

## Appendix 34 – Pain Self-Management Strategies

### Pain Self-Management Strategies

**Learn more about chronic pain** - Direct patients to additional resources so that they get a deeper understanding of chronic pain physiology and can develop their pain self-management skills

**Stay or become more active** - Hopefully, you have reassured your patient about the safety of physical activity. Encourage them to aim for consistent levels of activity initially, rather than doing too much on a better day, and paying for it with more pain afterwards. Some may be able to increase activity independently, but others may benefit from physiotherapy or exercise referral schemes

**Develop stress management skills** - Stress and worry don't cause pain, but the additional muscle tension can make pain worse. Many people with pain find that understanding these emotions and developing coping techniques, or using relaxation and breathing strategies can be helpful

**Improve or maintain mood** - Low mood doesn't cause pain, but it can wind-up existing pain and make the experience of living with pain more overwhelming. Anything that creates a sense of enjoyment or achievement is a pain management tool. Some may benefit from more specialist psychological input or social prescribing services

**Improve sleep** - An irregular sleep pattern, reduced daytime activity, daytime napping, caffeine, the bedroom environment and worry or stress can all contribute to poor sleep. Direct patients to resources on sleep hygiene/management, where the emphasis is on behavioural changes to improve sleep quality rather than analgesics or sedatives

**Encourage staying in or returning to work** - Work can be good for physical health, mental health, personal finance and overall wellbeing. Employees do not always need to be 100% fit in order to return to work. Use the fit note to suggest a phased return to work or make recommendations for workplace modifications (with specific timeframes/review dates)

**Consider a referral to a pain service with a Pain Management Programme (PMP)** - For those who are struggling to reduce reliance on opioids and have difficulties with activity and mood, a PMP could be of use. This is multidisciplinary rehabilitation, where the aim is to help individuals improve function and quality of life, despite ongoing pain. Be sure to discuss the reason for referral with your patient, so as to manage their expectations

This document has been developed by Salford Pain Centre and Manchester Pain Collaborative with support from Health Innovation Manchester