

Healthcare professionals – England



**VERSUS
ARTHRITIS**

A summary of Versus Arthritis
services for health and social care
professionals and organisations

At Versus Arthritis, it is our ambition that one day, no one will have to live with the pain, fatigue and isolation caused by arthritis.

We work alongside healthcare professionals, researchers, policymakers, volunteers and friends, to tackle inequalities and promote best practice, building a powerful community of advocates dedicated to improving arthritis care through increased focus, better data and improved training pathways.

Our patient insight tells us how important interactions with healthcare professionals are to the lived experience of people with arthritis. We offer a range of training, resources and support services to healthcare professionals to support you and your continued professional development. We can also offer a range of support and resources to your patients.

This leaflet has been written for individual healthcare professionals, Health Boards, Health & Social Care Partnerships, and other stakeholders in health and social care in England. This publication provides a summary of the wide range of services offered by Versus Arthritis in England to support people living with arthritis across our communities. Health and social care professionals can signpost into and/or embed our services into their service delivery pathways.

Versus Arthritis is keen to explore opportunities to strengthen partnership working with healthcare professionals and service providers across England to supplement and support existing services to improve quality of life, support self-management and to maximise independence of people with arthritis.

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Versus Arthritis Strategy 2023-28

4

Our vision

A future free from arthritis.

Our mission

We won't rest until everyone with arthritis has access to the treatments and support they need to live the life they choose with real hope of a cure in the future.

Over 10 million people in the UK live with arthritis. Every day around one thousand people are diagnosed with osteoarthritis, the most common form of arthritis, and every month over 2,000 people are diagnosed with rheumatoid arthritis.

Many more live with arthritis but remain undiagnosed, untreated and unsupported.

As we work towards our ultimate vision – a future free from arthritis – our five-year strategy aims to empower people with arthritis to live well now, and to offer hope through our ongoing commitment to finding better treatments now and cures in the future.

As a charity, we will do this by investing in world-class research, delivering high-quality services, and campaigning on issues that matter most to people with arthritis.

Our work will not be easy and we know that we cannot do this alone, so partnership and collaboration will be at the core of how we work and behave. We look forward to working side by side with our volunteers, supporters and partners, in all four nations of the UK. We will also proactively seek and develop partnerships in areas where we want to do more, including with people and organisations working with underserved communities.

The support of healthcare professionals, like you, will be vital in helping deliver our mission. Find out more about the support we can offer you and the people you care for and how to get involved on the next page.



Scan the QR code to read our strategy in full.

**10
MILLION**



Over 10 million people in the UK have arthritis.



Arthritis and MSK conditions are a leading cause of disability.



**£100
BILLION**

Combined costs from worklessness and sickness absence in the UK amount to around £100 billion annually.

The Health Development team at Versus Arthritis can provide resources, education and support that will help you to help people with arthritis.

Information

When you join the Versus Arthritis professional network, you'll become part of a growing community of healthcare professionals dedicated to limiting the impact of arthritis. We'll keep you up to date on the latest developments in musculoskeletal (MSK) health and care, training and development opportunities and resources.

Education and training

Our **Core Skills in Musculoskeletal Care** programme helps primary care health professionals build their confidence in diagnosing and supporting people with MSK conditions. The programme consists of an e-learning course designed in partnership with the Royal College of General Practitioners, as well as digital and practical workshops which are delivered across the UK, designed to help you master the basics of examinations and consultations.

The **Guide to the Clinical Assessment of Patients with Musculoskeletal Conditions** and the **Children and Young People Assessment Guide** both provide step-by-step approaches to assessing people with MSK conditions using the evidence-based GALS (Gait, Arms, Legs, Spine) screening examination and REMS (Regional Examination of the Musculoskeletal System). Alongside the guides, there are supporting videos taking you through each joint examination and a **Clinical Findings in Patients** series helping you to detect key clinical signs of a range of MSK conditions and make a diagnosis.



Scan the QR code to find out more about our Education and Training.



