

WORK ADJUSTMENT PLAN

Find the information, adjustments and support you need to work well with arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions



Diagnoses
and treatment

Managing
your condition

Workplace
rights

Reasonable adjustments
and Access to Work

Working well
with arthritis

 **Arthritis** UK

(Formerly Versus Arthritis)

New name, same
trusted support.

This plan has been designed with the support of people with arthritis and health professionals, to help you find solutions to work-related barriers; whether you are looking for work or currently in work. You can use it to agree changes to how you work or plan what would help you return to work. Links to further information and support can be found at the end of the document.

Key things to consider when living with arthritis or a musculoskeletal (MSK) condition (conditions affecting the joints, muscles, neck or back).

Be informed – learn about your condition, your treatment, any support and advice available from your doctor or other health professionals. Find the information and support you need to maintain your health and wellbeing.

Managing your condition - self-management (things you can do to lessen the impact or severity of your symptoms) can be empowering. Assisting you to live well with your condition, even when your symptoms fluctuate, or you have flare-ups. Getting information from health professionals, peer support, and pain/self-management resources can help.

Self-care - good sleep habits and pacing yourself can make a difference, as well as setting small, achievable goals to improve your wellbeing and fitness.

Know your workplace rights – check out the company's policies on sick leave, time off for appointments, flexible

working and workplace adjustments. Identify services that can provide you with advice and support on work issues.

Communication – speak with your line manager or HR about any adjustments you may need to work. Employers have a duty of care to all staff, **you have rights to protect you from discrimination.**

Focus on solutions - you may have to review your work goals, your hours, the impact of commuting, work tasks, or the tools you use for work.

Get support from jobcentre staff – A Disability Employment Adviser (DEA) or work coach within your local job centre can provide support to help you remain in or return to work.

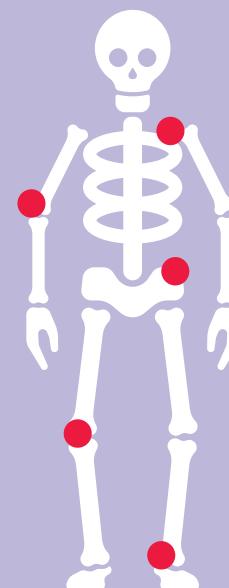
Seek advice - Occupational Therapists (OT) can provide you with advice, as well as supporting you with any application for adjustments.

Be persistent and believe in yourself – it can take time to find the treatment that works for you or the workplace solutions that will help. Increasing your understanding of your condition and strategies to manage it, along with agreeing reasonable adjustments with your employer, or applying to the Access to Work scheme can make a difference to your work life.



1 IN 10

current UK employees
have an MSK condition.



Introduction

Musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions affect around a third of the UK population, over 20 million people - which includes over 10 million people with arthritis.

Arthritis refers to painful, stiff, or restricted joints. These symptoms are common in conditions that cause joint damage or inflammation. They include osteoarthritis (OA), autoimmune inflammatory arthritis conditions including rheumatoid arthritis, axial spondyloarthritis, crystal arthritis (such as gout), or as symptoms of inflammatory connective tissue diseases.

Arthritis is also used as an umbrella term for a range of conditions where arthritis is their main symptom. Most types of arthritis are long-term conditions.

Having a diagnosis of arthritis or a related MSK condition can leave you feeling anxious and unsure about your future and your capacity to work. Learning to live with the condition takes time and finding the right support can be key.

Whether you are looking for your first job, changing career, or remaining in work, this Work Adjustment Plan has been designed to help you reflect on what support or adjustments you need to address any work-related barriers.

We hope the information on our website along with this plan will help you find what works best for you.

Disclosing your condition

You do not need to share information on your condition on a job application, or while in work if you **do not** need adjustments **and** you can continue to work safely.

However, if you do have problems at work due to your condition, you should speak with your line manager or someone you trust at work. Your employer has a duty of care, to consider what reasonable adjustments can be put in place to help you. You have a right to privacy and respect when discussing what adjustments, equipment or support you need.

