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Musculoskeletal conditions in underserved communities

Submission date 10/11/2025	**Recruitment status** Not yet recruiting	☒ Prospectively registered ☒ Protocol
Registration date 29/12/2025	**Overall study status** Ongoing	☐ Statistical analysis plan ☐ Results
Last Edited 28/04/2026	**Condition category** Musculoskeletal Diseases	☐ Individual participant data ☒ Record updated in last year

Plain English summary of protocol

Background and study aims
The number of people who have pain, from conditions like arthritis and back pain, and experience its effect on daily activities, is higher in communities that can be considered to be underserved. These are communities that often experience more poverty and are more likely to include people from a range of ethnic backgrounds and cultures. Whilst these communities have the greatest need and impact on healthcare use, less is known about them because they have not participated or been included in previous research studies. This means that healthcare is being planned for them without good information about these communities. This project will collect information in underserved communities that will be used to understand why higher levels of pain and its impact on daily lives occur and how to work with people to reduce this.

Who can participate?
People living in underserved communities aged 18 years and over.

What does the study involve?
Participants will be asked to complete a questionnaire, and whether the information they provide can be linked with their health information. A small number of people from the communities will also be invited for more detailed information during interviews. The research team plans to work with people from underserved communities before the study, to help them ask the right questions and collect the best information. They will then work with people from underserved communities on how they can use the information to develop ways to reduce the number of people who experience pain and its impact in this community with the greatest need. The research team will also speak to government organisations and other people interested in improving health for people with musculoskeletal conditions (e.g. Versus Arthritis) to highlight their findings.

What are the possible benefits and risks of participating?
The information obtained from this study may help to provide new research evidence to inform efforts to reduce variation in musculoskeletal health at a population level. There may not be any immediate benefits for patients, although some people find it rewarding to take part in health research.
Participation in this study may help to:

- Improve NHS services that are provided for people with common musculoskeletal problems, such as back pain or osteoarthritis
- Understand the local need for treatment and which groups of people are most underserved by the NHS at present.

It is considered that there are minimal risks to participants associated with this study. One burden is the time it will take the participant to complete the survey. Participants are advised in the participant information leaflet of the time it will take to complete the survey. Participants who provide their personal details will also be assured in the leaflet that the information they provide will only be saved if they consent to take part in the study; otherwise, it will be deleted. Participants will also be advised about who will have access to the information they provide and how it will be used.

Where is the study run from?
Keele University, UK.

When is the study starting and how long is it expected to run for?
April 2026 to September 2028

Who is funding the study?
1. Arthritis UK (formerly Versus Arthritis).
2. The Nuffield Foundation, UK.

Who is the main contact?
Professor Ross Wilkie (CI), r.wilkie@keele.ac.uk
Clare Thompson (Trial Manager), c.thompson1@keele.ac.uk

Contact information

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Public, Scientific, Principal investigator

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Additional identifiers

Integrated Research Application System (IRAS)
353549

Funder reference number
OBF/FR-000025814

Study information

Scientific Title
Musculoskeletal conditions in underserved populations

Acronym
MSK UP

Study objectives
Aim 1: To obtain person-centered data on musculoskeletal health, care and social determinants of health (SDOH) from underserved communities

Aim 2: To identify themes and inform a conceptual framework to understand intersectional social influences on musculoskeletal health and co-produce interventions to develop better treatment and prevention strategies to improve musculoskeletal health in underserved populations.

Aim 3: To create multi-level datasets through extensive linkage to primary and secondary care electronic medical records and aggregate-level data on SDOH.

Aim 4: Contribute to policy development and disseminate findings through working with local and national stakeholders

Ethics approval required
Ethics approval required

Ethics approval(s)
approved 15/04/2026, South Yorkshire REC (2 Redman Place, Stratford, London, E20 1JQ, United Kingdom; no telephone number provided; southyorks.rec@hra.nhs.uk), ref: 26/YH/0063

Study design

Mixed methods - a cross sectional face to face survey, with qualitative interviews including co-design and policy development

Primary study design
Observational

Study type(s)
Other

Health condition(s) or problem(s) studied
Musculoskeletal

Interventions
Cross-sectional face-to-face survey and qualitative interviews.

Participants will be approached at their homes and invited to complete a face-to-face survey on their doorstep. The survey will take no more than 20 minutes and will be administered by trained interviewers using a handheld tablet. Interviewers will first confirm eligibility, targeting adults aged 18 years and over. Participants will be asked to provide informed consent for their survey responses to be linked to their medical records. This linkage will enable a follow-up review of their medical records, which will occur between one and two years after the initial survey completion.

Intervention Type
Other

Primary outcome(s)
1. High impact chronic pain measured using two single items that capture how often people have had pain in the previous 3 months (to identify chronicity) and how often did pain limits life or work activities (to capture impact) at baseline (survey administration)

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Key secondary outcome(s))
1. Chronic pain measured using one single item that captures how often people have had pain in the previous 3 months at baseline (survey administration)

Completion date
30/09/2028

Eligibility

Key inclusion criteria
Current inclusion criteria as of 30/01/2026:
People aged 18 years and over and able to provide informed consent

Previous inclusion criteria:
People aged 35 years and over and able to provide informed consent

Participant type(s)

Population

Healthy volunteers allowed
No

Age group
Mixed

Lower age limit
18 years

Upper age limit
99 years

Sex
All

Total final enrolment
0

Key exclusion criteria
1. Has declined to be contacted about research studies recorded in their electronic health record
2. Patients receiving palliative care, patients residing in a nursing home, patients with severe mental illness and patients who are recently bereaved.

Date of first enrolment
01/06/2026

Date of final enrolment
01/10/2026

Locations

Countries of recruitment
United Kingdom

England

Study participating centre
University of Keele
Keele
Newcastle Under Lyme
England
ST5 5BG

Sponsor information

Organisation
Keele University

ROR
https://ror.org/00340yn33

Funder(s)

Funder type
Not defined

Funder Name
Nuffield Foundation

Alternative Name(s)
NuffieldFound

Funding Body Type
Private sector organisation

Funding Body Subtype
Trusts, charities, foundations (both public and private)

Location
United Kingdom

Funder Name
Versus Arthritis

Alternative Name(s)
Arthritis UK

Funding Body Type
Private sector organisation

Funding Body Subtype
Other non-profit organizations

Location
United Kingdom

Results and Publications

Individual participant data (IPD) sharing plan

IPD sharing plan summary

Data sharing statement to be made available at a later date

Study outputs

Output type	Details	Date created	Date added	Peer reviewed?	Patient-facing?
Protocol file	version 1.0	17/12/2025	28/04/2026	No	No
Study website		11/11/2025	11/11/2025	No	Yes