Scan the QR code to join our Professional Network.



of participants would recommend the Core Skills in Musculoskeletal Care training programme.



“Excellent course giving a complete overview of the clinical examination skills with plenty of chance for interaction. Would highly recommend.”



“I already have noticed a change in my assessment and treatment of patients; being aware of use of language to promote wellbeing and advising on simple exercise techniques.”

Decision Support Tools

6

Versus Arthritis has produced a suite of support tools to help people with back, shoulder, hip and knee pain. These tools were developed by Versus Arthritis with support from the Primary Care Centre Versus Arthritis at Keele University and funding from NHS England.

How to use the tools

The tools are designed to support consultations between patients and their healthcare professionals. They are a set of questions which encourage people to think about what types of support they need to help them with their musculoskeletal health problem.

Patients can use these to prepare for appointments, during appointments, or both. Each tool sets out the treatment options for that condition and summarises what is known about the potential benefits and risks of each option. They are intended to facilitate discussion, not to guide people towards a particular option.

For more information about the tools and how they were developed, please visit:

VersusArthritis.org/DST

Our resources

There are eight tools, all available to download as PDFs:

- [Making decisions about my back pain: primary care and self-care](#)
- [Making decisions about my back pain: thinking about a referral](#)
- [Making decisions about my shoulder pain: primary care and self-care](#)
- [Making decisions about my shoulder pain: thinking about a referral](#)
- [Making decisions about my hip pain: primary care and self-care](#)
- [Making decisions about my hip pain: thinking about a referral](#)
- [Making decisions about my knee pain: primary care and self-care](#)
- [Making decisions about my knee pain: thinking about a referral](#)



Or scan the QR code.



Workplace Health Development

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People with arthritis can face considerable challenges staying in or returning to the workplace. Symptoms such as pain, stiffness, fatigue, limited dexterity, or mobility, can mean that employees face a range of barriers.

Yet, with the right information and support, many of these challenges can be overcome.

Employers, health, and workplace professionals can be key to facilitating and supporting people with arthritis or related musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions to work well.

Versus Arthritis Workplace Health Development aims to help improve work outcomes for people with arthritis and MSK conditions by:

- supporting research into working with arthritis
- influencing policy
- developing key work-related information resources and training for employers, health, and workplace professionals
- providing clear work-related information resources and signposting for people living and working with arthritis.

To understand the barriers to work and gaps in training, information or support, we have worked with researchers, and carried out surveys, hearing first-hand from people with arthritis and the workplace professionals who provide occupational health support. The results have been used to inform our work.

We aim to ensure resources will help work capacity and outcomes for people with arthritis.

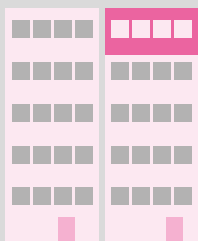
For employers, we offer 'Understanding arthritis in the workplace' training with the aim to improve workplace inclusion and support for staff. We provide information on rights, adjustments, employer duties, support services and good practice.

Email: WorkingWell@VersusArthritis.org



Scan the QR code to learn more about getting the right support at work.

**20%
LESS
LIKELY**



People with arthritis are 20% less likely to be in work than someone without arthritis.



1 IN 10

employees have an MSK condition.



working days were lost in 2022 due to MSK conditions.

Physical Activity

8

Research shows us that engaging in physical activity and movement reduces pain, improves quality of life and strengthens the muscles and joints. Versus Arthritis' Let's Move programme facilitates a way for people to incorporate movement into their everyday lives, empowering people with arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions to move in a good way for them.