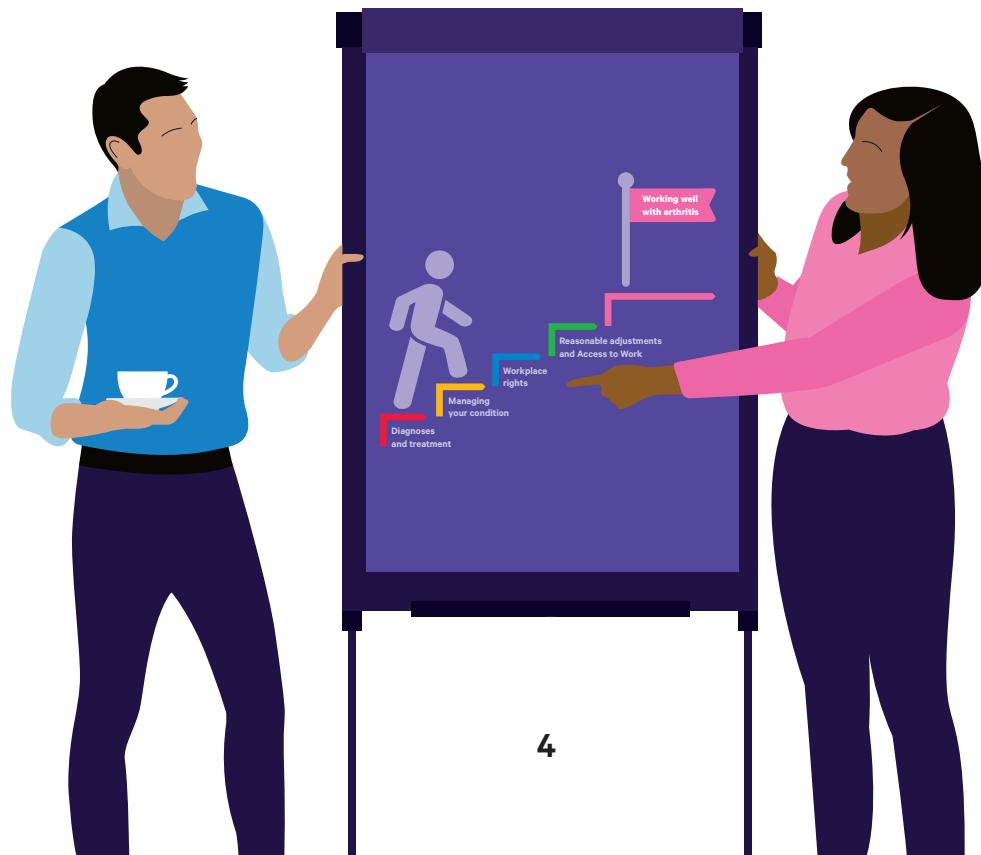
Knowing your rights can empower you. Find out about reasonable adjustments and support for employees who have a disability or health condition on the **ACAS website** (www.acas.org.uk). The **health and safety executive (HSE) website** (www.hse.gov.uk) has guidance for employers on safe working practices as well as information for workers. Links to key organisations can be found at the end of this document.

Help your employer to understand what adjustments you need by:

- describing how your arthritis or MSK condition affects you – include information on flare-ups, medication or treatment that you feel your manager should be aware of
- explain what tasks or ways of working are difficult for you
- share any suggestions you have that could make work easier.

You may need to test a few options to find what works best for you and your employer.

Use this booklet to help you frame your thoughts and plan any meetings. If you feel it would help, you can share it with whoever is supporting you at work.



Assessment of your needs

We are all entitled to a safe, inclusive working environment. Employers have a duty of care to ensure their staff can work safely. You have a right to ask your employer for adjustments to ensure you can work safely and well.

Knowing what adjustments, equipment or support could make a difference to you can be a challenge. As can sharing how your condition impacts on you, especially if it fluctuates, you experience flare-ups or have a change to your treatment.

An assessment of your workplace needs can be an opportunity to find out if there is equipment, changes or support, either temporary or permanent that will make a difference to you.

Risk assessments – these are key to ensuring our workplace is safe for everyone and does not aggravate any health conditions that people may already have. Be mindful that changes to your condition or some treatments could mean you may need a review of some work tasks to ensure you can continue to work safely and well.

Occupational therapist – in addition to using this plan to understand what you need to work well, you may find it helpful to speak with an Occupational Therapist (OT), to help identify equipment or adjustments. To access, check with your doctor or health professional.

Occupational health assessment – if you have been off work sick or are having difficulties with work, your employer may suggest you have an occupational health (OH) assessment. This can help your employer understand what adjustments you may need. The OH adviser will

assess your work capacity making recommendations that could help you.

Employers have a legal duty to remove or reduce the barriers job applicants and employees face in work. These are called 'reasonable adjustments'. They must take proactive steps to ensure disabled people and those with long-term health conditions have access to the same work opportunities as their non-disabled colleagues.

