

A woman with dark hair, wearing a black headband, a light blue sleeveless top, and teal leggings, is walking outdoors on a path. She is using two black trekking poles. She is wearing black wristbands on both wrists and white sneakers. The background is a lush green field with trees. There are decorative orange concentric circles in the upper right corner of the image.

Joint Pain Rehabilitation Programme

Information pack

Site: Sunbury

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The story so far

Dr Davina Deniszczyc,
Charity and Medical Director

Over 20 million people in the UK are currently living with MSK conditions such as arthritis and joint pain.

For many, physical pain and discomfort can have far-reaching consequences. Reduced mobility can make it difficult to work or socialise with friends and family, and may even lead individuals to feel confined in their own homes. This can lead to a vicious cycle whereby the inability to live an active and fulfilling life leads to further stress and anxiety, which reduces the body's capacity to manage pain.

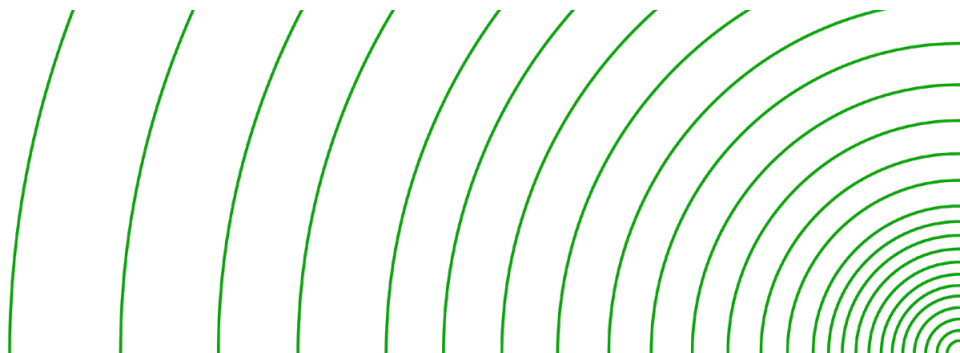
The impact of chronic MSK conditions is also having a significant impact on the NHS, accounting for one in seven GP appointments in England. While there is rightly a renewed focus on addressing MSK conditions to relieve current pressures on our healthcare system, the challenges are not new. As a practicing GP, it was always a great source of frustration that the options for my patients in terms of support and rehabilitation were severely limited.

It was this unmet need that Nuffield Health set out to address in 2018 when we initiated our first pilot intervention for osteoarthritis. At that time, it was already widely accepted that people with chronic pain would benefit from exercise and physical activity. But it was also clear that conditions can only be effectively managed when people are supported to make long-term changes →



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to their lifestyle – something that our healthcare system simply isn't set up to do.

In response, we designed a clinically effective programme to reduce pain and enhance wellbeing that would not only make a lasting impact on people's lives, but could also be accessed for free in a community setting by those who needed it most.

Since we began our journey, the Joint Pain Programme is being delivered by more than 230 trained Rehabilitation Specialists at over 110 sites across England, Scotland, and Wales. Over 35,000 people have benefitted from the programme, delivering benefits not only to those participants but also to their families, the NHS, and the wider economy. In 2023 alone, the programme generated over £100 million in Social Value.

While we will continue this work, the scale of the national challenge means that our contribution can only go so far. Collaboration is more important than ever. In this report, we share our experience to date and offer the Joint Pain Programme as a tried and tested template, with the aim of fostering new partnerships and supporting even more people who are living with chronic conditions.



35
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£100
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of social value generated in
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For the whole person

Marc Holl, National Lead for Primary Care

The Nuffield Health Joint Pain Programme can be accessed by people experiencing a wide range of chronic MSK conditions including osteoarthritis, fibromyalgia and lupus. But regardless of the label given to their particular condition, we know that each individual starts the programme with their own specific set of circumstances.

Designed by our clinical team, this is an evidence-based programme which continues to be modified as updated clinical guidelines and research are released, ensuring our programme remains both safe and effective.

We also know that the physical and mental aspects of an individual's experience are intrinsically connected. As such, the Joint Pain Programme has been designed to adopt a 'biopsychosocial' model to support both short and long-term benefits.



For the whole person



Offering a combination of education, low-impact physical activity and emotional wellbeing support, which can be tailored to each individual.

