



Arthritis  
ACTION

# Improving daily life with arthritis

OUR STRATEGY 2024-2026



# WELCOME!

Arthritis Action is a national charity founded in 1942 by Charles de Coti-Marsh, who developed a self-help programme for people with arthritis based on a combination of diet and physical therapy.

Our fundamental aims remain the same, and we take pride in continuing this longstanding tradition of helping people with arthritis enjoy a more active life with less pain through self-management, in line with the best available evidence. Over 10 million people live with arthritis in the UK, and with no cure, these numbers will continue to grow. This three-year strategy builds upon the foundations created during our 2021-2023 strategy, and we will continue to identify the most effective and innovative ways to support people living with arthritis. A big thank you to our Members, supporters and service users who have taken the time to provide feedback on our services and resources; this has helped us shape our next three-year plan.

We are the UK charity giving hands-on, practical help to improve the quality of life of people affected by arthritis. We offer an integrated self-management approach, which looks at both the physical and mental health impact of living with arthritis. Having supported people with all forms of arthritis for over 80 years, we know that one size does not fit all, so we will continue to develop and offer a range of services to help people find what works best for them. Whilst we are a membership charity, we have expanded our offer to ensure that everyone affected by arthritis and other musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions in the UK can benefit from our approach.

Our self-management approach includes: healthy eating and nutritional consultations; access to clinical appointments with our network of osteopaths and physiotherapists; mental health resources; pain management techniques; online Groups and self-management events; online exercise classes, advice and resources; webinars, podcasts, videos and fact sheets; and a personalised pathway for goal setting and self-management support, to help people take control of their arthritis, manage the pain it can cause, and enjoy life to the full.

We are proud of the progress we made in 2021-2023 to reach young adults and support them with a range of self-management services and resources, and we

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look forward to working with more young adults. We will continue to deliver presentations and engage with diverse communities affected by arthritis around the country, to raise awareness of its impact and provide information and evidence-based advice to empower them to live better with the condition. We will also work closely with employers to help them support their employees living with arthritis, whether they are new to work or are living and working for longer.

We are investing in our fundraising team, which will help us achieve our growth plans and aspirations over the next few years. Generating new income streams and engaging in long term relationships with our supporters and partners will continue to be a key focus. To achieve our new strategy, and increase the level of assistance we provide to the growing number of people living with arthritis across the UK, the Trustees have set an ambitious budget that involves incurring annual expenditure which will exceed operating income.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank our team, Trustees, Members, volunteers, supporters and partners for all we have achieved. We look forward to working together over the next three years to continue to make a meaningful difference in the lives of people living with MSK conditions.

As we embark on this exciting new chapter, we invite everyone reading this strategy to be an active participant in our journey. Your ideas, support, and commitment are the driving forces that will bring our strategy to life.

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SUMMARY

## OUR VISION

is for people to live active lives, free from the impact of arthritis.



## OUR MISSION IS TO:

### EMPOWER PEOPLE >

with arthritis to take control of their condition and lead a more active life.

### INFORM PEOPLE >

of the best available evidence-based approaches for managing arthritis.

### CONTINUE TO OFFER >

an integrated self-management approach, looking at both the physical and mental impact of living with arthritis.

### HELP PEOPLE >

gain the knowledge and confidence to manage their condition themselves and live life to the full.

### PROMOTE STRATEGIES >

that can help prevent the onset of arthritis, reduce further disability and pain, and improve quality of life.

## OUR CORE VALUES ARE:



### Community-oriented

People are at the heart of everything we do. Being part of the Arthritis Action community enables people to enjoy the advice, support and friendship of others actively using self-management. Our Groups bring communities together to share their experiences of living with arthritis, and learn hints and tips.



### Impact-driven

We focus on making a lasting difference in the lives of people with arthritis. Every day we are inspired to make an impact through our dedication, passion and hard work. We work closely with our Members and wider community to achieve the best possible outcomes.



### Practical

We are the UK charity giving hands-on, practical support to improve quality of life for people affected by arthritis. We offer healthy eating and weight management advice, therapies, exercise tips, and pain management techniques, to help people with arthritis manage their condition themselves, and live life to the full.



