

Challenging Pain

Our new self-management course



ARTHRITIS CARE

*Empowering
people with arthritis.*

Our new self-management course, 'Challenging Pain', introduces participants to a variety of cognitive pain management techniques, and is designed to provide coping skills to enable them to manage pain and its impact on their lives more effectively. It has been developed as an effective and accessible intervention to complement the care and support people with pain receive from their health specialists.

Challenging Pain workshops are **aimed at people with all types of chronic pain.**

'Challenging Pain' empowers individuals to better manage their medical condition, improve their quality of life and realise the goal of independence. They are likely to make more appropriate demands upon their GPs, live more active and fulfilled lives and have improved communication with all their health professionals. As this is a shorter course it is more suitable for those working to attend.

Course content:

The course is delivered over 2 x 3 hour sessions and covers the following topics:

- **Know your pain** – The difference between acute and long-term pain.
- **Conscious breathing** – The importance of learning to breathe properly.
- **Why challenge pain?** – Learning to change our thoughts, feelings and activities to break the negative effects that pain has on the body and mind.
- **Why exercise?** – Participants are given an overview of the importance of exercise through demonstrations and practice, emphasising how they should start exercising safely.
- **Managing stress** – Recognising when you feel stressed and how we can deal with it.
- **Relaxation tools** – Techniques to ease stress.
- **Making changes for the better** – Setting a personal long-term goal and working towards small achievable steps.
- **Dealing with negativity** – Questioning the negative statements we think and say – changing these to more positive ones.
- **Better communication skills** – Introduction to aggressive, assertive and passive communication. Encouraging participants to communicate more effectively and reduce frustration.

What participants say:

"By learning how to pace myself I have experienced better motivation, more self-confidence and I am not dreading the future any longer".

"Goal setting and pacing myself has allowed me to feel better about myself and, even in one week, my pain has eased".

"I feel more positive which enables me to do more and be willing to do more, Instead of feeling sorry for myself, I feel there may now be light at the end of the tunnel".

"I was upset at being diagnosed, but after attending the Challenging Pain workshops I feel more confident and able to deal with my condition much better".

Evidence

Results from recent research on 'Challenging Pain' show successful psychosocial outcomes that are sustained and even improve over a 12 month period. Participants reported significantly improved ability to cope with their illness (self-efficacy up by 27.4%), experienced reduced health distress (31.6% reduction), reduced pain (14.6% reduction) and needed to see doctors less often (22.8% reduction in GP visits) in the 12 months after the programme compared with the six months before the programme. It is a new and exciting development in the fight to give people back their lives.

Challenging Arthritis

Our new self-management course



ARTHRITIS CARE

*Empowering
people with arthritis.*

Challenging Arthritis is a self-management programme that is designed to enable participants to develop the skills to manage their arthritis more effectively and be empowered to make well-founded decisions about how they control their lives.

Arthritis is a major health issues affecting the people of Northern Ireland. It is the single largest cause of physical disability and accounts for 1 in 4 of all GP visits. The impact of arthritis on individuals and their families is incalculable in terms of pain and impaired physical movement, as well as psychological consequences such as loss of self-esteem and depression. Employment, education, relationships and social life can be affected and the economic costs to individuals and the country are considerable.

Course content:

The course is delivered over 6 x 2.5 hours sessions and covers the following topics:

- **Introduction to Arthritis and Fibromyalgia Self-Management**
- **Pain management**
- **Cognitive Symptom Management Techniques**
- **Action Planning and problem solving**
- **Strengthening exercises and identifying exercise barriers**
- **Dealing with difficult emotions**
- **Healthy eating**
- **Preventing and slowing osteoporosis**
- **Fatigue management**
- **Working effectively with your Health Care Professional**

What participants say:

“The course has given me the encouragement to help myself and be responsible for my progress”.

“The course has surprised me as it has made me realise that there are so many things that I can do myself to relieve my arthritis”.

“The course has given me a much more positive outlook. I feel now that I can ‘have a go’ rather than believing that I can’t do something. I loved every minute of it”.

“It has taught me to look at life differently and not beat myself up so much”.

“I wish I had attended this course years ago. I have learned so much from the course, particularly that I am not alone and other people have the same problems”.

Evidence of effectiveness

Results from recent research on ‘Challenging Arthritis’ show successful outcomes with participants reporting an 85% improvement level in their quality of life, 75% improvement in their confidence and a 90% improvement in the understanding of their condition.

Challenging Your Condition

Self-management courses that change lives



ARTHRITIS CARE

*Empowering
people with arthritis.*

‘Challenging Your Condition’ is an innovative and cost-effective approach to empowering individuals to better manage their medical condition, improve their quality of life and realise the goal of independence. This course is suitable for people suffering from **any long term chronic condition**. We have previously delivered this programme to people with Asthma, Scoliosis, Rheumatoid Arthritis, Multiple Sclerosis, Osteoarthritis, Diabetes, ME, Stroke, Heart Disease, COPD, Epilepsy, Colitis, Hypertension and Osteoporosis.

The course helps people to acquire the skills they need to be in control, to be informed, to manage their condition, to deal with flare-ups, to adjust medicines, to improve lifestyles and to know how to access services when they are required.

The success of the course is built on increasing self efficacy by goal setting and action planning; modelling; reinterpreting symptoms and persuasion.

