

EMSN Primary Care Conference 2026

Speaker Profiles

Michelle Emsley – Regional SCI Clinical Lead & EMSN Quality Service Improvement and Education Lead

Faculty and Master of Ceremony



Michelle is a registered Physiotherapist with over 25 years of experience within the NHS, including 15 years as the Clinical Lead Physiotherapist on the Spinal Unit at Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Trust. During this time, she developed a specialist interest in Spinal Cord Injury (SCI), which has led to her current role as the Clinical Lead Spinal Cord Injury Practitioner. In this capacity, Michelle supports SCI patients across the East Midlands as part of the SCI Network Model of Care, leading a dedicated team of practitioners focused on delivering high-quality, patient-centred spinal care.

Michelle's expertise and passion for spinal health also led to a secondment with the East Midlands Spinal Network, where she served as the Quality Service Improvement (QSI) and Education Lead for two and a half years. She continues to contribute to the Network as the Education Lead, maintaining a strong commitment to advancing spinal care, service improvement, and education across the region

Paul Lewis – Advanced Practice Physiotherapist & EMSN QSI & Education Champion
Faculty Member and Communication – Does What You Say Matter?



Paul is an Advanced Practice Physiotherapist at University Hospitals of Leicester, specialising in the assessment and management of spinal conditions. He holds extensive clinical experience across spinal orthopaedic clinics, Primary care, MSK triage, and complex spinal rehabilitation. Beyond his clinical responsibilities, Paul provides mentorship and supervision within primary care and has achieved formal competencies in both FCP and Cognitive Functional Therapy (CFT). He has contributed to research and education in CFT and remains committed to advancing evidence-based practice. His current research focuses on communication skills in clinical practice, reflecting his broader passion for enhancing patient engagement.

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Mr Harinder Gakhar – Consultant Spinal Surgeon
Management of Spinal Fractures



Harinder Gakhar was appointed as a consultant orthopaedic trauma and spinal surgeon at University hospitals of Derby and Burton in 2016 and is working there since. He has done his undergraduate medical training in India. He got post-graduation orthopaedic training at the prestigious PGIMER, Chandigarh in India. Having done registrar training he finished FRCS orth and was awarded the prestigious Arthur Edward Burton Memorial Prize for achieving highest scores.

He has done spinal fellowship training in Derby, RNOH Stanmore, and University hospital Motol in Prague. His practice involves treatment of adult spinal pathology for cervical, thoracic, and lumbar problems. He is the clinical lead for MSCC in his place of work. He is an active member of the MSCC clinical improvement group EMSN.

He has published in various peer reviewed journals and is especially proud of investigating the roles of autologous blood transfusion and sarcopenia in MSCC. His research was the first ever to be published in this field.

Mr Zakk Borton – Consultant Spinal Surgeon

Spinal Infections – Early Recognition



Mr Zakk Borton commenced his Trauma and Orthopaedic surgical training after ranking within the top five prospective candidates nationally. After being selected for early completion of his training on merit, he has completed a year of subspecialty spinal surgical training between the Northern General and Sheffield Children's Hospitals, Sheffield. He is currently completing a second year of combined orthopaedic and neurosurgical subspecialty training. At present, he is the senior oncology fellow at the primary bone tumour unit in the Royal Orthopaedic Hospital, one of the largest sarcoma centres in Europe. In February, he will finalise his Spinal surgical training at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital, Birmingham, one of the busiest Major Trauma Centres in the UK. He is an alumnus of the British Orthopaedic Associations Future Leaders Programme, sits on the editorial board of the Bone and Joint 360 Journal, is the lead for the Spinal subsection of the United Kingdom in-training Orthopaedic Exam (UKITE), is faculty for the internationally renowned Advanced Trauma Life Support course (ATLS), and has published widely across a breadth of orthopaedic topics.

Mags Wigram – Advanced Practice Physiotherapist (PICS)

Managing Spinal Pain in Pain Services



I qualified as a physiotherapist in 2000 and from 2005 I have specialised in the assessment and management of people with persistent pain related to neuromusculoskeletal conditions, including many people with spinal pain. I was a team lead within the Nottingham University Hospitals physiotherapy department until 2017, during which time I worked in the QMC spinal outpatient clinic and within and alongside Nottingham pain clinics. In 2017 I moved to an advanced practice role leading the team of advanced practice physiotherapists within the PICS Community Pain Service, which services patients across greater, mid and north Nottinghamshire. In 2010, I attained an MSc in Continuing Professional Development with Distinction from Nottingham University and in 2023 was awarded Advanced Clinical Practice digital badge recognition via the portfolio route.

