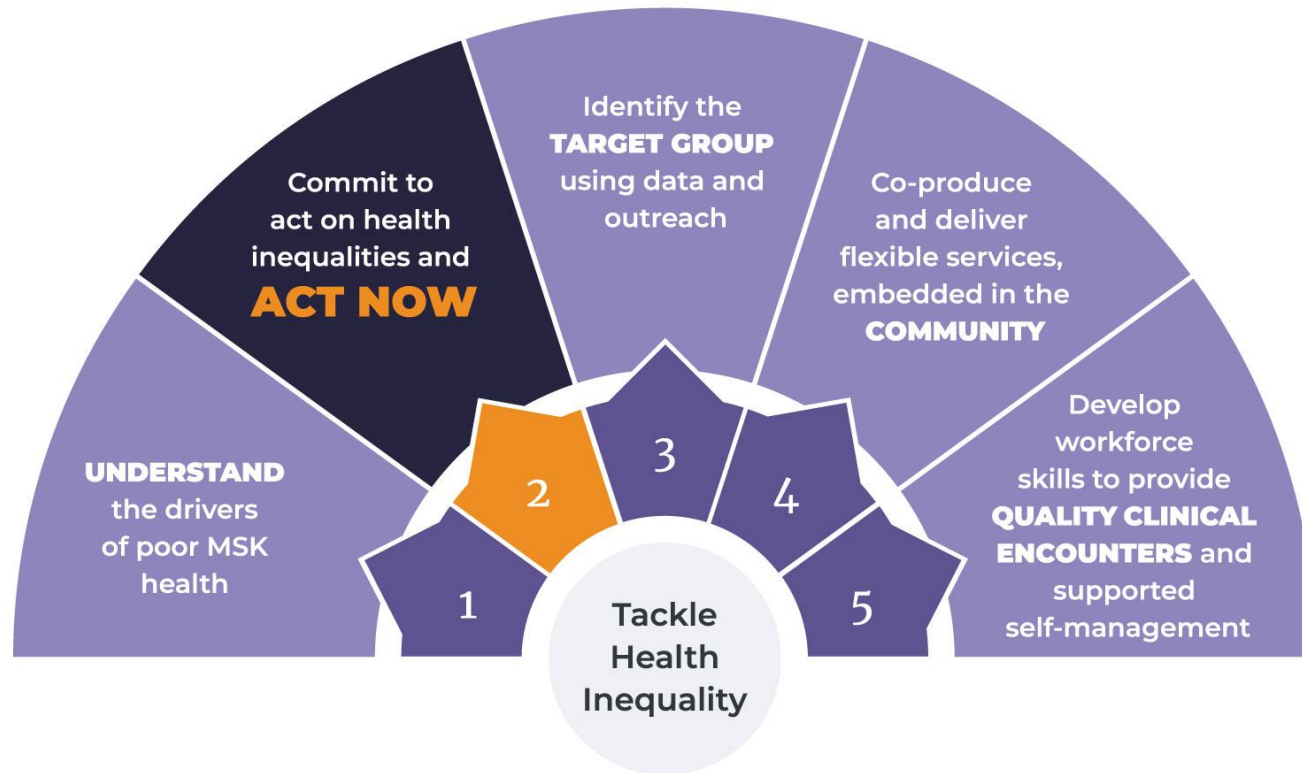


# Musculoskeletal Health inequalities and Employment: ARMA Inquiry



# Thanks to our supporters

- Financial support was provided for this project through sponsorship from Grunenthal UK Ltd and charitable grants from Pfizer Limited, Novartis Pharmaceuticals UK and Janssen.

# Arthritis and Musculoskeletal Alliance

- An alliance of patient, research and health profession organisations, working together, influencing health policy and care for better musculoskeletal health.

# What are MSK conditions?

- Inflammatory conditions: e.g. rheumatoid arthritis, axial spondyloarthritis, gout, juvenile idiopathic arthritis.
- Conditions of musculoskeletal pain: e.g. osteoarthritis, back pain, fibromyalgia, connective tissue disorders.
- Osteoporosis