Let's Move is our digital programme tailor-made for people with arthritis to help them on their physical activity journey. We have developed several series of videos featuring experts and people with arthritis. They include:

- Let's Move with Leon
- Stretching Series
- Let's Move for Surgery
- Monthly challenges with Leon
- Myth busting blogs, animations, and podcasts
- Peer-to-peer Let's Move Facebook group
- Let's Move Newsletter

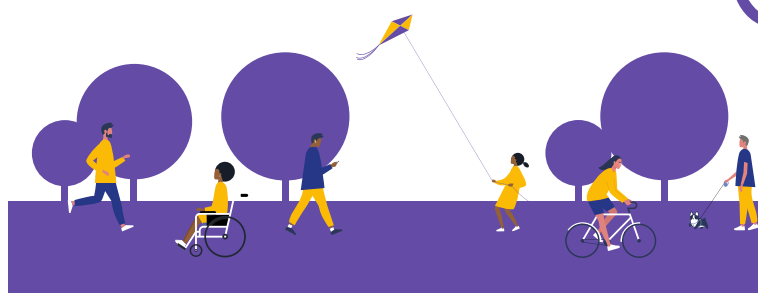


Scan the QR code to visit our 'Exercising with arthritis' page.

Other resources:

- Let's Move Facebook Group
- Exercise Sheets
- Let's Move with Leon
- Let's Move newsletter
- Stretching Series
- Let's Move for Surgery

LET'S MOVE
Moving my way



6 IN 10



people (60%) surveyed with MSK conditions reported using physical activity as a way to manage their symptoms.

7 IN 10

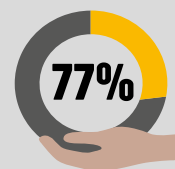


people (70%) surveyed with MSK conditions said they would like to be more active.

36%



of people surveyed with MSK conditions who were active at least once a week said they exercised because it helped them with their pain.



of people surveyed with MSK conditions said they want practical support to help them to be more physically active.

Support Services

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The Versus Arthritis Helpline is here to help you to support your patients.

Your patients don't need to face arthritis alone. Our advisors aim to bring all of the information and advice about arthritis into one place to provide tailored support for people affected by arthritis.



Helpline Freephone 0800 520 0520

Monday–Friday, 9am–6pm

(excluding bank holidays).



They can also email us

Helpline@VersusArthritis.org

So many people don't understand what it's like to live with a condition that can have such a huge but hidden impact on your life, but we do.



One place you'll always find a friendly ear or an answer to a question is our

Online Community ([VersusArthritis.org/Get-Help/Online-Community](https://www.versusarthritis.org/Get-Help/Online-Community))

This community is for people affected by arthritis to feel safe and supported.



Scan the QR code to order our information.

For orders of more than 500 booklets, please call **0800 515 209**.

"I wish to thank the person who answered the phone to me several weeks ago, they had a sympathetic ear. And the result is I have a new chapter opened up in my life – from one of extreme shock to putting into practice some of the suggestions."

"Thank you for your wealth of information. I feel more confident now that I can weather the storm until my surgery."

"Finally had the courage to call VA, I cannot recommend their helpline or should I say lifeline enough."



76%

of people that come to the Helpline feel they have a better understanding of their condition.



88%

of people contacting the Helpline felt satisfied with the information they received.

Our services in England work alongside people with arthritis, community groups, health, and social care professionals to deliver a framework of support across our nation.

We support people living with arthritis and other long-term conditions to learn practical skills and techniques to manage their condition and live well.

We help people to **get active and stay active**, to help them self-manage their condition. Our sessions are led by trained peer volunteers.

Chi-Me: Gentle exercise technique that can be practiced in either standing or sitting positions. It's Tai Chi influenced and is a simple and relaxing way to develop better flexibility and muscle strength for people of all ages and abilities.

“Chi-Me has helped me enormously, especially with breathing and my balance.”

Our local **Volunteer-led Community Networks** offer friendship, fun, information, and a chance to meet other people who know what it is like to live with arthritis or other musculoskeletal conditions.

Activities vary based on local interests and can include guest speakers and physical activity. Visit our website for more information and to find local community networks.

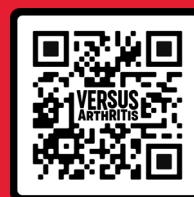
Information and Support Talks: Information sessions that cover a range of issues faced by people living with arthritis including pain, anxiety, fatigue, and sleep. These are delivered in small groups and will spend a couple of hours exploring ways to manage symptoms.

