



ARTHRITIS CARE

*Empowering
people with arthritis.*

**Putting people
with arthritis first**
2007-2012



Putting people with arthritis first

Nine million people in the UK are living with arthritis and yet awareness of the impact of the condition, and what can be done to improve day to day living, is still very low.

When people with arthritis understand their condition and learn more about managing it, the impact is often life-changing.

We have listened to the views of over 1,500 people to learn what people with arthritis want and need from our organisation. The message is loud and clear:

- greater awareness of arthritis – who it affects, what it's really like to live with, what can be done to improve life after diagnosis
- greater awareness of Arthritis Care – people need to know that we are here and to know about the valuable services we provide
- greater awareness among health professionals and other key service providers – what it is like to live with arthritis day to day, and how we can work in partnership to support people with arthritis.

People with arthritis are integral to reaching our goals. With one voice, we can raise awareness of the issues and share our positive experiences with others.

Our new five-year plan is ambitious but achievable if we all work together and become the voice of people with arthritis in the UK.

Notes to plan:

In this document, the term health professional is used to cover all disciplines from GPs to rheumatologists, physiotherapists to orthopaedic surgeons.

These are overarching UK-wide objectives, which can be tailored to the specific needs of regions and nations across the UK.

Vision:

Arthritis Care wants a society in which the needs of people living with arthritis are understood, respected and fully met.

Mission: Arthritis Care exists to support all people with arthritis:

- directly, with high quality services and information about other forms of support
- indirectly, by influencing others who can make a positive difference to their lives.

Aims: we will work towards a society in which:

- everyone with arthritis has information about, and access to, the best possible services and support
- people with arthritis get the best possible deal from government policies
- the impact of arthritis is better and more widely understood
- people are aware that there are always positive steps they can take in living with arthritis
- Arthritis Care is universally recognised as the voice of people with arthritis throughout the UK
- health professionals understand and value the unique role of Arthritis Care and 'prescribe' us to their patients
- Arthritis Care is clear, confident and professional in the delivery of these aims.



achieving our aims

1. Everyone with arthritis has information about, and access to, the best possible services and support

Objectives

- To ensure all four UK nations have in place a framework for arthritis services and an implementation plan.
- To enable people with arthritis to identify the support they need and how to access it.
- To influence and improve the way in which people with arthritis experience their local health services and support.
- To have arthritis specifically included in health targets.

We will do this by

- Initiating more powerful campaigns nationally and locally.
- Providing accurate, relevant, up-to-date and easily accessible information about all types of arthritis and the services/support available to people with arthritis.
- Identifying the common issues that people with arthritis experience from services - highlighting best practice and campaigning for change where standards need to be improved.
- Consulting regularly with our members and other people with arthritis to ensure we are developing and delivering services to meet their needs.

Example of activity

'We need clearer reliable information on "natural" therapies or aids to reduce the pain of arthritis...there do seem to be so many apparently false claims of the benefit of certain substances and desperate sufferers will try almost anything' (Arthritis Care member)

We will develop an Arthritis Care standard for services available to people with arthritis - from health services, information sources, internet sites, exercise plans and alternative therapies – enabling people to recognise from the wealth of support available which is appropriate, high quality and designed with their needs in mind.



2. People with arthritis get the best possible deal from government policies

Objectives

- To ensure Arthritis Care and people with arthritis are involved at the outset in any new policy or service development.
- To measure the outcomes of policies and services for people with arthritis, ensuring there is no negative impact.

We will do this by

- Establishing a think tank within Arthritis Care of staff, volunteers and external specialists.
- Developing a programme of contact between staff and service users and leading strategists/policymakers.
- Involving more people with arthritis in our activities to influence decision makers.

Example of activity

Thanks to funding from the Department of Health in England's Section 64 scheme, we have been able to launch our Involving Users as Experts project. Through training and peer support we will give volunteers the knowledge, confidence and skills they need to liaise with and influence decision-makers in the NHS and local governments. From Blue Badge parking schemes to funding health services for people with Arthritis - it's we who are shaping the future in our communities.



3. The impact of arthritis is better and more widely understood

Objectives

- To ensure the prevalence and severity of arthritis is reflected in its profile within the arena of long-term conditions.
- To dispel the myths surrounding arthritis and promote the true experiences of those living with it.
- To raise awareness of the barriers people with arthritis face and the action that society and professionals can take to reduce them.

We will do this by

- Developing and publicising 'myth busting' messages for key target audiences, especially the general public, people with arthritis themselves, health professionals, employers and other service providers.

- Integrating our activities so that our main messages are consistently promoted and heard by a wide audience.
- Implementing a programme of awareness raising and training events with health and other professionals.