# MSK in the workplace

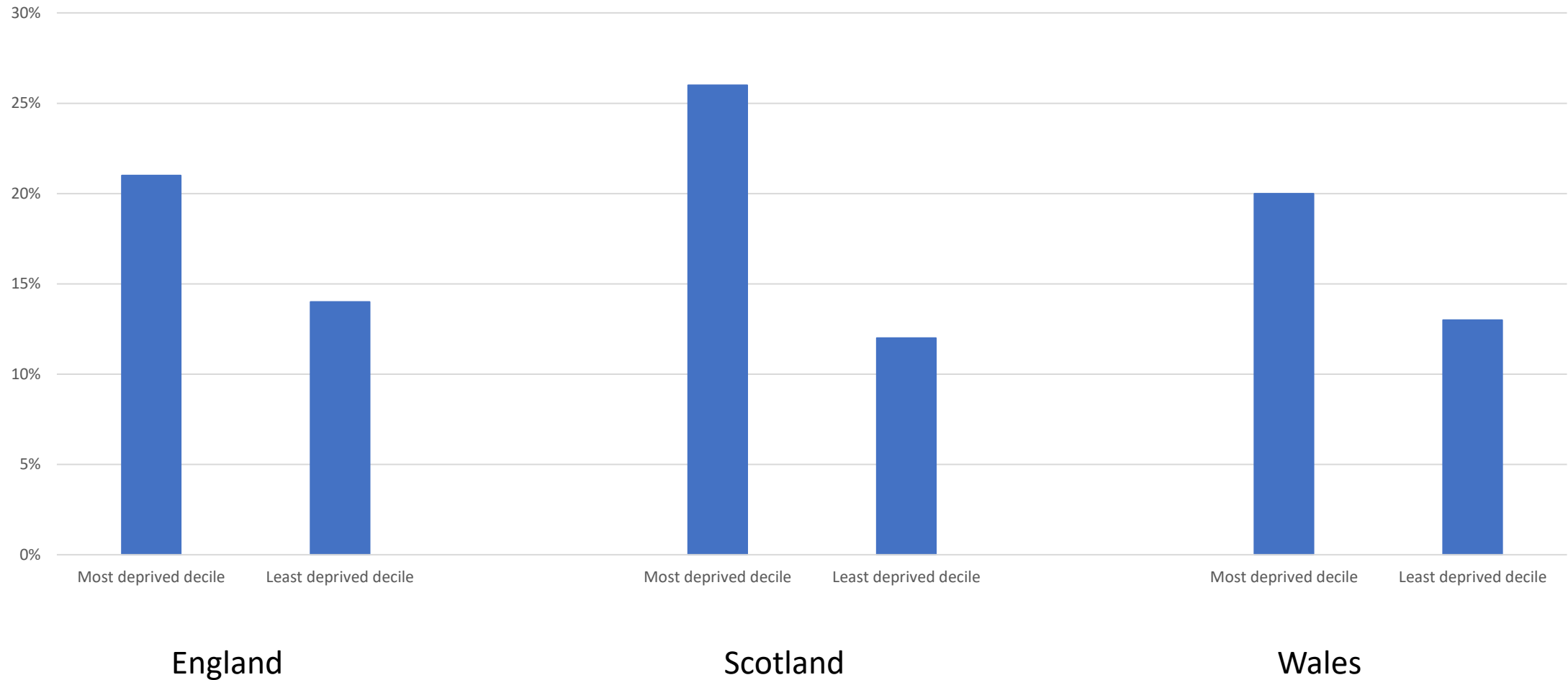
- Temporary – e.g. back pain
- Longer term progressive – rheumatoid arthritis, axial Spondyloarthritis
- Entering the workforce with a long term MSK condition – Juvenile idiopathic arthritis
- MSK alongside other conditions – especially mental health

# What are health inequalities?

- Systematic and avoidable differences in health between different social groups.
- Women, older people, people from some ethnic backgrounds and those living in the poorest neighbourhoods have higher rates of MSK conditions.
- Health equity means prioritising care and treatment based on need.
- Some will need more support, or a different kind of support, for the same condition.

# Inequalities and deprivation

% reporting long term MSK condition



# The Inquiry

- 1 year of evidence gathering. Report will be published next week.
- Set out the evidence for inequalities in MSK health related to deprivation and explore the possible underlying reasons.
- Propose actions which can be taken to address these, both in design and delivery of MSK services, and actions to address wider determinants of health and prevention.
- Raise the profile of the issues and possible solutions.



# Drivers of Poor MSK Health

- Only 20% of our health is driven by healthcare.
- Poverty
- Poor or lack of employment
- Education
- Modifiable risk factors
  - Physical activity (pre pandemic 58.5% active in deprived areas compared with 67.6% least deprived)
  - Healthy weight/diet (most/least deprived areas: 30%/21% of men and 40%/19% of women living with obesity).
  - An environment and food culture that deters physical activity and healthy diet

# The impact of MSK

- One of the two largest causes of economic inactivity
- Ageing workforce – MSK increases with age
- The challenge of multi-morbidity – also increases with age and higher in areas of deprivation
- Good work is good for MSK health

# What is good work?

SW Region NHSE:

Jobs need to be sustainable and offer a minimum level of quality which should include:

- A decent living wage
- Opportunities for in work development
- Flexibility to enable people to balance work and family life
- Protection from adverse working conditions that damage health

# Government initiatives – Spring Budget 2023

- Employment advisers in MSK services
- Digital options for MSK and mental health
- Physical activity MSK Hubs

# The role of employers – getting started

- Recognise that MSK health is important to your workplace and employees
- Pro-actively consider workplace MSK risks as part of your Health and Safety risk assessment approach
- Empowered staff around health and safety awareness and their rights and responsibilities to address risks
- Ask staff about MSK problems and solutions
- Measure the extent and nature of any MSK problems

# The role of the employer – managing MSK conditions

- Encourage and support open conversations to enable early reporting and solution-finding that enable employees to stay in work
- Encourage and support self-management
- Access to occupational health services
- Be aware of resources you can use to support employees to stay in work (e.g. Access to Work scheme)
- Signpost support for MSK problems to all your employees
- Review individual needs and make reasonable adjustments and adaptations to their work
- Support employees physical and mental health

# The difference you can make

- Falling out of work has major negative impacts on individuals and their whole families, exacerbating inequalities.
- Encouraging a healthy workplace will contribute to reducing MSK health conditions.
- Large employers can have significant influence in their community.



# Key resources

- Musculoskeletal health in the workplace: a toolkit for employers

<https://www.mentalhealthatwork.org.uk/resource/musculoskeletal-health-toolkit-for-employers/>

- The Musculoskeletal (MSK) Health Toolkit for employers and further education institutions: How to support adolescents and young adults to a better future

[https://www.som.org.uk/sites/som.org.uk/files/MSK Health Toolkit for employers and further education institutions.pdf](https://www.som.org.uk/sites/som.org.uk/files/MSK_Health_Toolkit_for_employers_and_further_education_institutions.pdf)



# Thank you for listening

- Sue Brown
- [sbrown@arma.uk.net](mailto:sbrown@arma.uk.net)
- <https://arma.uk.net/>
- Report of our construction roundtable:  
<https://arma.uk.net/construction-roundtable-report-action/>
- Inquiry report:  
<https://arma.uk.net/inquiry>
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