, and there are always healthcare professionals and religious and community support groups you can talk to if you feel you would benefit from sharing the challenges of your pain or the details of your situation.

Using the community resources to help you with other life challenges (e.g. finance, unemployment, housing, injustice, inequalities...) can be important in giving you a sense of agency, belonging and safety which all contribute to a nervous system that is less prone to pain.

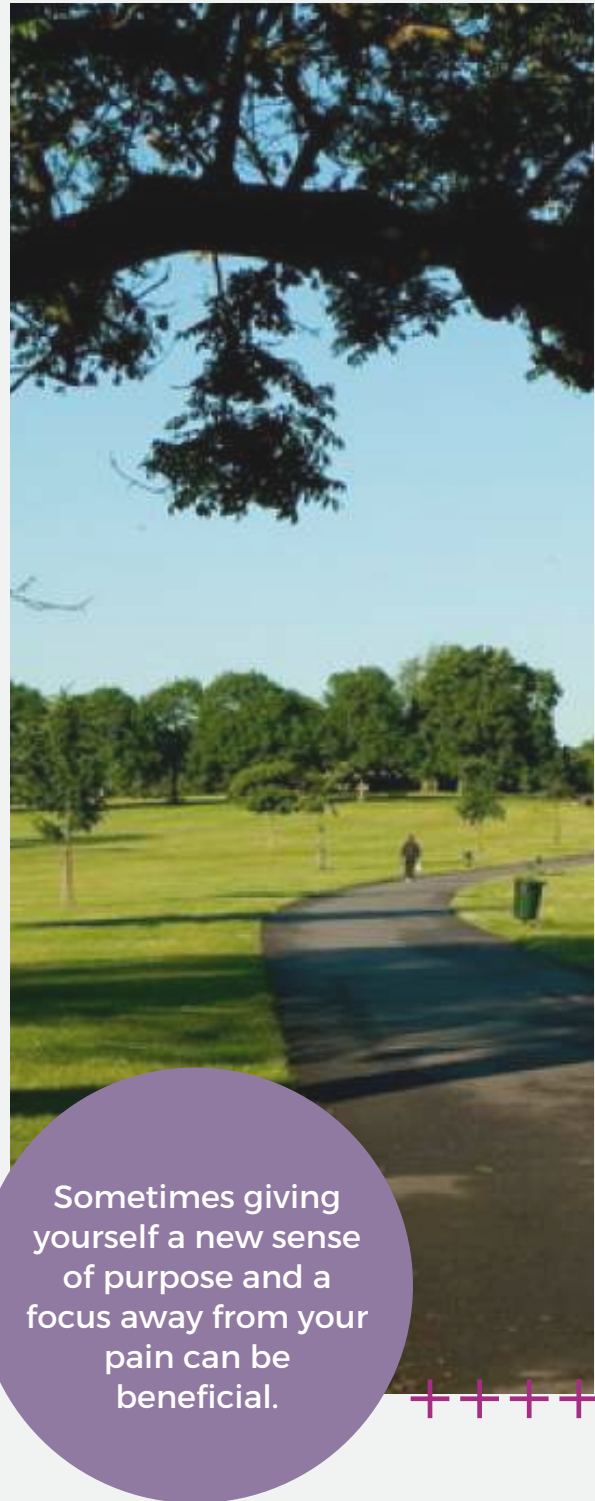
Hopefully the tips in this guide will help you manage your persistent pain and feel more confident in your daily life.

**We'll leave you with one final suggestion -**

## THRIVING COMMUNITIES

It can often be useful to get involved with events in your local community. Not only can it help take your mind off your pain, it can also provide you with a valuable sense of belonging and help you feel like you're making a difference.

The Thriving Communities platform has a bunch of helpful resources, events, and volunteering opportunities that you can get involved in.



Sometimes giving yourself a new sense of purpose and a focus away from your pain can be beneficial.







Find Helpful Health and Wellbeing Resources at <https://thrivinglambeth.co.uk/resources/>, including:

Eating well for less in Lambeth	Connecting with Nature in Lambeth	Getting Active in Lambeth	Volunteering in your community
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Find local events and activities to get involved in across Lambeth at <https://thrivinglambeth.co.uk/events/> examples of local events include:

Community Gardening	Local community choirs	Chess Clubs	Coffee Mornings
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Find Volunteering Opportunities at <https://thrivinglambeth.co.uk/volunteering/> - some of the opportunities include:

**Befriending volunteer** - Befrienders will meet people outside their homes, and go out locally together to do activities chosen by members. This could be going for a walk, cycling round the park, or helping with grocery shopping.