Access to Work (AtW) - The government funded Access to Work scheme, for England, Scotland and Wales, and Access to Work NI, can fund equipment and support to remove barriers to work.

The Access to Work (AtW) scheme will only fund items that are beyond what an employer would be expected to provide.

If you are unsure what could help you work, AtW can arrange an independent assessment of your work needs. The assessor will discuss with you how your condition affects your ability to work. Their report will detail their recommendations to help your AtW case manager decide what to award. You will receive a copy of the report detailing their decision; your employer will only receive a list of the items that have been agreed along with details of how to reclaim any costs.

Note: The AtW scheme is not available to staff within government departments, they have access to their own internal service.

Access to Work is also available to those who are self-employed.

Using the plan to identify and agree workplace support

This plan is aimed at helping you consider the impact your condition has on you and your capacity to work:



- How your condition affects your everyday life and work
- Explore any adjustments to how you work, your job, equipment, or support you need.
- Identify who can support you with this
- Detail anything that has been agreed.

It may help to work through this with someone you trust.

Your details

Only add the personal details that you feel comfortable including.
Alternatively, this plan can be kept for your own private use.

Name

Location

Condition/s

Role/job title

Usual working hours and days

Description of job and main tasks

.....
.....
.....

1 IN 3



employees with a long-term condition **have not** discussed their condition with their employer.

Adjustments, equipment, and support to consider

whether looking for work or changes to your current role



Travel and location

- Travelling to / from work, does your condition make it difficult to drive or use public transport? If yes, AtW may consider funding taxis, a driver or travel buddy.
- Does the job involve travel within work? Your employer will cover normal in-work travel expenses. If you need taxis or a driver AtW will consider helping with costs above your employer's contribution.
- Work location - consider your options and what you need to make work manageable, length of commute, working from home or another site, whether occasionally or permanent.



Job role and tasks

- Look at your daily, weekly and ad-hoc tasks, consider if it would help to remove or change some, including adding more time for tasks. What would this look like?
- Is there a need for a health and safety assessment to ensure you work safely?
- Ergonomic equipment may help – such as access technology software, electronic note taker, lighter tools, ergonomic keyboard, desk, chair, custom footwear.
- Can you continue in your job role with adjustments? If not, consider what options are available within the same company. This is where an Occupational Health assessment may help.
- If you cannot remain in the role and there are no options within the company, ensure you get advice from your union rep, Job Centre, ACAS or local advice agency.



Hours and working week

- Hours of work - what do you feel you can comfortably do each day or week? Do you need flexibility of hours, start or finish times?
- Do you need to reduce or change working hours? If so, for how long?
- Do you need longer breaks between days you work?
- Do you need time off to attend appointments or treatment? If so, how often?



Other types of support to work

- Access to Work could fund, job coaching, support workers, a travel buddy or driver
- Mental health support – available through Access to Work
- Additional training or mentoring to help you with your job
- Access to Work may consider funding training for colleagues to improve their understanding and awareness of arthritis.



Flare-up and fluctuating symptoms

There may be times when your condition is less stable, you are prescribed new treatment, or you have a flare-up, and as a result you need **additional** help to remain at work. Having a condition that fluctuates can be challenging, especially if you do not have support in place to help you during the times when you are feeling unwell.

When this happens, you may need to take things easier, pace yourself or consider having some time off work. Preparing for these periods by agreeing additional, flexible support could make a difference to your work capacity or reduce the length of any sickness absence.

The extra help could be:

- reducing your hours or changing days you work for a short period of time
- removing or adjusting some tasks when your condition is less stable
- working from home
- AtW travel support if driving or travelling on public transport is difficult.

Whatever works for you, include them in your plan. That way you can apply for these along with the day-to-day adjustments you have agreed. It will ensure you are prepared and are more likely to be able to remain at, or return to work sooner during these difficult periods.



Looking after yourself

Finding the right equipment or adjustments is only part of the solution to help you work well.

Looking after yourself - ensuring you get time to manage your wellbeing - is key to a healthy work-life balance.

- Pace yourself – get enough rest and sleep to help manage your energy levels
- Re-prioritise – think about changes you may need to make to your life and work
- Take your breaks at work
- Build in strategies to manage any pain or fatigue you experience
- Exercise little and often – if possible, build in daily stretching or movement
- Maintain a healthy diet
- Monitor your progress
- Be kind to yourself.



Each small change can add up to big benefits.

