



CHAMPIONING PRIVATE PHYSIOTHERAPY

# Working with Physio First

## Our Strategy and Culture

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CHAMPIONING EVIDENCE-BASED COST-EFFECTIVE PRIVATE PHYSIOTHERAPY  
WITH PHYSIO FIRST MEMBERS IN A CHANGING HEALTHCARE MARKETPLACE

[physiofirst.org.uk](https://physiofirst.org.uk)



# Our strategy and culture

Dear Reader,

It is very important to our Physio First's Commercial Team that we share our ethos and values together with a summary of our overall strategy, with you, ahead of trying to get to grips with the content of a mutually beneficial relationship. This is so you can familiarise yourself with who and what we are before engaging. Also, this gives you the opportunity to share your values with us because any relationship works better where these values are sufficiently aligned.

Since 2013 we have been very clear about our organisational statement of intent (our “why”) which is to

***“champion evidenced value based private physiotherapy with Physio First members in the changing healthcare marketplace”.***

This (and a previous iteration) is the guiding principle to everything we do and will continue to be so until our next full business plan review scheduled to take place in October 2023.

So, to work with us you need to understand 3 things:

1. that it is this Statement of Intent that guides everything we do
2. that we have an organisational culture that is based upon our agreed values and which articulates the standard of behaviour to which we hold ourselves and as importantly, against which we judge our ability to work with a commercial partner
3. that we run ourselves with the discipline and structure of a commercial organisation even though we are technically a not-for-profit organisation.

The purpose of this explanation is to try to provide enough context to explain this in the hope that any future contact with us will become easier and lead to a very successful relationship.

Whilst it is the leaders of Physio First who set our culture and strategy (that is our executive committee who are elected from among our members), Physio First is a membership trade association that is run by members, “with” our members. You will see that the real value from being a member requires engagement on many levels

From your perspective it may be helpful to know that our organisation-wide commercial strategy states that we feel that we can only do business with organisations that are sufficiently culturally and strategically aligned with us. In other words, organisations that take the time to understand our strategic direction of travel and our values and feel that they sufficiently complement their own.

By way of explanation and emphasis, this does not mean that there must be a complete cultural and strategic match between ourselves and any commercial partner as we know this is unrealistic. It simply means that there has to be sufficient synergy to make us all feel comfortably on the same page

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otherwise, our experience tells us, no matter how well intentioned, any relationship will be too difficult to manage in the mid to longer term.

Deciding that there is insufficient synergy is not, from our perspective, a criticism. It is perfectly acceptable for us not to have sufficient synergy with you or your organisation as different organisations have different priorities and different values, and that is fine. But if there is insufficient synergy then it is much better to only expect to work on a transactional basis, if at all!

So, to conclude my introduction, by providing the information here and below to you I hope that we have sufficiently articulated our own culture, strategy and way of doing business. In doing so I also hope to have given you sufficient insight to be able to judge whether you think there is merit in spending the time and energy in trying to construct a functional (i.e. fit for purpose) relationship with us at this point.

So please do read on and let me know what you think.

Best regards,  
Belinda Holloway  
Hon. Commercial Officer  
Physio First

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# Our strategy and culture

## Our story

### 1. Who are Physio First?

Physio First, formed in 1952 as the Organisation of Chartered Physiotherapists in Private Practice (OCPPP). We are a trade association of self-employed Chartered physiotherapists and a dynamic professional network of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy. We have approximately 3,000 members across the whole of the United Kingdom, the vast majority of whom are practice principles (i.e. business owners).

As a professional network of the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy, we are formally recognised by the Council of the CSP as representing self-employed Chartered physiotherapists. To find out about Physio First's history, [click here](#).

Physio First is run by our members and we pride ourselves on being an organisation that works *with* our members as opposed to for them.

Our elected Physio First executive committee, supported by fellow volunteer member post holders, our employed Northampton office team and commissioned professional advisors, proactively work together as an integrated team to deliver our strategic intent. We benefit from professional management, professional coaching and other professional support and pride ourselves on being an extremely functional (i.e. fit for purpose) organisation. We are well-structured, use project planning and capacity management tools and systems which includes Membership Relationship Management (MRM) software.