**Walking volunteer** - Are you able to assist older Lambeth residents with a weekly group walk? Age UK Lambeth is launching a healthy walks programme in each of their neighbourhoods.

**Retail volunteer** - Charities such as Vision Foundation are looking for friendly and energetic volunteers to join their growing retail team.

**Mentoring volunteer** - many organisations are looking for local residents to become mentors, and support programmes such as youth career development.

## LOCAL ORGANISATIONS/SUPPORT:

Emotional wellbeing support resources:

- Black Minds Matter - <https://www.blackmindsmatteruk.com/>
- South London Cares - <https://southlondoncares.org.uk/home>
- Lambeth Talking Therapies - <https://lambethtalkingtherapies.nhs.uk/> 02032286747 Self-Referral Number

Community engagement and activism resources:

- Lambeth Interfaith - <https://www.faithstogetherinlambeth.org/>
- Lambeth Citizens - <https://www.citizensuk.org/chapters/south-london/lambeth-social-mobility-strategy/>

# REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

What are the key learning points?

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Where can I go to get ongoing support with this?

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# 09 POST WORKSHOP REFLECTION

## IMMEDIATE FOLLOW UP:

What would I like to implement in my life to help cope with chronic pain?

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What voluntary services could I join?

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## 2 WEEK FOLLOW UP:

What have I done since the workshops?

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What haven't I done since the workshops? Why?

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Where have I gotten support?

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# 1 MONTH FOLLOW UP:

What have I done since the workshops?

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What haven't I done since the workshops? Why?

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How have I self-managed? What/who has helped me?

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What voluntary services have I joined?

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What would I like to raise with my link worker?

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# 10 FURTHER READING (SOURCES)

## INTRODUCTION TO CHRONIC PAIN

- Acute VS Chronic Pain:  
<https://southernpainclinic.com/blog/the-difference-between-the-types-of-pain-acute-vs-chronic/>
- Tips for living with Chronic Pain:  
<https://www.webmd.com/pain-management/guide/11-tips-for-living-with-chronic-pain>
- NHS- Managing Chronic Pain -  
<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/pain/ways-to-manage-chronic-pain/>
- What is Chronic Pain - <https://www.healthdirect.gov.au/chronic-pain>

## MOVEMENT

- Weight and Chronic Pain -  
<https://bmcgeriatr.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12877-018-0963-4>
- Body Mass Index -  
<https://www.nhs.uk/common-health-questions/lifestyle/what-is-the-body-mass-index-bmi/>

## STRETCHES AND EXERCISES

- Pain management stretching exercises -  
<https://www.wsh.nhs.uk/CMS-Documents/Patient-leaflets/PainService/6290-1d-Chronic-pain-self-management-stretching-exercise-and-posture.pdf>

## NUTRITION AND SUBSTANCES

- Foods that fight inflammation -  
<https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/foods-that-fight-inflammation>
- Fibre -  
<https://www.benefiber.com/fiber-in-your-life/daily-fiber-intake/top-10-high-fiber-foods/>

## SLEEP

- Sleep and Pain - <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4046588/>

## LIVING BETTER WITH PAIN RESOURCES:

- Living well with pain - <https://livewellwithpain.co.uk/>
- Flippin pain - <https://www.flippinpain.co.uk/>
- Curable health - [Infographic Chronic Pain Explained \(curablehealth.com\)](https://www.curablehealth.com/)
- Living with pain - [https://www.ruh.nhs.uk/zz\\_content\\_include/services/clinics/pain\\_clinic/documents/Living\\_with\\_pain.pdf](https://www.ruh.nhs.uk/zz_content_include/services/clinics/pain_clinic/documents/Living_with_pain.pdf)

# PEACS PROJECT

## ABOUT THE PROJECT

The Pain: Equality of care and support in the community (PEACS) project is a new care pathway being delivered for people living with persistent pain in Lambeth and piloted in the Stockwell Primary Care Network, a partnership of five GP surgeries. Patients can expect a full educational induction into the pathway, as well as an individual 30-minute assessment of their complex needs.

Patients will then participate in intervention style workshops and activities to help them develop the skills to better manage their persistent pain. Significant effort will also be put towards signposting patients to local voluntary and community services. The pathway will incorporate a dynamic range of support drawn from biological, psychological and social approaches.

## WHO WE ARE



**Dr Naomi Stent**  
GP



**Dr Sarfraz Jeraj**  
Clinical  
Psychologist



**Dr Feyisara  
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GP



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## FIND OUT MORE

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