Course content:

The course lasts for 6 x 2.5 hour sessions and covers the following topics:

- **Significance and implications of a diagnosis**
- **Pain management** – Looks at ways of coping with pain and practices a number of specific techniques.
- **Healthy lifestyle** – Explore the benefits of exercise and healthy eating.
- **Transitions** – Helps participants to prepare for moving between services, sometimes to different levels/types of support, during the cycle of illness.
- **Communication skills** – Explores how participants can communicate with their healthcare team, family and friends to explain their feelings and their needs and to be more involved in their care planning.
- **Positive thinking** – Looks at the difficult emotions that inevitably come with living with a long-term condition, and helps participants to develop strategies to deal with feelings of frustration, depression and isolation.
- **Fatigue** – Strategies for dealing with tiredness.
- **Problem solving and goal setting** – Throughout the course we help participants to set action plans and to work towards a personal goal.
- **Accessing information** – We discuss how to obtain information and resources locally.

“I benefitted from talking through situations and problems and getting ideas on how to solve them from other people. It has been fantastic; the leaders went into detail each week and talked in words we could understand. Great programme”.

“It has given me a wonderful outlook and confidence to continue my self-management with vigour”.

“I loved that things delivered could be done in your own house. I could be in control of my life and my illness. The programme is uncomplicated, easily done and understood. I found it a very encouraging and uplifting experience and feel lighter in myself as if a weight has been lifted. I have implemented the various tools into my life and already notice a great improvement in my quality of life. Also those who delivered the course understand the problems of long term conditions which is not always understood. They kept the atmosphere light, supportive and encouraging without minimising the difficulties. It was a very positive experience”.

Evidence of effectiveness

Arthritis Care recently delivered 18 ‘Challenging Your Condition’ courses on behalf of the **Southern Health and Social Care Trust**. Of the 200 participants that completed the course **90% reported an improvement level in their overall quality of life** a 75% improvement in confidence, and a 90% improvement in their understanding of their condition.

Arthritis Care

Delivering self-management programmes that change lives



ARTHRITIS CARE

*Empowering
people with arthritis.*

Arthritis Care Northern Ireland has been successfully delivering peer-led self-management training programmes for over 15 years. Our self-management programmes have been proven to be value for money by reducing critical episodes, potentially avoidable hospital admissions and GP attendances. Research shows that, regardless of age, people are likely to be less depressed, less anxious about their health and more independent as a result of attending a course.

Delivery method

All our programmes are delivered by trained volunteers who are themselves living with long term chronic conditions. Participants have told us they find the support offered by others in the same position affirmative and confidence-building. Participants welcome the informal interactive delivery style and appreciate the opportunity to meet with peers who face the same challenges and issues that they do. The peer support element afforded by the programme is an essential part of its success. The courses use short talks, discussion, freethinking, problem-solving, practice and demonstrations to encourage participation.

We have a successful model for marketing and promoting our self-management programmes to ensure participation across a wide range of communities, alternatively we can work in partnership with Health Professionals, taking referrals.

Quality assurance

Arthritis Care NI's expertise as a provider of long-term chronic condition management courses is extensive and is fully quality assured through Stepping Stones.

The model used for our 'Challenging Your Condition' and 'Challenging Arthritis' self-management programmes was developed by Stanford University Patient Education Research Centre as a collaborative research project between Stanford and Northern California Kaiser Permanente Medical Care Programme. The programme was introduced into the UK in 1994 and Arthritis Care has been licensed to deliver the programme from the early stages.

Arthritis Care NI regularly conducts six month and twelve month sustainability evaluations of all Programmes to ensure that they continue to meet participant's needs. Latest results show that 93% of participants continue to use the self management skills they learned and 90% report an improvement level in their quality of life.

Added Value / sustainability

Working with a voluntary organisation such as Arthritis Care also brings an extra dimension to self-management, as well as our experience in delivering courses in Northern Ireland, we can also provide a full back-up service of branch support, a free confidential helpline for information and advice and long-term volunteering opportunities. Many people that have participated in one of our self-management programmes have become Training Volunteers working for Arthritis Care delivering self-management programmes across Northern Ireland.

Policy context

DHSSPS: Transforming Your Care: A Review of Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland

"Evidence suggests that with the correct support, individuals suffering from a long term condition can have an important role in the management of their condition. Self management enables individuals to take control of their own care plan, acquiring the skills required to manage them through the education they have received..... better planning of self-care management will need to be introduced and replicated across the region".

Programme for Government 2011-2015 'Building a better future' lists self-management as a key commitment

"Health and Social Care Board / Public Health Agency should work with key stakeholders to develop and secure a range of quality assured education, information and support programme to help people manage their long term conditions effectively".

The DHSSPS Long Term Conditions Policy Framework supports self-management delivery by the voluntary sector "Many people who are living with long term conditions find the support offered by others in the same position affirmative and confidence-building. Many voluntary and community organisations provide very effective user-led self management programmes and initiatives and these should be utilised more extensively. Healthcare professionals should be equipped to signpost individuals to non-health service sources of self management training and support".

What commissioners say:

"The Southern Health and Social Care Trust has commissioned Arthritis Care as the lead provider of self management programmes for people living with long term conditions. Their professional approach and commitment to reaching out to those most in need has positively improved patients's ability to manage their own condition. Working in partnership with Arthritis Care has been a very positive experience".