Physio First also has a network of Community Representatives who are, like our executive, volunteer practising self-employed private physiotherapists, who liaise closely with our executive. Their role includes understanding and communicating our organisational strategy and culture; leading upon planned and aligned local or targeted events and assisting with our education, recruitment and retention strategies.



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## **2. Our strategy explained**

Our commercial discipline has ensured that our strategic intent is clear. Physio First is for **championing evidenced value based private physiotherapy with Physio First members in the changing healthcare marketplace.**

### **Member recruitment**

As per our Commercial Strategy, and following the reset required because of the Coronavirus pandemic from March 2020, Physio First's top commercial priority is to recruit more members and principally this is where our Strategic Commercial partners could help.

We have an organically growing database of potential members but need to expand this. An aim to benefit both Physio First and our partners.


### **Member engagement**

To champion our Intent, we need to increase our members' level of engagement. We measure engagement by looking carefully at how many of our members visit our website and/or open (like, share or respond to) our communications or take part on our very lively member-only forum.

Working creatively around member engagement with a Strategic Commercial partner is something we would love to talk about. You will see that we highlight "trusted partnerships" in our summary of the value of membership of Physio First, in what we call our Member Value Proposition (see below).

Of course, a relationship is two way and we fully expect to work together in a way that results in increased sales or recognition that will produce a sufficiently valuable win / win for us both.







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## PHYSIO FIRST

Everything you need to become a thriving provider of demonstrable quality private physiotherapy within a strong, influential and trusted community

### Membership enables you to


 <p><b>Demonstrate quality through independent analysis of your patient outcome data</b></p>	 <p><b>Continuously develop personally, professionally and commercially</b></p>
 <p><b>Share &amp; receive practical advice with a community of like-minded private physio's</b></p>	 <p><b>Remain current with the most up to date marketplace information</b></p>
 <p><b>Be part of a collective that shapes the private physiotherapy marketplace</b></p>	 <p><b>Benefit from the support of trusted partner organisations</b></p>







## PHYSIO FIRST

### Values of membership

**Quality assurance schemes that are robust, trusted, consistent and industry-renowned**



 <p><b>Multiple opportunities to link with fellow members, virtually and face to face</b></p>
<p><b>Education designed to help Private Physiotherapists thrive</b></p> 
 <p><b>The most important, relevant and concise marketplace news brought directly to you</b></p>
<p><b>Trusted partnerships sourced to help</b></p> 

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## Quality Assured Practitioner and Quality Assured Clinic schemes

Our quality assurance schemes are a very important, valuable and an exclusive benefit for Physio First members

Download the e Booklet to read all about QAP and QAC [here](#).