### Personal

Arthritis affects each of us in different ways. We provide individualised support to help people manage their physical and mental health. Each person can choose from our range of services to find solutions that work for them.



### Informed by science

We promote evidence-based approaches that help control arthritis symptoms and manage their effects through lifestyle changes. We work with experts in health, therapies and nutrition, all recognised by professional bodies, and follow the latest clinical guidelines, to ensure that we give the most up-to-date information about arthritis.

## ARTHRITIS ACTION'S STRATEGIC PRIORITIES ARE:



# 1

### To empower people living with arthritis to better self-manage their condition.

There can be a physical and emotional burden when living with the pain of arthritis, and many people with the condition can feel lonely. They will spend the majority of their time managing the symptoms of their condition on their own. Arthritis Action is here to support people with information and advice they can trust; connect them with each other through events and Groups; and give hands-on help to improve their symptoms. Ensuring people have the information and resources they need to self-manage their condition is key to improving their wellbeing.

#### We will do this by:

- offering a range of services for both physical and mental wellbeing, so that people with MSK conditions can actively participate in their own health and care and better manage their condition
- ensuring our services, wellbeing resources and mental health support are widely promoted and visible, so that we can reach as many people across the UK as possible
- motivating adults of all ages to take proactive steps to achieve good MSK health
- educating people on how they can prevent arthritis by leading an active and healthy lifestyle, particularly around nutrition and physical activity



# 2

### To reach more young adults across the UK and support more people in work of all ages.

Arthritis affects people of all ages, not just older people. Developing arthritis at a younger age can affect a person's education, career, relationships, and their ability to socialise or perform their favourite activity. This can have a profound effect on mental health. We will continue to reach out to young adults living with arthritis and support more people in the workforce, of all ages, to help them thrive at work.

#### We will do this by:

- adapting our services to ensure value to the young adult population, while continuing to offer a valuable service to those over the age of 65
- highlighting the importance of prevention, promoting a healthy lifestyle from a younger age
- actively engaging with corporates to promote good MSK health in the workplace
- supporting more people in work to help them lead fulfilling and productive work lives
- providing information and resources to help employers better support older adults in the workplace

# 3

## To have a self-management approach that attracts referrals from healthcare professionals.



We promote evidence-based approaches that help control the symptoms of arthritis and manage its effects. We work with experts in health, therapies and nutrition and the wider sector, and follow the latest NICE guidelines, to ensure that we give the most up-to-date information about arthritis. We will work alongside healthcare professionals to promote the wider adoption of our self-management approach, to improve the daily life of those living with arthritis.

### We will do this by:

- raising Arthritis Action’s profile with healthcare professionals
- developing clear evidence-based advice for good MSK health
- working with healthcare professionals nationally and locally to provide services and self-management presentations to support people and improve their MSK health and wellbeing
- educating Social Prescribing Link Workers, Specialists, Nurses, GPs and Allied Health Professionals on the benefits of self-management of MSK conditions

# 5

## To actively reach out to and make a difference for diverse communities affected by arthritis across the UK.



Our priority areas are, but not limited to, ethnic minority groups and low-income communities.

### Internally, we will do this by:

- building a diverse and inclusive culture within the organisation
- continuing to embed equity and diversity across our governance and leadership and ensuring that inclusion is a core part of our decision making
- continuing to learn, improve and implement best practice in equality, diversity and inclusion

### Externally, we will do this by:

- working collaboratively across the Charity and with other organisations to identify areas of need and develop services and partnerships that have a real impact
- disseminating self-management information and organising events in areas of unmet need, both online and offline
- deepening our understanding of the needs of diverse communities to further advance our work and increase our impact

# 4

## To raise awareness of the Charity and that of arthritis and MSK conditions.



We aim to generate awareness of arthritis, both nationally and regionally, and the importance of adopting a supported self-management approach, to empower communities living with arthritis to take control of their health and care.

