

Helen Preston member's showcase

Helen Preston, Clinical Director at Prestons Health talks to us about what she values about MSKPN, what she is learning and why she feels she is not alone.

“MSKPN - It's not about solving my problems for me. It's about going upstream and trying to work out how to solve it together.”



MSKPN is a safe space by which people are prepared to share their experiences

I've run a business for 20 years and decided to hop onto some calls during Lockdown thinking I'll just listen in the background as I'm just a small business. I immediately found someone to talk to me about the way back. Importantly I managed to appeal our Council's decision not to give me a grant with MSKPN's support and for that I'll be forever grateful.

I'm now taking my business in another direction and MSKPN has really helped with that too. To be honest, **I've been blown away by people's honesty**. That was the thing that was so endearing to me. I've not seen this from other organisations in our sphere.

What is MSKPN giving you as a growing business?

- **Positive and professional** - I find MSKPN refreshing. The members and leadership team have all shown a professional attitude to raising each other up rather than knocking others down. I like that! And it's led by people that are market leaders in their field.
- **Access to business minds** - It is giving me a safe space to explore ideas and share experiences. It gives me access to business minds in the sector, not just physiotherapists.
- **I'm not alone** – I feel like I'm not alone in the struggle, I'm part of a wider community, part of a platform to share experiences and raise up MSK as a whole.

Tell me a bit about you and your practice

We are a 50 year old business based in City of Peterborough. A team of 4 physios, sports massage practitioner and a podiatrist, we've been based in a David Lloyd club for 5 years with full access to 4 treatment rooms, the gym and hydro facilities. We service Peterborough and the surrounding market towns including Stamford and Oundle. Pre-covid we had clinics in the market towns but not anymore as Covid has struck our team in terms of personal life changes.

What inspired you to be a MSK clinician?

I come from a family of physiotherapists: I am a third generation Physiotherapist. I grew up in a house next to my father's physiotherapy practice. I also had ageing grandparents and my grandma had the terminal illness MND during my formative years, so I always leaned towards a caring profession. I chose physio because of the autonomy that physios have, and I was drawn to the fact that I would be able to formulate my own decisions.

I took over my dad's practice after travelling the world in 2000 and carrying out sports work. My particular area of expertise is treating people in persistent pain. I'm also finding my way as a clinician who does second opinion work.

What do you love about your work?

I love helping people and see them being able to make life changes. I've adapted my practice to be more of a coaching approach with joint decision making. This links so well with the MSKPN ethos - feels like we are raising each other up.

“I walk with my patients and power with, rather than power over.”

Patients tell me 'Thanks for showing me that I can make myself better' rather than saying I've cured them. **It's a very powerful thing for a patient to feel they have power over their health.** I love helping people get back to doing what they love and inspiring them to live their best life.

It's not about solving my problems for me. It's about going upstream and trying to work out how to solve it together. MSKPN helps with the how, eg how do I actually tackle this problem differently. It's the upstream approach that sits well with me.

What challenges are you seeking help with at MSKPN?

- **Recruitment** - **I don't have a problem marketing our clinics, but I have a problem serving the market.** It's a wider socio-economic problem. In Peterborough we don't even have a university physio course. I've just taken on a new grad and MSKPN helped me with the application and supported me with this new pathway.
- **Covid** - I continually have Covid related challenges whether it's an issue affecting a patient, a personal problem trying to juggle family or an issue faced by one of the team. You have all these people drawing on you to make Covid decisions on a daily basis.
- **Everyday challenges** - It's so helpful as if you have a problem, you can just pop it on the **WhatsApp group** and the idea that you're not alone is so helpful. **Most people also have the same issue.**

What did you do for support before being a MSKPN member?

I felt very alone as a business owner before joining MSKPN. I probably thought my problems were worse than anyone else's. I used to be a member of other groups for 20+ years but didn't feel I was getting the support I needed. **There wasn't anything else out there. It's the idea of raising each other up, being non-competitive and being stronger together.** It was not the value set I was seeing for other groups which were much more guarded and protectionist.

How did you come to be a member of MSKPN?

By chance! I can't quite remember how but I ended up listening in to some conversations early during lockdown in 2020 and learnt loads so just carried on listening in!

What advice would you give other practices?

It's a no brainer to join! As a result of joining MSKPN, I managed to successfully appeal a council decision to give us a COVID grant related to our closure and that alone was well worth the investment.

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