

A physiotherapist led axSpA clinic– Inverclyde Royal Hospital



**Axial SpA
works silently.
We don't.**

BACKGROUND

Inverclyde Royal Hospital (IRH) provides an axial spondyloarthritis (axSpA) service to people in the Inverclyde region of NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde. Servicing a population of 125,000, which includes some of the most deprived areas in Scotland, IRH axSpA clinic runs once per month with 100 new and return patients attending annually. The clinic is consultant led with specialist physiotherapist input for metrology, advice and education. Onward referral is made for further physiotherapy interventions including virtual exercise and hydrotherapy.

We started by considering where undiagnosed patients might be attending the health service. In the Inverclyde region our GP physiotherapists are able to refer directly to rheumatology for suspected axSpA. Conversely MSK physiotherapists providing rehabilitation in physiotherapy departments are unable to refer to rheumatology. In addition >40% of patients attending MSK physiotherapy self refer without having seen a health professional for their symptoms. We were aware that with the population of the area our clinic serves and an estimated 1 in 220 people suffering axSpA we would expect to have closer to 625 patients attending annually.

Inverclyde has a rich history of heavy industry and ship building. Historically people with axSpA have not accessed occupational therapy (OT) despite expressing that they face challenges with work, fatigue and activities of daily living.

OBJECTIVES

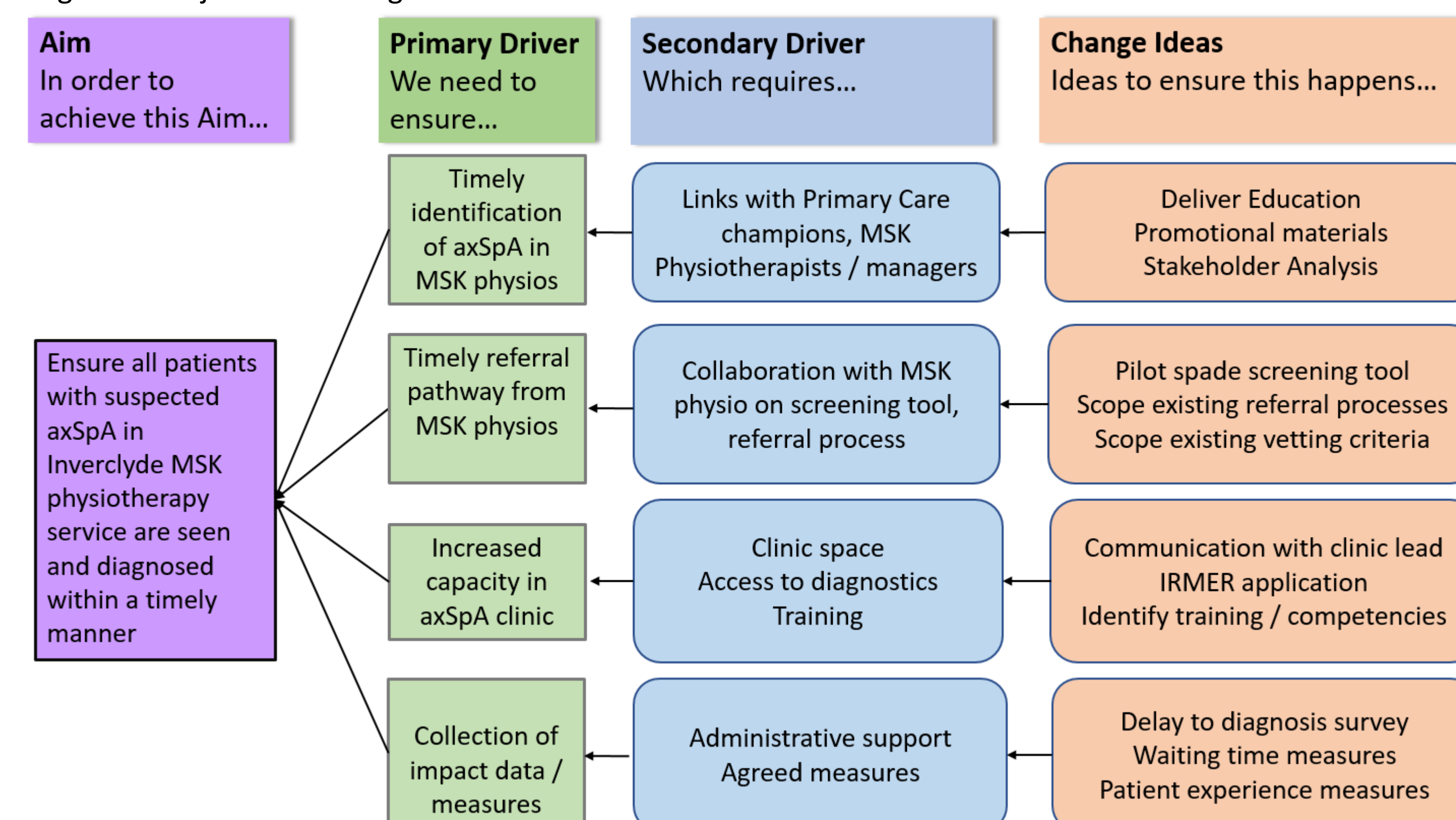
Primary Aim: Ensure all patients with suspected axSpA in Inverclyde MSK physiotherapy service are seen and diagnosed within a timely manner (Figure 1). In doing so we aim to reduce the delay to diagnosis to < 1 year and improve quality of care.

Secondary Aim: To develop an OT led work survey to gather the views of people with lived experience and to find out what matters to them with regards to employment.

METHOD

- Delivered recognising axSpA education to MSK physiotherapists.
- Established streamlined referral pathway from MSK physiotherapy directly to IRH axSpA clinic.
- Built additional capacity with an Advanced Practice (AP) Physiotherapist seeing new patients at first contact including requesting investigations.
- Collection of impact data and measures including delay to diagnosis survey and patient experience.
- A work survey was developed and administered in the Axial SpA clinic by the AP OT.

Figure 1. Project Driver Diagram



RESULTS

- In 16 months 16 new patients were referred through the new pathway.
- 5 of these patients were diagnosed with axSpA.
- Delay to diagnosis in the Inverclyde region has reduced from 7.41 to 6.11 years.
- Feedback from referring MSK physiotherapists through semi structured interviews has been positive with a common theme of increased confidence to identify and refer potential undiagnosed axSpA patients directly to rheumatology.
- Feedback from patients regarding the quality of service provided by the AP physiotherapist led new axSpA clinic and has been extremely positive (Figure 2).
- Results from the work survey can be found via the QR code on the right.

Figure 2. Qualitative feedback on patient experience



CONCLUSION

Evaluation of the project has shown positive outcomes across quantitative measures with reduced time to diagnosis, as well as qualitative measures of referring clinician confidence, patient satisfaction and acceptability of an AP physiotherapist led axSpA clinic.

The results of the work survey demonstrates that there is a clear role for OT in supporting work related issues in people with axSpA.

NEXT STEPS

Provide further recognising axSpA education and training to MSK physiotherapists to help identify a higher number of patients with axSpA.

Expand the referral pathway from MSK physiotherapy to include a wider population across the Clyde sector, including the Vale of Leven and Royal Alexandra Hospitals.

Develop and deliver OT led work interventions including signposting to relevant services such as access to work and fatigue management.