Self-Management courses: Through the programme, people will have an opportunity to meet with others who are also living with musculoskeletal conditions in a small, supportive group, and develop their skills and knowledge on:

- managing fatigue
- coping with anxiety and stress
- improving sleep and rest
- managing change and goal setting
- improving lifestyle including activity and healthy eating.

Contact us

Email SouthEnglandDelivery@versusarthritis.org
or NorthEnglandDelivery@versusarthritis.org
or visit VersusArthritis.org/In-Your-Area/England



Scan the QR code to see what services are available by postcode.



2,718,089

people have osteoarthritis (OA) of the hip in England.



4,538,461

people have osteoarthritis (OA) of the knee in England.



20%

of people with OA experience depression and anxiety.

Young People and Families Service

11

The Young People and Families Service at Versus Arthritis offers a range of support for young people with arthritis and musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions and their families across England. Our support ranges from one-to-one in paediatric rheumatology clinics, self-management programmes, residential, workshops and transition support.

Young people tell us that sometimes their friendships, school life and family life have been impacted by their diagnosis. Coming to our events and meeting others with similar conditions has really helped and given them confidence to advocate for themselves and manage their condition better.

Events are run with our volunteers, who themselves have arthritis or a similar condition. This helps our young people feel listened to, which makes a massive difference.

Our Moving on Up programme is aimed at young people of 10-11 years of age who will be making the move to secondary school. We look at the bags that have to be carried around with the books/kit that is needed, moving around a much larger school, becoming more independent, travelling to school and how young people can be supported by the school.

Contact the Young People and Families team:
YPFSEngland@versusarthritis.org

Our referral form:
<https://forms.office.com/r/a4jq1xhpFC>

Take a look at our School Series – these are short films that can support young people, their families and their teachers.
<https://qrco.de/beUzc8>



Scan the QR code for information on our offer across the UK for young people.



It is estimated 10,000 children under 16 years old have been diagnosed with juvenile idiopathic arthritis.

78%



of young people who accessed our service feel more positive about their condition.

89%



of young people who accessed our service feel more able to manage their condition.

At Versus Arthritis, we invest in world-leading science across the translational spectrum: from fundamental discovery science to fully understand arthritis, through to clinical trials to test more targeted and personalised treatments, to their eventual implementation in health services and social care.

We also have a commitment to support both clinical and academic researchers in their research careers. All our funding calls are open to healthcare professionals, including our Career Development Fellowships (CDF). These allow researchers to carry on the important work they do to help forward MSK research.

Recently, we spoke to one of our CDF award holders, Jim Dunham, a senior registrar, and clinical lecturer in anaesthetics, about what his CDF award has done for his career:

“The fellowship is my stepping stone to independent research. It provides me with research funding as I move from a senior trainee into a consultant role, which is often a precarious transition for research-active clinicians. Crucially, it also provides funding for our patient partners who will contribute to the design of experiments, the hardware, and the software, so that the final

multi-contact recording system fully meets their needs and can be seamlessly integrated into clinical practice.”

In 2019 we established our Research Advisory Groups which bring together people with lived experience of arthritis, researchers, and healthcare professionals to help guide our research priorities.



Scan the QR code to read about our research.

You can also find out about:

- our research strategy
- research funding opportunities
- how you can get involved

The State of Musculoskeletal Health is a collection of the most up-to-date, UK-wide statistics on arthritis and other musculoskeletal conditions. Find out more: VersusArthritis.org/somh

Email: ResearchLiaison@VersusArthritis.org

**£91.2
MILLION**



of research investment in England has been split between 195 projects (accurate Feb 2024).



43 different research organisations receive Versus Arthritis funding across England (accurate Feb 2024).

Musculoskeletal Health Questionnaire (MSK-HQ[®])

13

The Musculoskeletal Health Questionnaire (MSK-HQ[®]) is a short questionnaire that allows people with musculoskeletal conditions (such as arthritis or back pain) to report their symptoms and quality of life in a standardised way.