1

Your condition. How does it affect you? Consider how symptoms such as the examples listed affect your capacity to work.

pain	fatigue	treatment	other symptoms
stiffness	mental health	restricted mobility	
limited dexterity	medication	brain fog	

1. How do they affect you?

List ways they have an impact on your work and wellbeing.

2. How often – all the time or occasionally?

Do they fluctuate, do you experience flare-ups?

3. Are there any triggers that make the symptoms worse or occur more often?

Examples:

- **Pain:** pain causes me to feel tired, I cannot sit for long, it makes travelling to work difficult
- **Fatigue:** I find that I lose concentration due to tiredness near the end of my work day
- **Dexterity:** my fingers, hands, wrists and arms are affected causing issues with my strength, grip and flexibility of movement. I cannot lift heavy items, and driving is difficult.
- **Mobility:** it is hard to climb stairs, walk distances, balance and bend, I need a chair or walking aid
- **Concentrating or feeling alert:** can affect my ability to work safely at times
- **Effect of treatment or medications:** when and for how long
- **Other symptoms or conditions that may affect how you work.**



Our survey, '*Understanding work-related support for people with arthritis and MSK conditions*', highlights work issues and some of the solutions that help address barriers to work. In addition, we partnered with the Society of Occupational Medicine (SOM) to hear from workplace professionals. The report, '*Identifying work-related training and support for workplace professionals*', details their responses and suggestions to improve work outcomes for people living with arthritis and MSK conditions.

Symptom	How it affects me and my ability to work

2

Now that you have identified the symptoms that are affecting your life and work, think about work adjustments, support, or equipment that may help.

Example:

Arthur lives with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and back pain, has been working in his current role for three years. Arthur's main symptoms are fatigue, stiffness and pain. During flare-ups he also experiences brain fog and sensitivity to bright lights. He also finds a few work tasks increases the pain in his hands and shoulders, resulting in delays to completing jobs and at times mistakes are being made.

After a period of sick leave Arthur realised that to return to and remain at work, some adjustments would need to be made. He arranged to speak with his line manager about the impact of his condition and the problems he was experiencing with work. Together they looked at ways to deal with the difficulties and agree what would work for the organisation and for Arthur.

While the job is not suitable for home working, Arthur's manager approved changes to his core hours during flares-ups - to start later and finish earlier. After discussion it was also agreed some tasks would be reorganised, with Arthur being allocated lighter duties.

With support from his manager, he also applied to Access to Work scheme (AtW). After a workplace assessment, arranged by AtW, it was recommended that an ergonomic chair, keyboard, mouse and a daylight desk lamp should be provided. These would help ease pain in his hands and shoulders and allow him to adjust light levels at his desk. Arthur's employer was advised by AtW to purchase the items and claim back an agreed part of the cost from AtW.

To improve the management of his condition Arthur sourced a fatigue and pain management course. Following some advice he has now started to build some stretching and manageable activities into his day to improve fitness and wellbeing.

Use the space on the next page to record your notes >

Difficulty or barrier	Adjustments, support, or equipment that may help you manage work:

3

Now that you have considered the possible solutions that may help you work well, think about your next steps.

Discuss with your manager, HR or employer contact. If needed, identify who can support you, and which organisations can help. Remember your employer has a duty to consider reasonable adjustments.

Organisation and contact	What information or support do they provide?

4

Record changes to work pattern, equipment, or additional support that you have identified and agreed.

Lead contact for support	Details of adjustments or equipment	Date of change or review
Example - line manager	<i>Home working two days per week. Chair ordered, delivery in four weeks.</i>	<i>Three months from xx/xx/2025</i>

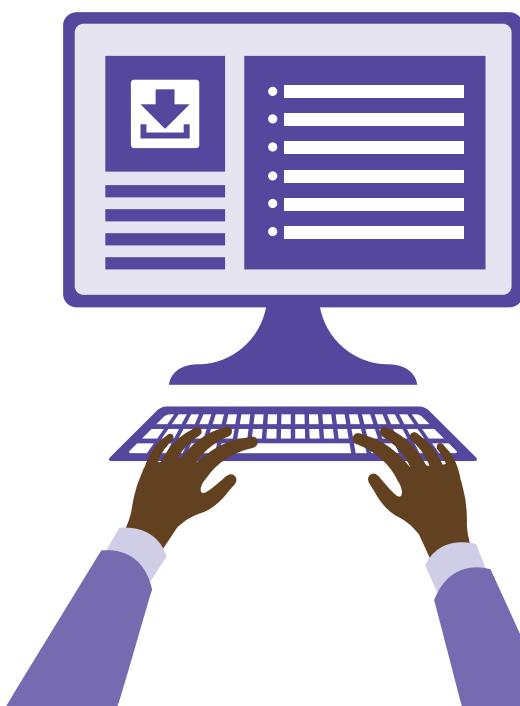
5**Finally, think about other changes or support that you will need to consider in addition to any work adjustments you have agreed.**