Example of activity

We will undertake research to identify the most common myths surrounding arthritis and run public awareness campaigns across all our activities to challenge and educate.

Myth

Arthritis only affects older people.

It's just aches and pains.

You just have to learn to live with it.

Fact

Arthritis doesn't discriminate – it can affect anyone, of any age including young children.

Arthritis is the biggest cause of physical disability, accounting for 1 in 5 GP visits.

There are so many different ways people can manage their arthritis – medical and non-medical. With the right information and support people can overcome the pain and immobility arthritis can cause.

4. People are aware that there are always positive steps they can take in living with arthritis

Objectives

- People with arthritis will have access to Arthritis Care's information at the point of diagnosis.
- To heighten awareness of the benefits of self-management techniques and ensure they are more widely available/accessible.
- People with arthritis will have access to new and updated information about managing their condition.
- To give people with arthritis the confidence and information to have a more informed dialogue with their health professionals.

We will do this by

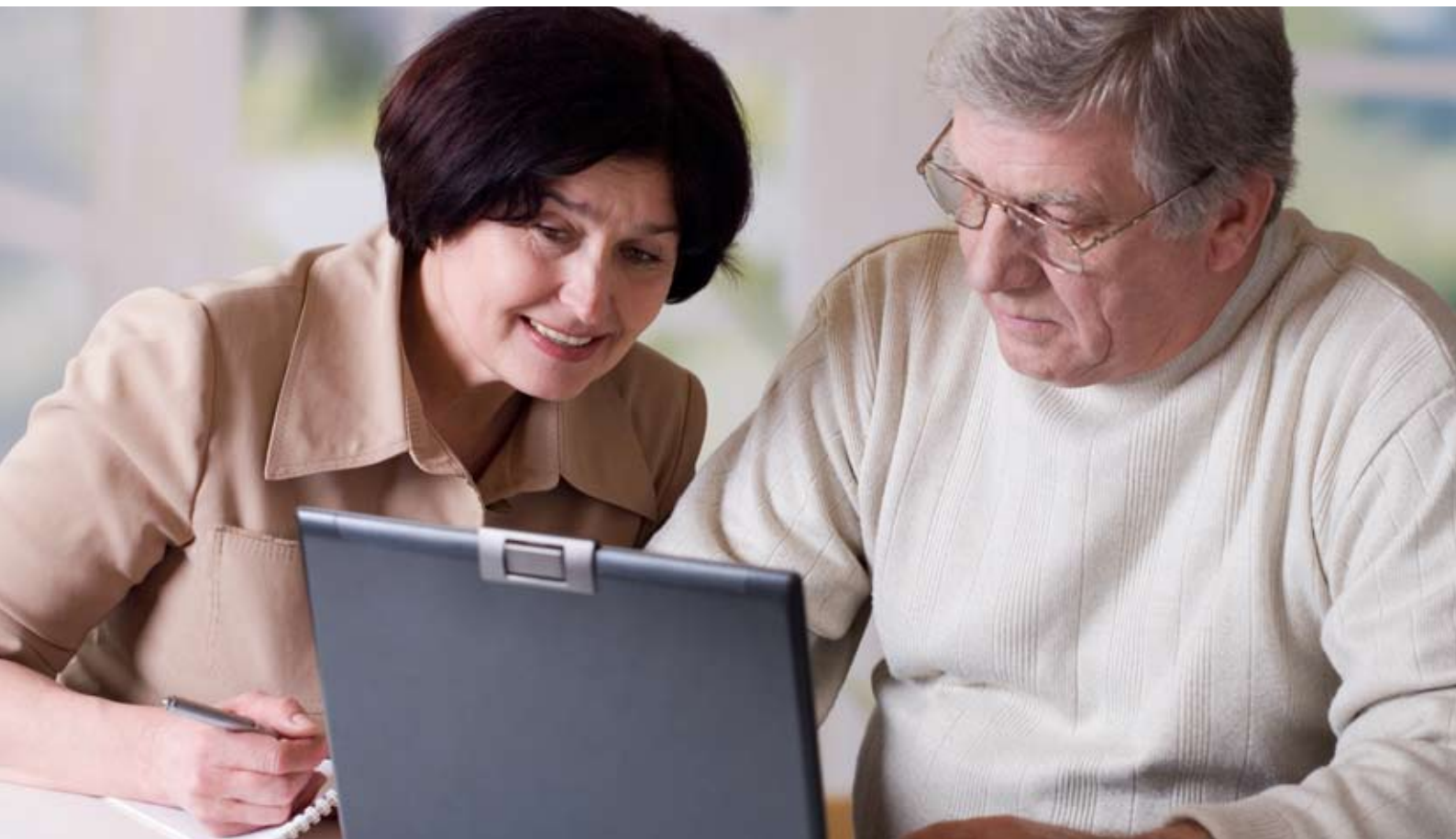
- Promoting and delivering self-management services, monitoring their impact for people with arthritis and publishing these findings.
- Providing opportunities for peer support through our helplines, branches & groups, discussion forums and self-management courses.
- Providing regular updates to our members and service users about the range of treatments and services available to people with arthritis.