Empowering



An initial assessment is used to understand the participant's goals as well as their current activity levels. The programme is then personalised with the aim of delivering incremental increases in activity levels to improve strength and stamina. The educational component helps participants to understand this process, so that they are empowered to make informed decisions after the supported phase.

Social



The programme is delivered in small groups of up to 12 people, which fosters a sense of community and peer support, enabling individuals to help and encourage each other.

Clinically governed



Clinically governed by a Multi-Disciplinary Team, but delivered in a non-clinical setting by upskilled fitness professionals called Rehabilitation Specialists.

Accessible



Completely free to access, with individuals able to apply directly or to be referred by a clinician.

“Small groups help people to open up. The 20-minute chat that we do prior to the exercise component is as beneficial as the exercise part – friendships are formed and ideas are bounced around about how to manage any pain.”

Joanne Pritchard Rehabilitation Specialist, Telford



Who could benefit from the Joint Pain Programme?

People who have suffered with chronic pain for many years can benefit from the programme, including those with no formal diagnosis as well as those with conditions such as:

- Osteoarthritis
- Psoriatic arthritis
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- Other arthritis
- Gout
- Fibromyalgia
- Spondylitis
- Lupus

The programme is free and open to anyone living with joint pain. Participants do not have to be a Nuffield Health Fitness and Wellbeing Centre member to join and are under no obligation to continue using Nuffield Health after the programme ends.

For those whose pain is very severe, or have surgery scheduled within 12 weeks, it may not be possible to take part.



Scan the QR code to listen to
[Vivienne's story](#)

The pathway



Scan the QR code to listen to
[Julia's story](#)



Measuring impact

Understanding the impact of our programmes is fundamental to our approach at Nuffield Health. The rigorous collection and analysis of data allows us to continuously adapt and improve our programmes, thereby maximising the benefit we can offer to people living with long-term conditions.

It also allows us to contribute to the body of clinical evidence, meaning that others can benefit from our insights and build on what we have achieved. That's why we published our findings from the programme in a peer-reviewed journal, *Frontiers in Rehabilitation Sciences*.

To build our understanding we begin collecting data from the very first interaction we have with our Joint Pain Programme participants, to enable us to track their improvement over time. We look at indicators such as improvement in joint function, reduction in pain and reduction in stiffness, with participants asked to report scores at regular intervals over a two-year period. In each of these areas, we see significant improvements.

↑ **35%**
Improvement in
joint pain

↑ **37%**
Improvement in
joint function

↓ **47%**
Reduction in
sick days

↓ **29%**
Reduction in GP
appointments



Read our published research in
[Frontiers in Rehabilitation Sciences](#)

It's also important to capture the impact that the programme is having on quality of life, and as such we also look at broader measures of wellbeing. Here, we also see some very encouraging outcomes. Even a marginal gain in these areas would have significant real world benefits, so the improvements we see in life satisfaction, perceptions of life being worthwhile and happiness are truly transformational.

At Nuffield Health we are also keenly aware that, beyond the direct effect on individuals, ill-health has a far wider-reaching impact – on friends and families, on local healthcare services and on the economy.

Our Social Return on Investment (SROI) framework, developed with Frontier Economics, allows us to understand the impact of our programme in each of these areas, and allows us to express this as a monetary value – known as Social Value.

Given that MSK conditions are estimated to cost the NHS around £6.3 billion in 2022-23*, it is vital that we understand whether our programme is helping to save money. So far, the signs are promising, with our data showing that, on average, the programme reduces the number of GP appointments by nearly a third.

Our 2023 Social Value equates to £100 million.

*The Kings Fund. The NHS budget and how it has changed [Online] 08 12 2022. [Cited: 21 02 2023.]

↑ **28%**
Improvement in
joint stiffness

↑ **25%**
Improvement in
fitness

↑ **26%**
Improvement in
anxiety

↑ **9%**
Improvement in
happiness

£100 million

Social Value delivered in 2023



Individual



Family/carers



Health and social care



Economy



Referring onto our rehabilitation programme



Clinician referral

Complete our online referral form,
at nuffieldhealth.com/joint

Clinicians need to enter the person's
name, date of birth, gender, email
address, phone number and address.

A pre-assessment questionnaire will
be emailed to the person for them to
complete within five days.

A Nuffield Health Rehabilitation
Specialist will make contact to progress
the applicant onto the programme.



Self referral

We accept applications directly from
individuals through our self referral
form, available at:
nuffieldhealth.com/joint