

Workplace wellness – Axial SpA employment audit

Promoting the role of Occupational Therapy



Axial SpA
works silently.
We don't.

BACKGROUND

Inverclyde Royal Hospital provides an Axial Spondyloarthritis (Axial SpA) service to people in the Inverclyde region of NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde. With a population of 125,000, it includes some of the most deprived areas in Scotland. It has a rich history of heavy industry and ship building. Historically people with Axial SpA have not accessed occupational therapy (OT) despite expressing that they face challenges with work, fatigue and activities of daily living.

Musculoskeletal conditions including arthritis affect more than 20 million people in the UK, a leading cause of disability and sick leave in the age working population.

An Axial SpA work study suggested that 45 % of people had to change their type of employment and a further 24% had to give up working completely.

Our aim was to gain an understanding of the difficulties faced by people living with Axial SpA on employment and improve work outcomes.

OBJECTIVES

To develop a work survey to gather the views of people with lived experience and explore what matters to them with regards to employment.

To find out what resources would help to support employment issues.

To demonstrate the effectiveness of occupational therapy in supporting employment issues.

METHOD

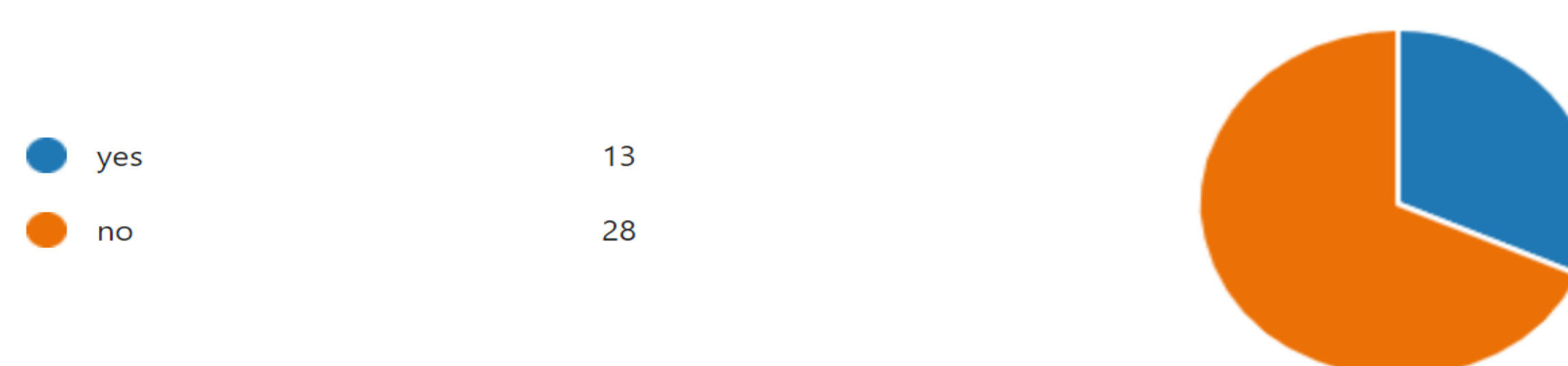
A work survey was developed and administered in the Axial SpA clinic. In addition the following activities were undertaken to gain a better understanding of the role of OT within Axial SpA care.

- Audit of current number of referrals to OT for Axial SpA and reason for referral.
- Shadowing Axial SpA clinic.
- Gathering views of the multidisciplinary team, people with lived experience, 3rd sector.
- Literature review.
- Training needs analysis with OT team.