### We will do this by:

- continuing to raise awareness of the impact arthritis has on daily life
- continuing to reach out to the media and use social media and digital campaigns to reach adults of all ages
- developing campaigns aimed at recognising MSK conditions
- continuing to collaborate with others in the sector, especially through the Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Alliance (ARMA) and National Voices umbrella bodies
- amplifying the voice of people with lived experience
- building our networks and collaborating with other organisations to extend our reach and impact across the UK

# 6

## To achieve long-term financial sustainability.



Arthritis Action’s intention is to continue operating indefinitely, as we believe it is essential that we can fulfil our mission of supporting as many people with arthritis as possible over the longer term. Financial sustainability is an ongoing effort that requires effective financial management, continuous fundraising, and adapting to changing circumstances. As a result, consideration is always given to the long-term financial implications of our decisions and actions. Although we currently have an ambitious budget that involves incurring annual expenditure which will exceed operating income, steps are being taken to achieve a balanced budget within the next few years.

### We will do this by:

- diversifying funding sources. Reliance on a single source of funding is risky so, in addition to continuing to promote legacy giving, our main source of income at present, we will increase our efforts to:
  - secure funding from foundations, government agencies, and other grant-making organisations
  - cultivate our existing base of loyal individual donors and expand this through regular fundraising campaigns
  - develop suitable and mutually beneficial corporate partnerships which align with our social responsibility policies
  - continue to practise sound financial management, including budgeting, expense control, and transparent financial reporting

We believe that financial sustainability is an ongoing effort that requires effective financial management, continuous fundraising, and adapting to changing circumstances. Accordingly, by implementing these strategies and staying focused on our mission, we can achieve long-term financial health and sustainability.

# ARTHRITIS ACTION'S SELF-MANAGEMENT APPROACH

Arthritis Action offers people with all forms of arthritis an integrated self-management approach that can be tailored to suit each individual based on their specific condition and lifestyle. Although over 10 million people live with arthritis in the UK, each person is unique in the way they manage their symptoms. Our approach enables people to choose the techniques that work for them best.



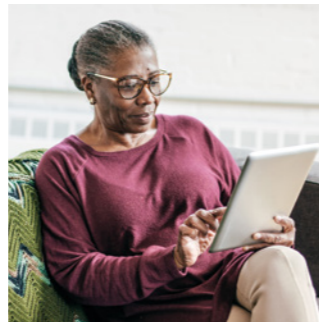
## Our self-management approach encompasses the following services:



Nutrition and weight management consultations with our registered Dietitian



Arthritis Action Online Groups including coffee mornings and evening events



Factsheets, our digital Members' magazine, electronic newsletters, webinars and mental wellbeing resources



Running online exercise classes and resources for exercising safely. Signposting to activities in communities and collaborating with activity providers



Subsidised clinical appointments with our registered Osteopaths, Physiotherapists and Acupuncturists



Our Personalised Member Pathway service, enabling people to set goals and receive personalised support to achieve them



Our new Podcast aimed at young adults, and specialist groups and events exclusively for young adults living with arthritis



Self-management educational events to learn about various techniques for managing both the physical and mental aspects of arthritis

## OUR IMPACT IN 2022/2023

### OUR SERVICES

#### Overall Member Satisfaction

**92%**

are satisfied with our services

"You have made me feel better in myself by just having a caring organisation that I can contact for support. I have attended Martin Lau's exercise classes which are excellent. It keeps me moving which helps my arthritis. Your webinars are useful as is your monthly newsletter. Your team in the office are brilliant."



### Nutrition & Weight Management Service

**93%** satisfaction

**90%** said the service made them feel more knowledgeable about their arthritis and closer to achieving their weight/nutrition goals



"I enjoyed working with Martin. He is invested in what he does and goes above and beyond his remit."

### Personalised Member Pathway



**100%** satisfaction with the Pathway service

**97%** agreed that the Pathway increased their knowledge about self-management and improved their confidence to self-manage their arthritis

**95%** agreed that the Pathway has brought them closer to achieving their goals

"I am happy and know that if I need, there are people that I can turn to with expertise, or who know someone who does."

### Podcast

**2.7k**

plays across platforms



"I have been listening to your podcast and recommended it to my patients as I find it is a very fun and informative way to engage with people living with arthritis."

