

Introduction

For many Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Multi-Disciplinary Teams (MDTs) the workload has increased significantly in recent years due in part to the management needs associated with new drugs for relapse/remitting MS. This has impacted on the time available to treat people with progressive MS. Several publications highlight the patient's perspective on this (e.g. Davies et al 2015).

Finding innovative ways to fill gaps in resources has become a major theme in the National Health Service (NHS) and the development of non-clinical assistive roles is one effective way to address the short-fall (Ham, 2017). This poster describes the process of recruiting and developing a combined clinical and research assistant practitioner role, its integration into the clinical routines of a busy MS rehabilitation team and its evaluation.



Fig 3a,b. Fatigue Research: fMRI , Fig 3c Fatigue Management :FACETS course

Expansion of the role over two years

The post holder has received ongoing training and support which has enabled further services and opportunities to be introduced:

- Co-ordination and running the gym based balance groups at a local Leisure Centre, this includes the on-going long term management session to support PwMS to continue to exercise under the guidance of the MSAP using latest evidence based approaches for exercise.
- The development of one to one rehabilitation for people with advanced MS with the aim of improving their function and quality of life.
 - Key focus of rehabilitation to prevent/reduce falls with the aim of reducing hospital admissions.
 - Providing timely rehabilitation to assist early discharge from hospital.



Fig 1. a)The Bristol Brain Centre b) based in a regional hospital

Recruitment and development of the role

After considering the annual through-put of referrals to the Specialist MS Physiotherapy Service it was decided to recruit a sports science graduate with a sports rehabilitation background to augment the existing NHS specialist MS team. A Band 4 MS Assistant Practitioner (MSAP) was recruited in 2016, funded by charitable money for three years (0.7WTE clinical /0.3WTE research). See Fig 2.

The addition of a MSAP has enabled:

- Expansion of the existing balance and aquatherapy services providing added safety and productivity of the courses. See Fig 4 & 5.
- Assists with the joint physiotherapy and orthotics service.
- Delivery of one-to-one rehabilitation improving function and quality of life for PwMS.
- Working alongside the research physiotherapist supporting research studies and co-ordinating and assisting a fatigue management programme (FACETS). See Fig 3.

This post commenced in 2016 and ongoing evaluation of the service is being undertaken.