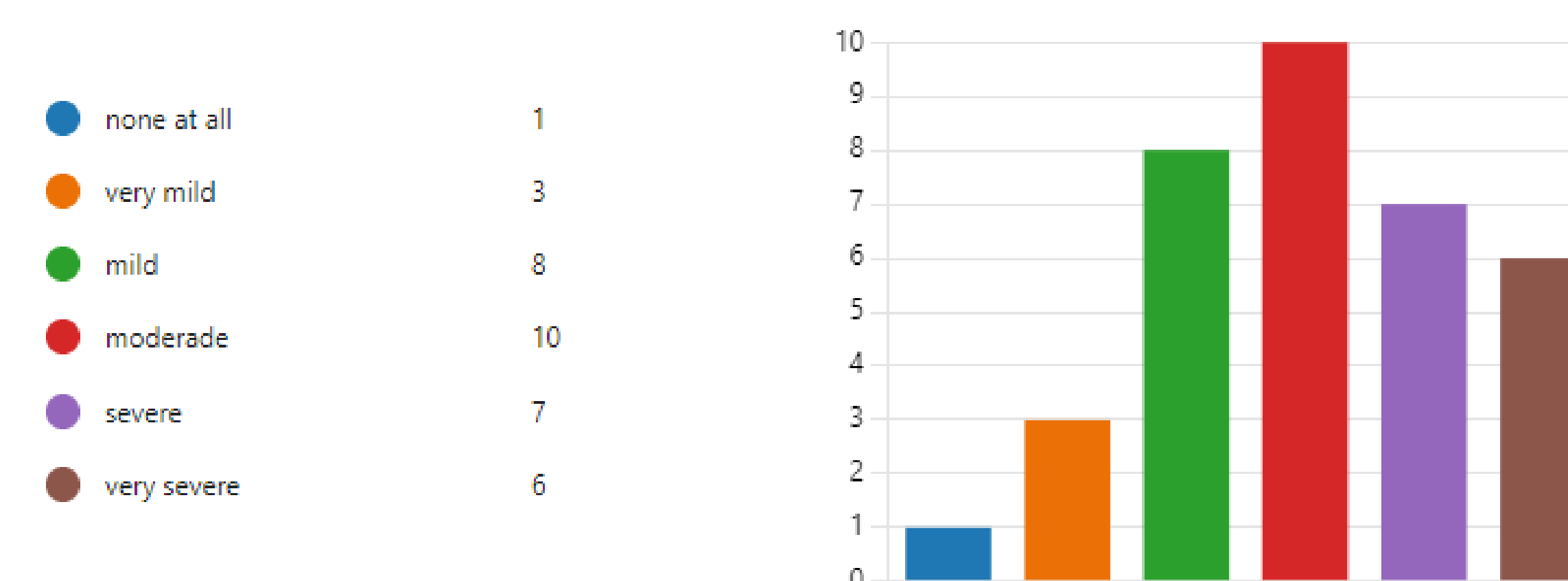
RESULTS

55% of living with Axial SpA in our survey are worried about their ability to maintain employment. 34% had given up working as a result. Fatigue came out as an overwhelming factor and an area people would like support for. There was limited awareness on the role of OT and how to access support.

Have you had to give up your employment because of your Axial SpA?



