<insert MP name> pledges to become an Arthritis Champion for <insert constituency>

**<MP name>** has pledged to work alongside leading charity Versus Arthritis to represent the thousands of people in **<constituency>** living every day with the pain of arthritis.

Arthritis is the single biggest cause of disability and pain across the country, with over 17 million people living with arthritis and related conditions, such as back pain. Arthritis can impact all areas of people’s lives and their ability to work, socialise, care for a family or even move freely without pain. For many, it steals their independence, which often leads to isolation that can leave them disconnected from the life they want to live.

As well as the personal impact, these conditions amount to the third largest area of NHS spending, with an annual budget of £4.8 billion They are also the cause of one in five working days lost in the UK.

As an Arthritis Champion **<MP name>** has pledged to support people with arthritis by speaking up for them in Parliament. Together with Versus Arthritis, MPs will demand better for people with arthritis and help:

* Make arthritis and related conditions a public health priority
* Ensure people have timely access to health and care services that enable them to improve their musculoskeletal health
* Ensure people with arthritis and related conditions have fair and timely access to services that support them to be in work, including financial support
* Protect the UK’s position as a global leader in science and sustain the benefits of the life-science sector to the economy

Speaking about becoming an arthritis champion, **<MP name>** said:

“*I’m proud to champion Versus Arthritis’ policy calls to tackle the prevention, transformation and cure of arthritis. We need to put the issues affecting people with arthritis at the forefront of Parliament’s agenda.*

*“I’m committed to making a difference. Together we can fight this painful condition that has such a huge impact on all aspects of people’s lives in* **<area>**.”

Dr Liam O’Toole, chief executive officer of Versus Arthritis, said:

*“I’m delighted that* **<MP name>** *has become an Arthritis Champion. It’s imperative that we have the support of as many MPs and Peers as possible to stand up for the rights of people with arthritis.*

*“There needs to be a public health approach focusing on preventing arthritis, transforming services and finding a cure for the 17.8 million people affected by this devastating condition. It’s vital we work together to make life better for everyone affected by arthritis.”*

For further information visit [www.versusarthritis.org](http://www.versusarthritis.org)/campaigns or email campaigns@versusarthritis.org

**END**

For further information or interview requests contact **<insert contact details>**

**NOTES TO THE EDITORS**
 **About Versus Arthritis**

There are over 17 million people living with arthritis, and related conditions such as back pain, in the UK. The impact is huge as the condition slowly intrudes on everyday life – affecting the ability to work, care for a family, to move without pain and to live independently. Yet arthritis is often dismissed as an inevitable part of aging or shrugged off as ‘just a bit of arthritis’. We don’t think that this is okay. Building on the legacies and expertise of both Arthritis Research UK and Arthritis Care, Versus Arthritis is here to change that.

Alongside volunteers, healthcare professionals, decision makers and researchers we do everything we can to push back against arthritis. Together, we’ll continue to develop breakthrough treatments, campaign relentlessly for arthritis to be seen as a priority and support each other whenever we need it. We’re making real progress. But there’s still a long way to go, and we won’t stop until no-one has to tolerate the pain, fatigue and isolation of arthritis. We are Versus Arthritis.

[www.versusarthritis.org](http://www.versusarthritis.org)

[www.twitter.com/VersusArthritis](http://www.twitter.com/VersusArthritis)

[www.facebook.com/VersusArthritis](http://www.facebook.com/VersusArthritis)

[www.instagram.com/VersusArthritis](http://www.instagram.com/VersusArthritis)

 **Additional information**

* Arthritis is a term used to describe inflammation within the joint. As an umbrella term, it covers many different conditions – ranging from osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis to lupus, fibromyalgia and gout.
* 17.8 million people in the UK have a musculoskeletal condition. That’s more than a quarter (28.9%) of the total population.
* Musculoskeletal conditions refer to a broad range of health conditions affecting bones, joints and muscles, pain syndromes and rarer conditions of the immune system.
* In 2016, 30.8 million working days were lost to musculoskeletal conditions – 20% of all sickness absence in the UK.
* Nearly eight in ten (78%) of those living with arthritis feel pain most days.
* Arthritis costs the UK health system £10.2 billion in direct costs to the NHS and wider healthcare systems every year.