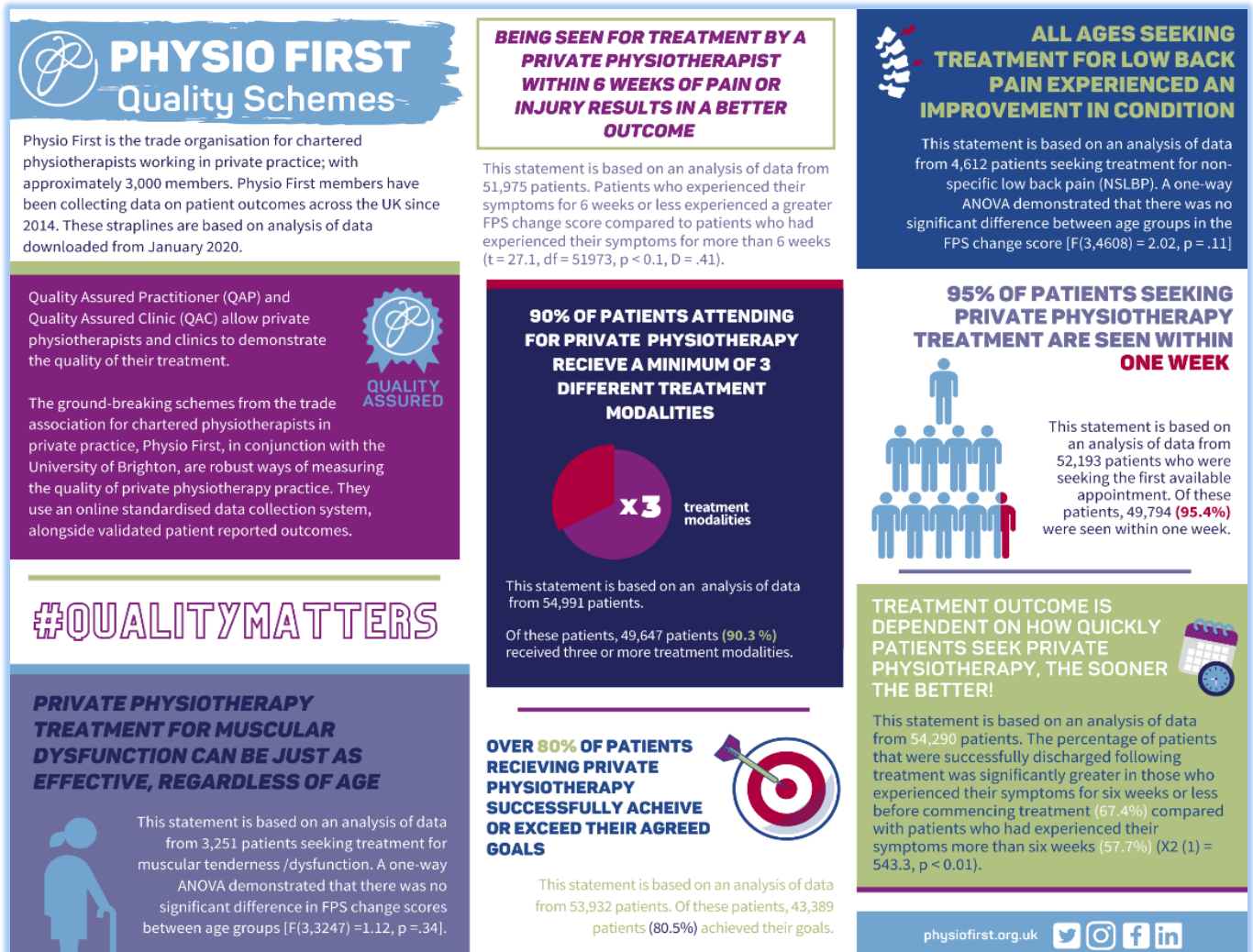


To put it simply, our quality assurance schemes allow our members to benchmark their independently analysed patient treatment outcomes to demonstrate how well they are doing against over 75,000 data sets that inform the quality baseline. So, our quality kitemarks prove the effectiveness of their individual and/or clinic's treatment.

The accumulated data sets have also enabled us to produce some very powerful commercial statements that apply to those members who participate and which we are encouraging them to use to promote themselves and/or their practices – see this infographic.



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One of our most important strategic objectives of our 2020-2023 business plan is to help our participating members to communicate their value to their current and prospective patients, by using this evidence. This is something we really hope our commercial partners will help us with in whatever small way they can.





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## **The Physio Co-op**

As part of our strategic planning we have contemplated the question “What could a collective of quality assured practitioners and clinics achieve?” As a result we have had a plan in place since 2013 to work towards enabling our members, who are independent self-owned businesses, to compete more effectively in the marketplace with third party owned commercial networks, and to expand their services beyond their current boundaries.

We now feel confident that Physio First, together with our growing number of quality assured members, can come together legally in one or many business models and disrupt the private healthcare marketplace, to improve the service we private practitioners give to the public and to protect our autonomy from rules imposed by commercial networks who resell our skills.

In this regard we have encouraged and are now closely connected to a volunteer Co-op Founder team who have looked at business models and a minimum viable product for this sort of progression, and expect to work with them to develop this entrepreneurial idea.

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## 3. Our culture explained

Our culture expresses our values and represents the standard of behaviour against which we are to be judged and against which we judge others. First published in 2012, we strive to live up to it in everything we do, every day – so it is not just a well-intentioned sentiment, but how we do business!

We judge cultural synergy in any potential commercial partner by reference to their behaviour i.e. anything they say, write or do.

Our culture document is entitled **“Doing business through relationships – through respect, no blame, good communication, structure and planning.”**

and is reproduced in its 1-page entirety here:

**Respect:** Total respect for each individual who volunteers and/or is employed by Physio First by behaving with integrity and in a way that:

- Helps all feel valued and trusted\*
- Demonstrates respect, even if in dispute with them
- Empowers
- Makes it easy to identify, declare, communicate about and then manage any personal interests e.g. self-promotion or promotion of anything in which an individual has an interest that could conflict with the interests of Physio First

**No blame:** We operate a no blame Culture, which means that we try to demonstrate trust\* and accept that if anyone makes a mistake:

- Internally we feel very comfortable to communicate our mistake as soon as it has happened as we can expect everyone in Physio First to respond by rushing to help and not to blame
- Externally we hope that they or we would feel the same.