Fiona Blackwell – Advanced Practice Physiotherapist (PICS)

Managing Spinal Pain in Pain Services



I qualified as a physiotherapist in 2004, working in a variety of settings and specialities. I have specialised in rehabilitation and management of musculoskeletal conditions since 2007. While working in outpatients MSK rehabilitation I continued working with different types of rehabilitation including hydrotherapy and back pain groups developing persistent pain presentations.

I have worked in an Advanced Physiotherapy Practitioner Role at PICS Community Pain service since 2020 and have been involved with the assessment and diagnostic side of the service; but my main interest lies in the management of persistent pain conditions and working with individuals on long term self management and improving their quality of life with long term pain. For this role I work with the Pain Rehabilitation (BPS) team and provide both 121 and group support on the Living Well with Pain Programme.

Dr Susie Bayley – GP and Medical Director (Hub+ Derbyshire)

Civility In Medicine



With over 20 years of experience as a doctor in the NHS, including 10 years as an NHS leader, Susie brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise to her role as a coach, educator and facilitator.

Susie is known for her incredible warmth, humour, honesty, and exceptional problem-solving skills. This combination makes her an understanding, compassionate coach and a trusted educator, guide and mentor.

Susie trained as a GP in Derbyshire, where her time as an inner-city GP Partner sparked a deep interest in medical politics and addressing the challenges faced by those working in general practice. Over the past eight years, she has balanced her clinical work with her role as Medical Director of The Hub Plus, a successful not-for-profit company that provides training, education, development, and project leadership for primary care. The company's initiatives focus on enhancing wellbeing, creating career development opportunities, and providing hands-on support to practices. Thanks to her and her colleagues' unwavering dedication, The Hub Plus has become a cornerstone of Derbyshire's general practice.

Having experienced burnout as a GP, Susie is a strong advocate for self-care and balance in her personal life. Outside of work, she finds joy in taking part in challenging, quirky sporting events and endurance challenges, which she decided to take up when she hit 40! She also loves spending time outdoors walking her dogs, watching her kids play rugby, and enjoying board games with her family.

Mr Mike Hutton – Consultant Spinal Surgeon and GIRFT Lead
GIRFT (Getting It Right First Time) Updates



Mike is a Consultant Spine Surgeon. He is the GIRFT national Lead for Spinal Services and the National Lead for spinal services optimisation and recovery for the NHS England improvement programme. Mike worked as a spine surgeon at The Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital from 2007 to 2021, undertaking complex spine procedures in all areas of spinal surgery including paediatric and adult spine deformity.

Mike held an executive position on the British Association of Spine Surgeons from 2009 to 2019, and was an expert advisor to the MHRA from 2012 to 2021. He led the British Spine Registry from 2012 to 2019, and developed a National Emergency Referral Tool which links to the BSR. He is currently the co-chair of the Spinal Orthopaedic Data Evaluation Panel and Beyond Compliance programme, the chair of The National Suspected Cauda Equina Pathway improvement programme, an affiliate member of the NHSE Spinal Service Clinical Reference Group, and the clinical lead for the spinal national consultant information programme (NCIP). Mike developed the Spinal Services dashboard on 'The Model Health System', and chaired and developed the Spinal High Volume/Low Complexity (HVLC) pathway programme. Mike's GIRFT national report on spinal services was published in January 2019; he has subsequently visited and reported on the spinal independent sector and is a coauthor of the 'Learning from Litigation claims' national report (May 2021) Mike is a former professional rugby player and still follows the sport with a passion.

Claire Stapleton – Clinical Service Manager for MSK CATS, Outpatient
Musculoskeletal Therapy and FCP services, Derbyshire Community Health Services
NHS Foundation Trust

Community Assessment Days/Super Clinics



With over 18 years' leadership experience, I am proud to work as Clinical Service Manager for Outpatient Physiotherapy, Musculoskeletal (MSK) Services, and Occupational Therapy at Derbyshire Community Health Services NHS Foundation Trust. Since qualifying as a physiotherapist in 2000, I have remained passionate about transforming outcomes for people with MSK conditions across Derbyshire, championing evidence-based practice and service innovation every step of the way. I hold Post Graduate certificates in

healthcare leadership and am currently completing an MBA in Healthcare leadership.