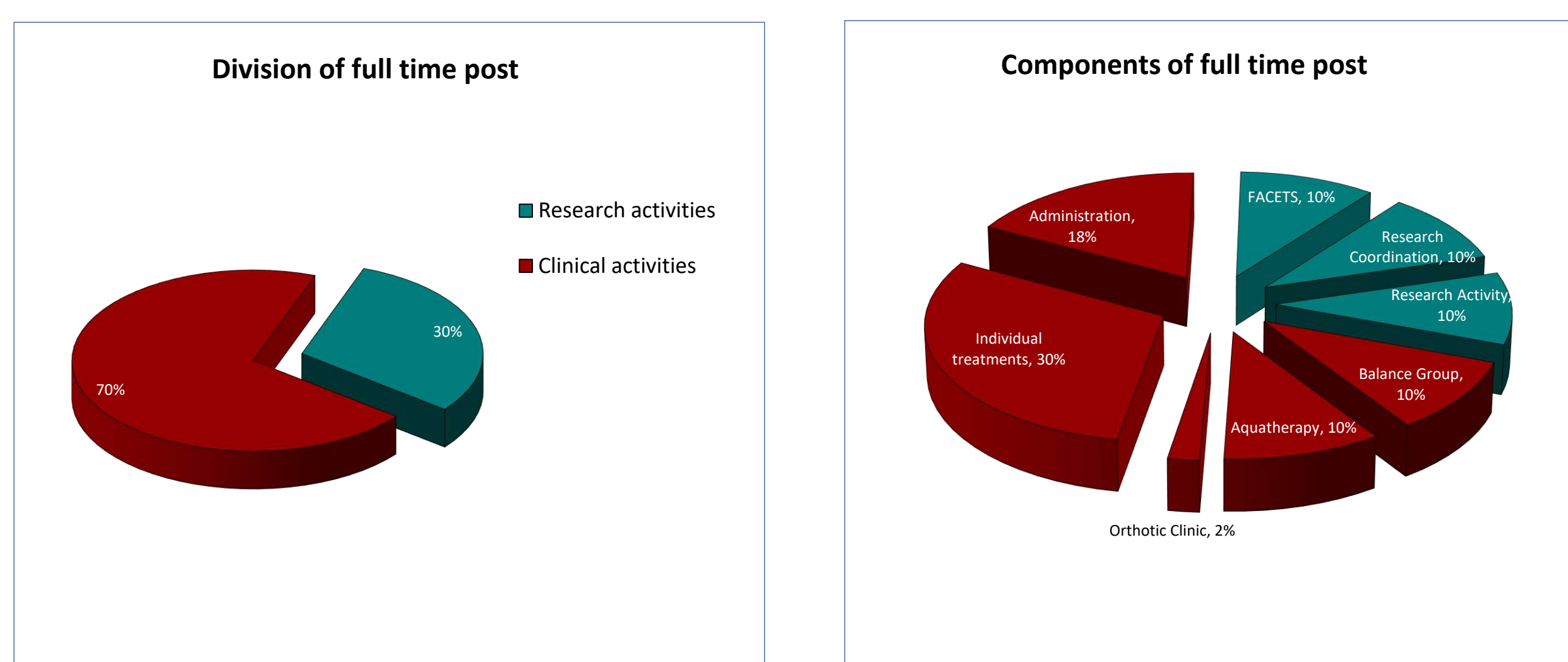


Fig 2. a)Division of full time post b)Components of full time post

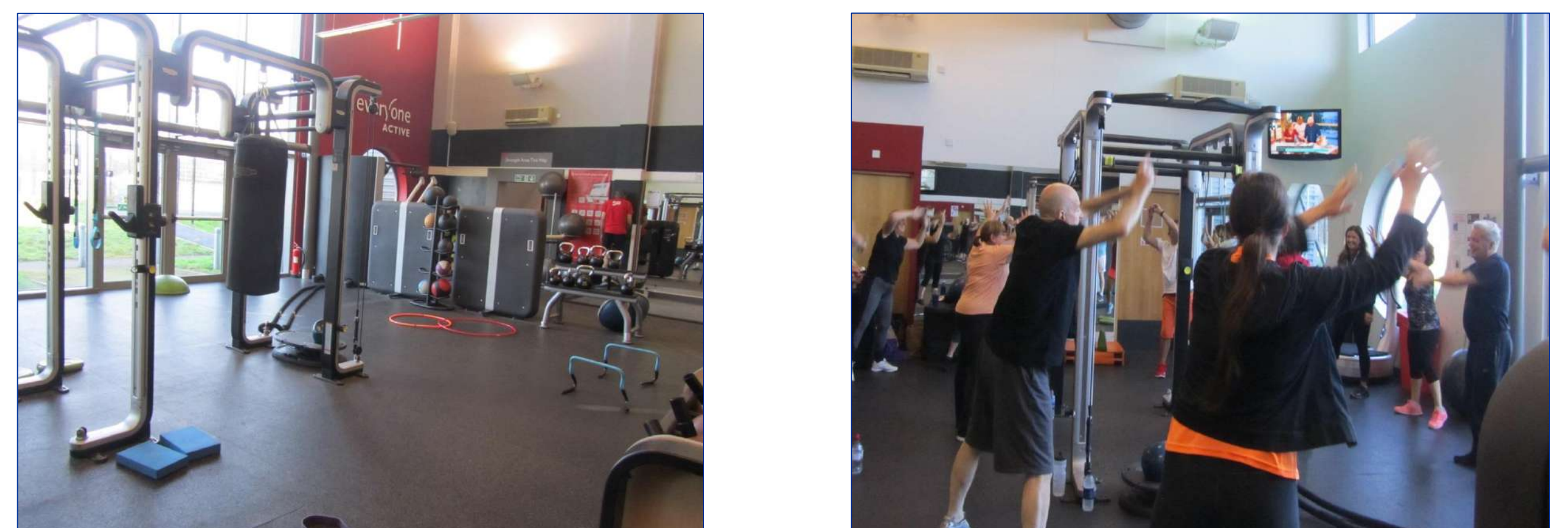


Fig 4. Balance Group at local leisure centre.

Conclusion

- This has been a very successful post offering wider therapeutic opportunities especially for people with more advanced MS.
- The group activities have been enhanced by new skills introduced through the new appointment.
- It has also supported current and new research programmes.
- An ongoing evaluation of the service and business case proposal are in progress to secure the post as an NHS funded service.



Fig 5. Aquatherapy at a local Leisure Centre.

Contact

Tania Burge (MS specialist Physiotherapist)
North Bristol NHS Trust
tania.burge@nbt.nhs.uk

References

1. Davies, F. et al. (2015) "You are just left to get on with it": qualitative study of patient and carer experiences of the transition to secondary progressive multiple sclerosis', *BMJ Open*, 5(7), p. e007674. doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2015-007674
2. Ham, C. (2017) 'Next steps on the NHS five year forward view', *BMJ (Clinical Research Ed.)*, 357, p. j1678. doi: 10.1136/bmj.j1678