\* There are two aspects to “trust” i.e. 1) trust in honesty 2) trust in competence. When using the word “trust” one has to be precise as to which meaning is intended.’ In this instance, the use of the word “trust” throughout Physio First’s explanation of our culture refers to both meanings.

**Communication:** Physio First as a group of people understand:

- The value of excellent communication
- That relationships are founded on integrity, trust\* and good communication and that the better the communication the better the relationship
- The importance to always strive to:
  - Provide and seek both **clarity** and **context** all of the time
  - Listen – really proactively listen!

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- Look at the proposition from the other persons position – also a measure of respect
- Reassure that there is no such thing as a stupid question and that each meeting is a safe place
- Provide complete openness and demonstrable trust\*
- Meet deadlines whether self-imposed or agreed
- Encourage energy through optimism and discourage pessimism (e.g. long faces, complaints without suggested solutions, criticism without balanced affirmation).
- Coach\*\* rather than tell
- Our need to embrace a “modern attitude” i.e. evidence based thinking and the creative use of technology to resourcefully use our limited TEM

\*\*Coaching means “asking the right questions” as opposed to “telling what to do” the distinction being that “coaching elicits the right answer for the person being coached in which that person takes greater ownership from having defined the answer for themselves”.  
(Source Business Coach Jon Wigley December 2014)

**Structure:** We hold the 3 structural elements to any organisation in equal importance i.e. Operational (Blue), Support Services (Red) and Strategic (Black):

<b>Operational (Blue)</b> That aspect which for commercial organisations brings in the money but which in Physio First (Trade Association) terms is our Educational Courses, Journal, Conference, Member Benefits, Advice and Support, Job Profiles to Peer Reviews, Appraisals and Accounts.	<b>Strategic (Black)</b> The need to take time to “think” rather than “do” and to plan where we are going and to monitor our progress on a regular basis by reference to our Business Plan	<b>Support Services (Red)</b> From Office procedures, to rules about meetings.
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**Planning:** Through detailed planning of our business we reduce risk, frustration, conflict and misunderstandings. Planning, coupled with our culture of no blame, good communication, and structure enables us to form and nurture successful commercial strategic relationships.

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## **4. Our executive described**

We have 8 defined volunteer roles that make up our Physio First executive committee. Our Hon Commercial Officer is one of them who is supported by other employed and volunteer roles who together we call our commercial team.

All but one of our executive officers are practising self-employed private physiotherapists who deeply understand and appreciate the issues facing the self-employed private physiotherapist today.

Our executive committee meets regularly and it's their role to lead our organisation, in line with our strategic Intent, Member Value Proposition and top priority to commercialise our quality assurance schemes whilst taking into account our members' needs, views and changing marketplace. To find out more about our executive, [click here](#).

Any Strategic Commercial agreement that our commercial team are happy to recommend will be circulated to our executive committee for approval, before a partnership is signed and launched.

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## **5. The role of our Hon Commercial Officer**

The role of our Hon Commercial Officer, in addition to his or her executive committee responsibilities is to help Physio First “to Champion us through our income generating activities so that we have the financial resource that we will need to support us on our strategic journey through our business goals to our intent”.

Our Hon Commercial Officer receives most initial contacts from commercial organisations and, where appropriate leads Physio First on the journey through the various steps i.e.

- ensuring that any approach to Physio First is responded to with the opportunity to read this paper, so that there is at least some context as to what is involved
- reviewing any offer with whatever assistance is needed from members of the Physio First commercial team
- making sure that all communications with those who approach us are in line with our own culture

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## **6. Our Commercial Strategy**

Following Physio First's annual reviews of our data driven commercial strategy it has become obvious over the years that:

- Although welcome a “commission-based relationship” is no longer appropriate or sustainable because:
  - to properly “earn” a commission, Physio First would have to endorse a product or service which it is very hard to do and stay within our culture i.e. how could we ever really know whether a product or service is as good as, better than or best?
  - unless linked to the uniqueness of our Member Value Proposition, how could Physio First ever influence any of our members' buying priorities in this new age of very powerful digital influencers?

