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## Stories of change

# INSPIRED BY DISNEYLAND: WORTHWHILE WAITING IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE

Transforming the experience of waiting for joint replacement surgery through health coaching and social prescribing



## What we did

We combined ideas from the literature on the psychology of waiting and pre-habilitation to inform our project. We have offered regular Health Coaching appointments to people on waiting lists for knee and hip surgery. The support we offer includes one-to-one consultations, advice and regular updates by phone and email. In addition, we work with local social prescribers to give people the opportunity to engage in a wide range of events and activities provided by our partner organisations. These include all kinds of activities such as nature walks and mindful movement sessions, emotional wellbeing and debt advice. The aim is that people arrive at their clinical appointment in the best possible physical and mental health.

## Our motivation

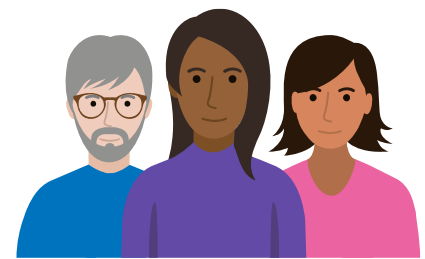
Waiting times are at record highs. We thought about what it feels like to be told you have to wait three years for a joint replacement, and then not be given any further help during this time. We wanted to transform the period spent waiting for care from one in which patients are given a passive-role in to one in which they are empowered to make the most of this time.

## The difference we are making

People report feeling happy to have regular contact with our team, and enjoy the activities our partner organisations provide. We are in the early days of the programme so do not yet have our own data, but evidence from similar interventions shows patients are happier and healthier, and that they visit their GPs less frequently

## What's next?

We plan to expand the project to all patients on waiting lists for all types of appointment, and to encourage other Primary Care Networks to adopt our model.





## Making change happen

I read an article about how Disney have spent millions paying their “imagineers” to figure out how to make people enjoy a day during which they're spending most of their time waiting, queuing for rides in their theme parks. I realised we needed imagineers for the NHS. I was interested in the psychology of waiting and read up about it. I found [10 basic design principles](#) that can be applied to any wait. We can't shrink waiting lists or speed up the wait, but we can empower people to improve and maintain their physical and mental health.

We teamed up with a huge range of local organisations who were already commissioned to do work which improves physical and mental health. We found that everyone who heard about the programme understood the value of it immediately, and our list of partners soon grew. With a website which provides information about these offers, and regular health coaching sessions, we make it easy for patients to access information and activities which improve their lives.

Pre-habilitation can significantly improve both mental and physical health. We want to improve outcomes as well as impact on patient experience.

We partnered with Healthwatch to ensure all our materials were patient friendly. We also contacted people who had already been through the waiting process to get their views on our offer.

Uptake initially was lower than we would have liked, so we updated our invitation letter to make it more directive. Rather than saying "this service is available if you want it", we now say "we are changing the way we care for patients on waiting lists", and then explain the programme. We also added a quote from one of our GPs saying why they think the programme is worthwhile.

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***“We can't shrink waiting lists or speed up the wait, but we can empower people to improve and maintain their physical and mental health”***




### Top tips

- Put patient experience at the heart of your project
- Partner with services which are already commissioned.
- Staff the project with social prescribers and health coaches (100% government-funded)
- Co-produce website and info materials with patients
- Follow up invitation letters with phone calls

### Want to know more?

[worthwhilewaiting.meridianpcn.nhs.uk](http://worthwhilewaiting.meridianpcn.nhs.uk)



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