It was developed jointly by the Primary Care Sciences Research Centre Versus Arthritis at Keele University and University of Oxford, co-produced with active participation and feedback from people with musculoskeletal conditions, clinicians, academics and Versus Arthritis.

The purpose of the work was to develop holistic indicators that reflect how well services improve quality of life for people with musculoskeletal conditions, such as arthritis or back pain. The MSK-HQ[®] instrument is designed to be used across different musculoskeletal care pathways in different healthcare settings.

By capturing an overall rating of a person's musculoskeletal health at any given time, the MSK-HQ[®] enables patients and their clinicians to monitor progress over time and response to treatment. Considering individual components of the score, such as sleep quality or mood can allow particular aspects of musculoskeletal health to be addressed, ensuring a holistic approach to patient needs.

The MSK-HQ[®] has the potential to become in musculoskeletal health what the 'blood pressure' is in cardiovascular health: an essential measure of musculoskeletal health that can be used throughout health systems for the benefit of people with musculoskeletal conditions.

The MSK-HQ[®] is available for use free of charge to publicly funded healthcare providers, non-commercially funded academic researchers and other non-commercial users.

The MSK-HQ[®] is owned and managed (on behalf of the developers/funders) by Oxford University Innovation. Anyone wanting to use the MSK-HQ[®] must seek permissions (a copyright licence) from Oxford University Innovation before using it.

If you'd like to know more about obtaining a licence or have any questions on the application process, please visit process.innovation.ox.ac.uk

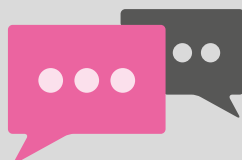


Scan the QR code to find out more about the purpose and background.



600 LICENCES

Since it was launched in 2016, over 600 licences have been granted to use the MSK-HQ[®], mostly free of charge to the NHS in the UK.



16 LANGUAGES

The MSK-HQ[®] has so far been translated into 16 different languages.



32 COUNTRIES

The MSK-HQ[®] has been used in 32 countries across the world.

The pain of arthritis and musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions affects all aspects of life – from family life to employment, to social life, independence and retirement.

Our Policy, Public Affairs and Engagement team works to influence health and social care policy in the UK to improve the lives of people living with arthritis and MSK conditions.

How we work

We work with governments and politicians to ensure arthritis stays high on the political agenda. We work across many areas of policy to help people with arthritis, including MSK health, multimorbidity, exercise and employment.

Our activities

- We campaign on the issues that matter most to people with arthritis – from tackling long waiting times to calling for increased funding for arthritis research.
- We uplift the voices of people with arthritis and mobilise our supporters to take action.

- We use robust evidence to advocate for change; this includes publishing reports, responding to consultations, convening focus groups, taking part in working groups, and facilitating discussions across health care.
- We work with MPs and arthritis champions to reform policies in arthritis and MSK health.

Versus Arthritis campaigns to make a difference for people with arthritis across the UK. We bring together volunteers, healthcare professionals and other stakeholders to call for arthritis to be a national priority.



Scan the QR code to help us push for the change people with arthritis need to see. Campaign with us.



Scan the QR code to learn more about policy, public affairs and engagement.



or 10 million people in the UK live with the pain, fatigue, and restricted mobility that arthritis often causes.



people (12.1%) in England report living with at least two long-term conditions, one of which is MSK related.

**£118.6
BILLION**



Arthritis and MSK ill health results in significant costs for individuals, employers, the health service and the wider economy. Cumulatively, the healthcare costs of arthritis will reach a massive £118.6 billion over the next decade.

There are over 10 million people in the UK living with arthritis and the impact for individuals and society is profound.

The pain and disability caused by arthritis results in a substantial loss in quality of life, accounting for 22% of the total burden of ill health in the UK. The cost of working days lost due to osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis alone was estimated at £2.58 billion in 2017 and is predicted to rise to £3.43 billion by 2030.

FOLLOW US



For more information please visit **VersusArthritis.org**

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VERSUS
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