- Packaging and promoting our services so anyone can see we are here for them no matter what type of arthritis they have or what age or lifestage they are at.

Example of activity

'The benefit I have enjoyed most from Arthritis Care has been information on drugs. It has been easier to talk to doctors with this knowledge.' (Arthritis Care member)

Over 90 per cent of people surveyed in our consultation agreed 'they needed someone to talk to about their arthritis'. This is one of the cornerstones of our work. Our network of branches provide regular social support to thousands of members across the UK with regular monthly meetings; our free helpline service provides confidential support from trained counsellors; our on-line discussion forums give people with arthritis a chance to share their experiences and learn from each other and our information is written with the input of people with arthritis. We aim to raise awareness of Arthritis Care so that thousands more people with arthritis can have access to this life-changing support.



5. Arthritis Care is universally recognised as the voice of people with arthritis throughout the UK

Objectives

- To raise awareness of Arthritis Care and the services we offer so that people with all types of arthritis, at any age and at any point in their diagnosis, know they can turn to us for information and support.
- To ensure the voice of people with arthritis is regularly heard and heeded.
- To ensure people with arthritis are at the heart of Arthritis Care.

We will do this by

- Ensuring Arthritis Care is on the podium at key events not just in the audience.
- Consulting regularly with people with arthritis and involving them in service development and delivery.
- Ensuring that people with arthritis are represented throughout the organisation.
- Working with the media to raise awareness of arthritis and ensure Arthritis Care's views are reported.
- Ensuring Arthritis Care's image and identity is attractive and appropriate to all our key audiences.

Example of activity

'Arthritis Care should also have information in all newspapers and TV channels...it should be a loud noisy advert to wake people up to the pain and suffering...' (Arthritis Care member)

When we consulted people with arthritis about what they wanted from our organisation, there was an overwhelming call for 'greater awareness of arthritis' and 'to let more people know about Arthritis Care and our valuable services'. We can't be on every high street but by working with the media and using new technologies, we can 'make some noise' and reach out to people in a way that is right for them individually.

6. Health professionals understand and value the unique role of Arthritis Care and 'prescribe' us to their patients

Objectives

- To regularly evaluate and communicate the positive impact of Arthritis Care's services.
- To heighten awareness among health professionals of the benefit of 'prescribing' Arthritis Care to people at the point of diagnosis and at other times of need.

We will do this by

- Establishing champions in each health professional speciality so they promote our work to their peers and other colleagues.
- Developing a programme of engagement with health professional associations and students.
- Working in partnership with professional associations to ensure their members are 'prescribing' Arthritis Care.
- Developing new systems to enable us to evaluate the impact of our services.

Example of activity

We want to extend dynamic projects like our Patients as Teachers and Information Prescription pilots which are already demonstrating the positive difference partnership work with health professionals will make to the lives of people with arthritis

- Together with the School Of Healthcare at Leeds University, our Patients as Teachers project is enabling healthcare students to learn first hand from people with arthritis what it's really like to live with the condition so they can be more effective when they start working professionally.
- In partnership with Diabetes UK and Asthma UK, Arthritis Care has recently launched an Information Prescription pilot with the Department of Health in England ensuring that people with arthritis are being given a 'prescription' to Arthritis Care at key moments in their treatment.

Example of activity

Everyone involved with Arthritis Care will have a clear understanding of the aims of the organisation and their value within it. Through regular evaluation, we will constantly monitor the quality of our services and ensure we focus our resources on activities which have the best outcomes for people with arthritis. Through regular and powerful communications, we will tell more and more people about the positive difference our work can make attracting more members, supporters and much needed funding.



7. Arthritis Care is clear, confident and professional in the delivery of these aims

Objectives

- To strive for excellence in all aspects of service design and delivery.
- To monitor, evaluate and report on our activities ensuring we are achieving the best outcomes for all involved in their delivery and all those who use them.
- To continue to lead the way in developing innovative services and solutions for people with arthritis.
- To become an expert employer which lives up to its public messages internally.

We will do this by

- Developing a corporate strategy with clear objectives supported by financial and human resource, fundraising and marketing, IT and diversity strategies.
- Meeting recognised and accredited quality standards.
- Building a strong internal communications strategy for staff and volunteers.
- Promoting healthy workplace initiatives to support all staff and volunteers.

For further information:

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For local contact details please see Arthritis Care's website: www.arthritiscare.org.uk

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