- This could be a review of your income. If changing or reducing your hours, how will it affect your pay; are there additional benefits you can apply for?
- Have you considered applying for a disabled parking badge?
- Whatever your situation - first job, starting work after an absence, or currently in work - use this to help assess what might make work easier for you.
- AtW can help with support to attend an interview as well as work-related support. You can apply to AtW up to 12 weeks before you start work.
- If your employer has an Employee Assistance Programme, how can you access this?
- Peer support can often be key to you finding the support you need, sharing information with others who have similar conditions and experiences.
- If you have continuing issues with managing your condition and your capacity to work, contact your doctor or health team for advice.
- Local Jobcentre staff in England, Scotland and Wales, and Northern Ireland provide advice on remaining in or finding work.
- Versus Arthritis' information on work and resources can be found on our website.
- Agree regular reviews to ensure the changes are working for you and your employer.

If you find that you are still struggling with work due to lack of support raise this with your manager or HR staff. If you are a member of a union, your rep may be able to help.

If you feel you are unable to continue to work, speak with your doctor or OT, contact Jobcentre staff who can advise you of any support to find a more suitable job or change of career.

Further information can be found on our website.



Website links and sources of information

Scan the QR code to access all the links in one place.
or visit: <https://linktr.ee/WorkplaceAdjustmentPlanner>



- Reasonable adjustments for workers with disabilities or health conditions:
<https://www.gov.uk/reasonable-adjustments-for-disabled-workers>
- Disability at work. Advice on supporting and treating disabled people fairly at work for employers, managers, workers and job applicants: <https://www.acas.org.uk/disability-at-work>
- Disability at work – your rights: <https://www.gov.uk/rights-disabled-person>
- If you have been refused reasonable adjustments – advice from ACAS: <https://www.acas.org.uk/reasonable-adjustments/if-an-employer-does-not-make-reasonable-adjustments>
- Health and Safety executive – the law on musculoskeletal disorders and work:
<https://www.hse.gov.uk/msd/legislation.htm>
- Your health and safety as a worker: <https://www.hse.gov.uk/disability/worker.htm>
- MSK conditions at work guidance for employers and employees: [Musculoskeletal disorders - HSE](#)
- Royal College of Occupational Therapists (RCOT), explain what occupational therapy is:
<https://www.rcot.co.uk/about-occupational-therapy/what-is-occupational-therapy>
- ACAS provides information on an Occupational Health Assessments:
<https://www.acas.org.uk/using-occupational-health-at-work/using-occupational-health-to-help-someone-at-work>
- ACAS Helpline: <https://www.acas.org.uk/contact> Helpline 0300 123 1100, s
- Claiming an Access to Work grant online, check if you are eligible:
[Access to Work: get support if you have a disability or health condition: Eligibility - GOV.UK](#)
- Access to Work Northern Ireland: Access to Work - [practical help at work | nidirect](#)
- Disabled parking (blue) badge: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-blue-badge>
- Disabled parking Northern Ireland link: <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/information-and-services/motoring-travel-and-transport-people-disabilities/blue-badge-scheme>
- Disability benefits UK: <https://www.gov.uk/browse/benefits/disability>
- Disability benefits Scotland: <https://www.mygov.scot/browse/benefits/disability-benefits>
- Information on the [Equality Act 2010 Disability discrimination | EHRC](#)
- Benefits NI. Benefits and pensions | Department for Communities:
<https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/topics/benefits-and-pensions>
- Disability Discrimination Act in Northern Ireland.
[Disability discrimination law: employment rights | nidirect](#)
- Versus Arthritis Work and Arthritis guidance on working with arthritis:
<https://versusarthritis.org/about-arthritis/living-with-arthritis/working-well-with-arthritis/>
- The Equality Act 2010 and the United Nations (UN) Convention on disability rights help to enforce, protect and promote your rights. [the-united-nations-convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-what-does-it-mean-for-you.pdf](#)

Our aim is to offer you clear, accessible information resources that will help you work well with arthritis.

Thank you to all who helped us develop this document, we are grateful for your valued support.

For more information please visit:

www.versusarthritis.org

-  /VersusArthritis
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GET ACTIVE
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Find out more at versusarthritis.org/get-help

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