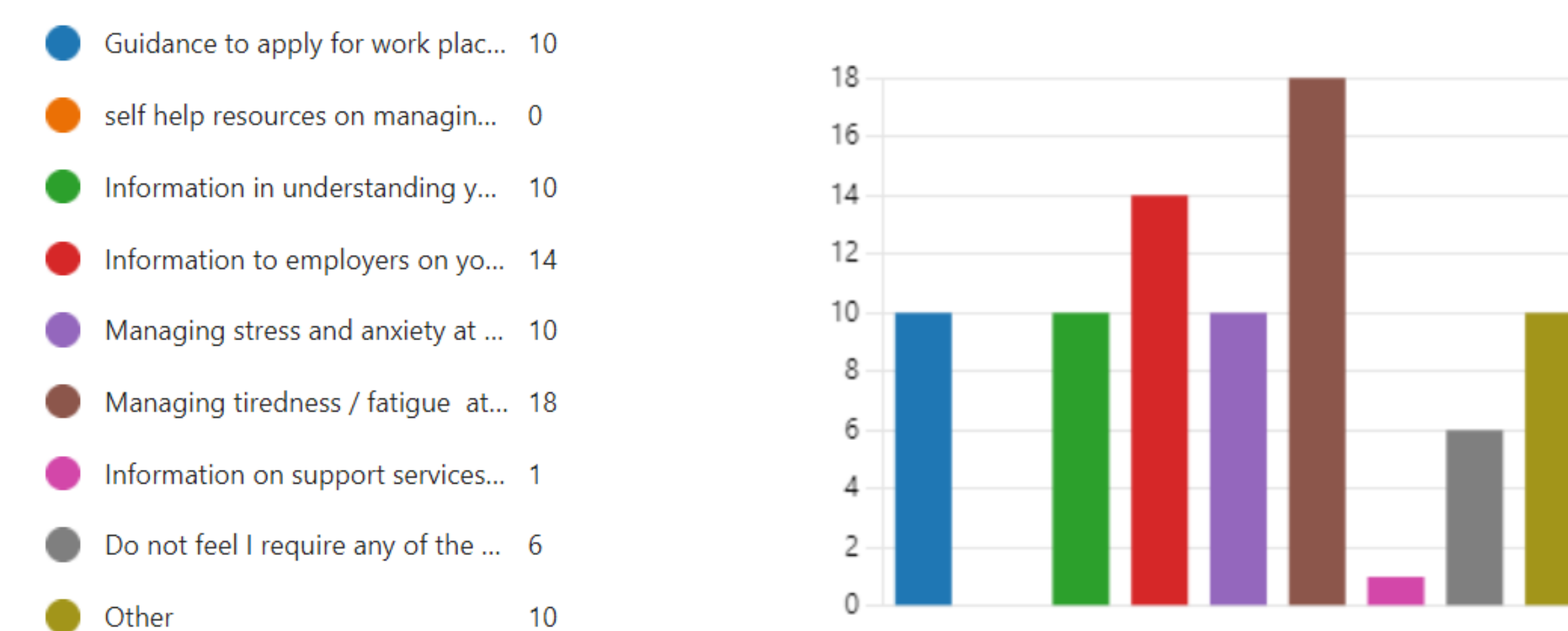
Overall, how would you rate the impact on your Axial SpA on your ability to work?



How much do you disagree or agree with the following statements about managing your current employment ?



What information or support do you feel would improve your ability to maintain work or get back into employment?



Did you know that you can self-refer to Rheumatology occupational therapy ?



CONCLUSION / NEXT STEPS

There is a clear role for OT in supporting work related issues. As a result of the responses to the survey the following service improvements have taken place.

- Work interventions including signposting to relevant services such as access to work, fatigue management, advice on ergonomic equipment, information to employers, workplace reports, information on legal rights, advice on workplace adjustments.
- Training needs analysis with OT staff and subsequent delivery of work support training.
- Implementation of the AS Work instability scale, outcome measure to identify individual at risk of falling out of employment .
- Provision of NASS booklets to support self-management.
- Promotion of the self-referral service and raising the profile of occupational therapy within Axial SpA.
- Continue links with the third sector to support self-management.

I am in so much pain after work that I have to lie down and my wife holds an I pad up so I can do the books.

My manger is supportive and I have accommodations in place.

Fatigue is a huge issue. If I knew how to cope with that I could manage better at work. I just push through.

I wish I had known there was support available. I might not have had to give up work.

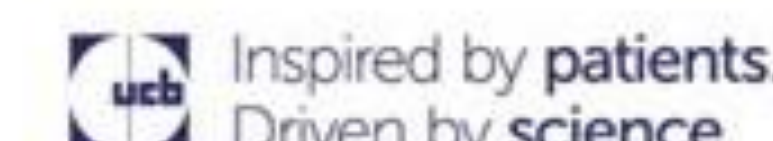
For full survey results scan QR code



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Driving improvements in axial SpA care