I lead multidisciplinary teams to deliver accessible, efficient, and effective care aligned with NHS priorities. My leadership is rooted in compassion, fostering environments where teams and patients thrive. I prioritise service development, continuous improvement, and professional growth, supporting both staff and patient outcomes. I also enjoy coaching emerging leaders, co-producing with stakeholders, and embedding quality improvement into everyday practice.

A highlight of my recent work is developing, piloting and now scaling our Community Appointment Day (CAD) model—bringing cross organisation services together with the aim of providing holistic care at one appointment.

Victoria Lane - Advanced Practice Physiotherapist and Clinical Lead for 'MSK CATS, Outpatient Musculoskeletal Therapy and FCP services', Derbyshire Community Health Services NHS Foundation Trust

Community Assessment Days/Super Clinics



Victoria is a highly Qualified Advanced Practice Physiotherapist currently working within the MSK CATS team in Derbyshire. With extensive clinical experience spanning over three decades in the NHS, she has worked across a diverse range of physiotherapy and advanced roles, encompassing the entire MSK pathway from primary care to community and secondary care.

Victoria has spent the last 15 years as a Clinical Lead, where she has played a key role in driving service developments. Notably, she contributed to the Vanguards pilot of First Contact Physiotherapy (FCP) and was instrumental in the establishment of the Derbyshire MSK CATS role. She is passionate about the ever-evolving nature of the NHS and thrives in the challenge of implementing new, innovative ways of working.

Her dedication to improving patient care is reflected in her commitment to the CAD days and her support of staff as they adapt and navigate new working models. Victoria remains a strong advocate for developing cutting-edge solutions that enhance both patient outcomes and team dynamics.

Dr Siddharth Thaker – Consultant MSK Radiologist

Break Out Session - MRI Interpretation and Objective Examination



Dr Siddharth Thaker is a consultant musculoskeletal radiologist affiliated with University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust. He enjoys all facets of musculoskeletal imaging, especially spinal imaging, sarcoma imaging, and rheumatology, in addition to radiology education and journalism. He is a well-published author and educator actively involved in teaching of primary and secondary care colleagues.

Mr Daniel D'Aquino – Consultant Spinal Surgeon and Head of Service at The Centre for Spinal Studies and Surgery, Nottingham University Hospital

Break Out Session – Spinal Objective Examination



Mr Daniel D'Aquino is a Consultant Spinal Surgeon and Head of Service at The Centre for Spinal Studies and Surgery , Nottingham University Hospitals Trust. He has subspecialty expertise in complex spinal trauma, deformity correction, and minimally invasive techniques. He completed an Advanced Spinal Surgery Fellowship at the Centre for Spinal Studies and Surgery and currently co-directs its education programme. Mr D'Aquino has contributed extensively to academic research, with publications spanning various aspects of spinal surgery, and maintains an active international profile in surgical education and training.

Prof Roger Kerry - Professor of Physiotherapy Education

Vascular Presentations in the Cervical Spine



Roger Kerry is Professor of Physiotherapy Education in the Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences at the University of Nottingham, UK. He is a qualified Chartered Physiotherapist, and an honorary Fellow of the UK's Musculoskeletal Association of Chartered Physiotherapists. His main clinical research interests have been in adverse events and physiotherapy interventions of the head and neck, particularly on the causal nature of the interventions. Roger has also undertaken research activity in the philosophy of science, investigating the nature of causation in the medicine and the health sciences, and this was the focus of his PhD. He is well-published in these areas and has been an invited speaker at numerous international conferences. Roger is a two-time winner of the prestigious Lord Dearing Award for Educational Excellence.

Dr Gill Sare – Consultant Neurologist

Neurology Conditions Early Recognition and When to Refer



Dr Sare has been a consultant neurologist at Nottingham University Hospitals since 2011. She trained in Leeds and Manchester before completing a PhD in stroke medicine at the University of Nottingham in 2010. Her primary interest is movement disorders, and she looks after patients with Parkinson's disease, Huntington's disease and with Mr Basu runs the Midlands Deep Brain Stimulation service. She also does general and acute neurology. Outside clinic work she has been a Royal College Tutor, Training Programme Director for neurology, Neurology Head of Service and is currently holds leadership roles in both Medicine and Surgery Care Groups at NUH. She also enjoys yoga and gardening to relieve the stresses of the above.