So, we do NOT want a commission-based relationship but rather one that will help us deliver our intent, align with our Member Value Proposition, and help us to commercialise our quality assurance schemes.

- So how does this piece of information relate to our commercial strategy “to Champion us through our income generating activities so that we have the financial resource that we will need to support us on our strategic journey through our business goals to our intent”? The answer is that by helping us to recruit more members and retain the ones we have, we will secure sufficient income to enable Physio First to deliver.
- This means that it is imperative that any potential commercial partner takes the time to understand our Member Value Proposition (reproduced above) and our quality schemes (see link above) and through discussing them with us. By doing this, it will be much easier to navigate our way to a successful conclusion.

So, once we have concluded discussions based on the above and (hopefully) produced an agreed hypothesis upon how our relationship is likely to produce value for both your business and Physio First, the next phase will be to look at how the value of our relationship is communicated to Physio First members.

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## **7. The role of our Hon Communications Officer**

Our hypothesis is that the value of a relationship with Physio First for any of our commercial partners going forward will be in the reaction that Physio First members have to the communications they receive both from Physio First and our commercial partner.

As part of our development, Physio First created the executive role of Hon Communications Officer in April 2019 as it was identified as a valuable executive position that simply did not exist and needed to.

Upon creating the role, we set about reviewing our entire Communications Strategy which was signed off in June 2020. An essential feature of our strategy is that all Physio First communications going internally to our members or externally to the wider marketplace, will go through our communications team led by our Hon Communications Officer. The point is that getting our communications right i.e. aligned with brand Physio First is now so important it does not make sense to do it any other way.

So, this means that the “what does our potential commercial partner get?” from any relationship with Physio First is very dependent upon how we communicate about them.

What we mean here is probably easiest described by an example. If company A has a product and through discussion with Physio First finds that there is:

- sufficient strategic and cultural synergy
- a relationship that is likely to produce value for the company, Physio First and its members

then, remembering that Physio First cannot say that their product is better or best (without specific evidence) but can very publicly and very frequently say that the company is doing something that aligns with Physio First’s priorities i.e. something that helps us deliver on our Member Value Proposition or to commercialise our quality assurance schemes or (ideally) both!

We would all agree that just because we and any possible partner may think we know where the value in our relationship might lie, the only way to really know is to test this is by amassing the data.

So, every Physio First strategic commercial relationship going forward will be based upon the following 3 steps i.e.

- 1) establishing that we believe that sufficient strategic and cultural alignment exists which includes fully understanding Physio First’s Member Value Proposition and quality assurance schemes
- 2) agreeing that there are opportunities to help Physio First deliver on its Member Value Proposition or commercialise its quality assurance schemes leaving Physio First able to



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communicate at agreed levels about the company and how it is assisting Physio First with these

- 3) agreeing as part of the relationship to make it dependent upon the evidence that demonstrates its value, which we call a Build-Measure-Learn approach. This means including in our agreement how we believe we can measure the value of our relationship and to take time out together to assess this which is likely to include:
  - a. how many more unit sales and members joined as a result?
  - b. which communications have had the most impact, in terms of engagement?and to learn from and react to these.

In this way we go into our relationship expecting to iterate things between us to find the value which, if we can, then great, and if we cannot, then neither of us wastes resource in carrying it on at this time allowing us to part friends ready to do business at a later date.

So, the role of our Hon Communications Officer is to be intimately aware of the nature of our relationship with our strategic commercial partner and of the metrics that as Physio First we have agreed to compile, to be used to determine its value. But it will be for our commercial team, led by our Hon Commercial Officer, to lead upon the B-M-L reviews.

## 8. What's next?

So, all that remains, is to thank you so much for reading all the way to the bottom.

To the extent that you feel that you understand where we are coming from and would like to develop a business proposal that is something that would help to open our conversation, please contact us.

Knowing that you have at least read this document and looked at our Member Value Proposition and Quality Assurance Schemes and still feel it worthwhile to explore a relationship with us will feel like a great place to start.

Again, thank you and best wishes,

Belinda Holloway, Hon Commercial Officer, Physio First

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