



# ARTHRITIS THE NUMBERS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

**300,000**



in Northern Ireland  
are affected by arthritis

**240,000**



in Northern Ireland  
have osteoarthritis (OA)

**60,000**



people have  
rheumatoid arthritis (RA)  
or another  
inflammatory condition

**500**



children and young  
people have been  
diagnosed with Juvenile  
Idiopathic Arthritis

## THE IMPACT OF ARTHRITIS ON PEOPLE'S LIVES

34% report  
feeling like they  
have no one to  
talk to

65% of people  
have difficulty  
making a cup  
of tea when  
pain is at its  
most severe



**One in five people**  
experience **long term pain**  
in Northern Ireland

Arthritis Care is a charity which supports the 300,000 people in Northern Ireland who have arthritis. Living every day in severe pain can make people with arthritis feel depressed and fatigued. Simple daily tasks that others take for granted can become extremely difficult and time consuming. Arthritis is the largest single cause of physical disability and days off work through illness in Northern Ireland.



**Musculoskeletal diseases such as  
Osteoarthritis account for almost one third  
of GP visits.**

OANation 2012 – Arthritis Care



**Arthritis is the biggest cause of pain and  
physical disability in the UK**

OANation 2012 – Arthritis Care



**Almost 70% of people with arthritis live in  
constant pain**

OANation 2012 – Arthritis Care



**By 2020, the number of adults with arthritis  
will have increased by 19%**

MSK Briefing 2012 - Institute of Public Health in Ireland



ARTHRITIS CARE  
NORTHERN IRELAND

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ARTHRITIS CARE  
NORTHERN IRELAND

# Less pain, more gain

## AN ELECTION MANIFESTO FOR ARTHRITIS

It's miserable being in pain.  
Every day is a challenge to do  
what is normal for everyone else.  
Pain controls my life but I want to  
be able to control the pain.



# Less pain, more gain

Arthritis isn't just an older person's issue - it affects people of all ages and proper diagnosis and treatment is essential. Reducing pain doesn't just benefit people with arthritis, but also has a longer term benefit for the economy. Arthritis Care's Election Manifesto sets out a number of measures that will achieve better outcomes.

We call on the Northern Ireland Assembly **to reject any future proposals to re-introduce prescription charges** - unless it can guarantee protection for people with arthritis and other long term conditions who have multiple prescriptions.

We also call for an **increased focus on diagnosis of Osteoarthritis and other non-inflammatory forms of arthritis within primary care**, as these are too often dismissed as 'wear and tear' by GPs.

**Early access to disease modifying treatment and new drugs for Rheumatoid Arthritis** is also a key priority which demands **reduced waiting times** for rheumatology appointments. **Early diagnosis and referral to improved pain pathways and self-management programmes** have been evidenced to improve outcomes for people with arthritis.

Arthritis Care is firmly behind the principles outlined in the Donaldson Report and *Transforming Your Care* and calls for their implementation as a matter of urgency.

## ARTHRITIS CARE IS CALLING FOR:

### Increased focus on the diagnosis of osteoarthritis

**One in three**  
people with OA  
forced to  
**give up work**

One third of people with osteoarthritis (OA) retire early, give up work or reduce the number of hours they work because of their condition.

#### We want to see:

- Improved diagnosis of Osteoarthritis by GPs. Too often the condition is dismissed as part of the ageing process, leading to worsening symptoms and a condition that is more difficult to treat.
- More patient involvement in developing individual care and treatment plans

### Improved pain pathways and mainstreaming of self- management programmes

Integrated and holistic care has been evidenced to improve outcomes for people with arthritis.

#### We want to see:

- More person-centred care
- Promotion and implementation of peer led self-management
- Better-integrated care services
- Implementation of a pain strategy for Northern Ireland

### Reduced waiting times for rheumatology and orthopaedic appointments



Inflammatory arthritis, particularly Rheumatoid Arthritis, is a common cause of disability in adults and can reduce life expectancy if not treated in a timely manner.

#### We want to see:

- A dramatic improvement in waiting times for rheumatology and orthopaedic appointments – current waiting times fall far outside the recommended guidelines and standards developed by the National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE)
- Improved access to treatment, care and new drugs
- A streamlined rapid response system so that people with inflammatory arthritis get the help they need when they most need it.

*“Taking part in a self-management programme has made me better equipped to deal with my illness. It has given me back an interest in other people, restored my sense of humour and helped me take control of managing my arthritis.”*

*Participant on an Arthritis Care  
Pain Management Course*