### Online Arthritis Action Groups



**100%** felt the Groups helped them to understand their arthritis better

**95%** felt more in control of their arthritis, and would recommend Arthritis Action to a friend

"I felt isolated when it came to discussing and understanding what it was actually like to be living on a day-to-day basis with osteoarthritis. The Online Groups bring together people from all walks of life, and for me has helped me to come to terms with having osteoarthritis, and has helped me to build a better pathway for the future."

## Self-Management Events

**94%** were likely to apply what they learnt in the course to their daily lives

**87.5%** agreed that these events help people better understand how to manage their arthritis

“Was very friendly, welcoming and informative. Especially good having someone from your charity who is also dealing with arthritis, who could explain how they self-manage their arthritis.”

## Webinars

**98%**

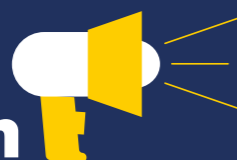
- ✓ found Arthritis Action’s webinars useful, with 61% finding them very useful
- ✓ came away from the webinar with more information on the topic discussed (including pain, yoga therapy, and arthritis & pain)
- ✓ would recommend Arthritis Action’s webinars to others living with arthritis



## Publicity and PR

Combined reach of

**70.8 million**



## Social media

Our social media activity reached

**1.7 million people**



# SUMMARY

There are over 10 million people living with arthritis in the UK. These numbers will continue to rise, and with no cure, arthritis and other MSK conditions will continue to have a big impact on people’s personal and professional lives.

Giving people the support they need and equipping them with the tools and knowledge to self-manage their condition, will be more important than ever.

We are proud to have supported thousands of people each year, and are keen to continue to offer a range of services to meet the evolving needs of people affected by arthritis.

We are led by our desire to run the Charity both efficiently and effectively, to not only support people with arthritis and the wider MSK community, but also ensure that we are making the most of every penny that has been so generously donated to us.

Good governance is important to us, so we will continue to invest in and review our practices and safeguard our finances. We will also continue to monitor our performance and measure our impact,

to ensure that we are making a real difference for the communities we serve.

Thank you once again to our team, Trustees, members, volunteers, supporters and partners for what we have achieved to-date, and we look forward to working together over the next three years to continue supporting people living with arthritis and other MSK conditions.

We are delighted to share our strategy with you and hope that everyone reading this plan will think about how they can support and join us to help make our vision a reality – to enable people to live active lives, free from the impact of arthritis. We would love to hear from you so please do get in touch by phone, email, WhatsApp, or contact us through our website and social media channels.

## TANYA’S STORY

I was initially prescribed medication to help reduce my symptoms, but after this I would say that I’ve not received any other formal support – outside of receiving more painkillers from my GP upon request. I have struggled to find the support and guidance for navigating my life, both before and after my diagnosis. At the time of writing, I have been waiting over a year for a pain management clinic appointment. It feels like I’ve been left to manage my condition on my own.

I first heard of Arthritis Action over Instagram and really appreciate the great work they are doing. Speaking to an organisation like them is an amazing way to connect and learn from others who have things in common with you. Their resources help people to manage their lifestyle and symptoms as I have and live a better, more active life.

My arthritis has definitely impacted my daily life, affecting what I can and can’t do. However, I find comfort in the things I can control. Recently, I have been making efforts to improve my daily habits. I’ve learnt to be careful when planning my time and deciding what to do each day, so that I don’t over-exert myself. I’m mindful of avoiding processed foods and increasing my step count to help self-manage my condition. I have also taken up mental wellbeing therapy to help cope with the stress that comes with my conditions.



Now, several years after my diagnosis, I have come to love and accept my conditions. At the end of the day, it is a part of me that makes me who I am. Living with my conditions has helped me learn so much about myself and how to listen and honour my body. I have become far more familiar with dealing with my conditions on a daily basis, to the point where it doesn’t negatively impact my mental wellbeing anymore.

If someone my age has been diagnosed with arthritis or a similar condition, I would advise them to accept and love their body and self for who they are. It can be hard doing this when your body has different needs to others your age, but you can still do everything you want to do. Don’t let your condition define you.

**Tanya**





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ACTION



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