Emma Ivemey – MSK FCP, Lincolnshire Community Health Services NHS Trust

Rapid 5 Case Studies



Emma Ivemey is the Advanced Practice Strategic Lead for Lincolnshire Community Health Services. With 25 years in MSK physiotherapy, including 10 years as a First Contact Practitioner, Emma has supported MSK transformation across Lincolnshire for just under a decade, influencing service design and ICS-level strategy. She is passionate about advancing practice, improving patient outcomes, and driving system-wide change.

Baljit Kaur – Advanced Practice Physiotherapist and EMSN QSI & Education Champion

Faculty Member and Rapid 5 Case Studies



Baljit Kaur is a dedicated Advanced Physiotherapy Practitioner based in Derbyshire working the MSK CATs interface service bridging between the primary care and secondary care sector. She has extensive clinical and leadership experience spanning over 30 years' in the NHS. Her work in the Vanguard's pilot FCP projects helped shape the existing FCP services and the framework. Baljit is dedicated in the professional development of the emerging workforce. She has extensive educator experience and is actively involved in the training of the next generation of Advanced Physiotherapy Practitioners and other professionals including GP trainees and pharmacists. Baljit holds a Master's degree in Continuing Professional Development in Physiotherapy from the University of Nottingham which led to full membership with the MACP.

Baljit has a specialist interest in spines and hopes to use her knowledge and skills to improve the experience and outcomes for spinal patients in the region.

Outside of her professional life, Baljit is an avid cricket enthusiast. She volunteers at her local community cricket club, fostering community spirit and physical health.

Dani Poxon – Senior Sister at Royal Derby Spinal Centre and Trauma Ward & EMSN QSI & Education Champion

Faculty Member



Dani works as a Senior Sister within the Royal Derby Spinal Centre and trauma ward and has been a qualified Nurse for the last 16 years. Dani is passionate about Education and Service improvement and strives to ensure that the best standards are met when involved in the planning a delivery of patient care. Dani has been heavily involved in service and quality improvement when it came to the complete overall and development of the Spinal Unit and ensured that training had been implemented in areas of spinal care, and policy implementation in line with the EMSN and GIRFT. Dani has been involved in a number of educational projects including the development of the then RCN accredited Orthopaedic Foundation Programme and has recently developed the "Spring into Spines" study day at the Royal Derby Hospital.

Carla Eveleigh – Advanced Physiotherapy Practitioner & EMSN QSI & Education Champion

Faculty Member



I live in Nottingham with my husband and 2 children. I work at Queen's Medical Centre as a spinal Advanced Physiotherapy Practitioner (APP). I am passionate about excellent patient care, staff education and well-being. I have used my project management skills to develop and streamline local clinical and department pathways, as well as completing service evaluation research. I am currently collaborating with colleagues locally and nationally to develop a spinal APP competency and capability package learning.

Anna Johnson – EMSN PA/Administrator

Faculty Member



I am an experienced administrator currently working as Network Administrator for the East Midlands Spinal Network, a role I have held for the past eight years. Prior to this, I spent 21 years with East Midlands Ambulance Service (EMAS), where I developed a strong foundation in NHS systems, patient pathways, and operational support. With nearly three decades of service within the NHS, I bring extensive organisational knowledge, reliability, and a commitment to supporting high-quality patient care across the region.

Outside of work, I live with my partner Mark and our cat, Tinkerbell. I previously represented England in volleyball as a teenager, an experience that fostered my lifelong appreciation for teamwork and discipline. Today, I enjoy spending my free time with my horse, Storm, and my donkey, Spud, finding balance and wellbeing through caring for animals and the outdoors

Charlotte Westmoreland – EMSN Administrator

Faculty Member



I'm an experienced administrator currently working with the East Midlands Spinal Network, where I've been since 2022. Before this, I spent five years working as a GP receptionist across several GP surgeries, gaining valuable experience in patient care, organisation, and working in fast-paced healthcare environments.

Alongside my role, I'm a second-year Business Management student, continuing to develop my skills in leadership, problem-solving, and understanding how effective organisations work. I enjoy learning and am always looking for ways to grow both professionally and personally.

Outside of work and study, I'm a proud mum of four. Balancing family life with my career has strengthened my time-management skills, resilience, and ability to adapt — qualities I bring into everything I do