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## Stories of change

# SUPPORTING PATIENTS TO MAKE PERSONALISED DECISIONS ABOUT THEIR CARE

**Decision Support Tools (DSTs) have given patients options to choose the best treatment and support for them, so they are able to manage their conditions better in Sandwell and West Birmingham.**



## What we did

We have implemented Versus Arthritis' Decision Support Tools, which aid decision making around treatment options for back, shoulder, hip, and knee pain. They were co-produced with clinicians and patients, with support from the Primary Care Centre Versus Arthritis at Keele University. With funding from NHS England, the tools were built to accurately reflecting the recommendations in the NICE guidance on osteoarthritis and low back pain and sciatica in over 16s. Locally, we are using the tools to support a conversation between patients and healthcare professionals, considering the context of people's lives, and not assuming that there is a single 'best' option for everyone.

## Our motivation

- To help patients make right choice for them so they achieve outcomes that enable them to have the best of quality of life.
- To rebalance the power away from healthcare professionals who traditionally lead consultations.
- Enable people to take control of their decision making.



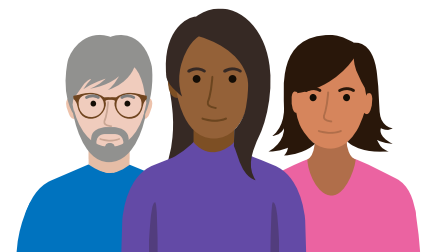
## The difference we are making

Preventing people from having treatments that they are not informed about. Reducing unwanted referrals therefore reducing wastage in the healthcare system. Enabling people to understand their problems and the full menu of evidence-based treatment choices available to them.

## What's next?

We will continue work in this way as I feel these decision support tools enlightens people. They take ownership of their health care.

It would be brilliant to see these free tools taken up elsewhere.





## Making change happen

In general, Decision Support Tools are not used for most patients in their musculoskeletal clinical appointments. This means that people come into those appointments with pre-conceived ideas about what is most likely to help their symptoms. Physiotherapists want to deliver evidence-based practice, but there is often a mismatch between what patients want, and what the evidence tells us will make a difference. Examples include patients asking for injections or tests like x-rays, when lower risk and more effective treatments might include physiotherapy courses, lifestyle changes and self-management.

We downloaded and embedded DSTs in SystemOne. We spent time explaining to patients about its use and its importance in decision making. Once they understood and agreed to use it then we posted, emailed, text a link or handed out the tools to patients before their consultation. The method depended on their preferred option and the type of appointment they would be having (face to face or virtual).

Decision Support Tools are a superb way of helping people understand all the available options and align their choice with their circumstances and needs. We have seen people change their approach and engage in discussions that they were previously unwilling to. Many people have gone on to manage their symptoms effectively following the shared decision-making process.

When patients went through this information, they gained knowledge and understanding so when they came for their follow ups, they engaged with us brilliantly and discussed their priorities and needs. From there people were able to choose the best treatment options considering evidence effectiveness and risk. Therefore, these DSTs provide cost effective and high value care.

**VERSUS  
ARTHRITIS**

Versus Arthritis: Registered Charity England and Wales No. 207711, Scotland No. SC041156.

Helping people to understand all the available options is key. Visual tools help people think holistically about their health, which leads to good choices.

### Top tips

- Collect the data
- Share your story of implementation
- Create case studies
- Be mindful that these tools will not be right for everyone.

### Want to know more?

[Musculoskeletal Decision Support Tools | Versus Arthritis](#)



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