National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society

JIA at NRAS
JUVENILE IDIOPATHIC ARTHRITIS

Annual review 2025

2025

The year of the Symptom Checker

Peter Foxton, CEO

Message from the CEO

This year saw the launch of our new three-year strategy, aimed at moving us closer to our vision of 'a future where everyone with Rheumatoid Arthritis and Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis can thrive'. The strategy reflects the key themes of the extensive engagement work done with our community in 2024 and focuses on reaching many more of the over half a million people living with RA in the UK.

Our strategy has four key goals as follows:

- **Informing and educating** – To greatly increase awareness and understanding of Rheumatoid Arthritis and Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis and the number of people receiving help from our services.
- **Supporting and empowering** – To support more people to safely self-manage their health by improving the relevancy, accessibility, visibility and reach of our services.
- **Campaigning and research** – To support research and campaigning to improve access to high quality care and treatments.
- **Funding and resilience** – To build a strong organisation that raises more money from diverse sources to meet people's needs.

To fulfil these goals this year we have:

- **To raise awareness of symptoms** and help more people achieve an early diagnosis we launched an online Symptom Checker tool as part of an 'Is it RA' campaign. It was used by 2,433 people in the initial campaign and now has steady traffic.
- **We offered information, reassurance and support to people in need**, in 2025 we fielded 1,917 helpline calls, enquiries and social media messages, and distributed over 17,000 publications.
- **We supported** hundreds of people recently diagnosed with Rheumatoid Arthritis. Our team received 677 referrals from the NHS for a Right Start call, supporting people to understand their diagnosis, and help them on the first steps to self-manage their condition.
- To help **improve rheumatology care** in Scotland we undertook a survey which in 2026 will be used to influence decision makers and highlight areas for improvement.
- **We provided online courses** via our e-learning platform and helped an additional 1,500 people safely self-manage their health.
- We continued to deliver **peer to peer support** to thousands of people across the UK through our volunteer led local groups, online meetings, forums, and one to one support.
- Throughout 2025, **we campaigned** on key issues affecting our community. These included changes to the welfare system and the implementation of the NHS 10-year plan.
- We took part in **research studies** to help develop and shape rheumatology care for people in the future.
- We **expanded our educational resources** by developing a suite of new materials on the menopause and RA and producing three modules on cardiovascular health for our SMILE-RA online learning area.

Of course, our work requires many resources. Our most important resource, our people, worked tirelessly to deliver support throughout the year. Among these are over 200 volunteers who take on a variety of roles, including running local groups, online meetings, providing peer to peer support and acting as a patient voice in research studies. We are extremely grateful to all of them for lending us their time and expertise.

We have also managed to maintain a strong financial position this year despite increased pressures on our finances from national insurance increases and higher than expected inflation. We have benefitted hugely from the support of grant giving Trusts and Foundations, like the Garfield Weston Foundation, and the National Lottery Community Fund who are funding us to reach more people.

NRAS receives no direct funding for its services from the NHS or any other statutory body therefore we are grateful to the many people who undertake challenges, put on events, donate directly, become members or leave us a gift in their Will. Without them we would not be able to carry out our work.

Two important aspects of our strategy that we are looking forward to developing in 2026 are our work with young people and families, and how we become a more equitable and inclusive organisation. These will be big pieces of work that will span across the three years of the strategic plan, yet we know they are important to our community.

I hope you enjoy reading this review – I look forward to reporting back on the impact of our work next year.

Message from the Chair of Trustees


Simon Collins, Chair

I am pleased to welcome you to the 2025 Annual Review, which reflects a further year of commitment, service and impact.

NRAS exists to inform and support people living with Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) and Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis (JIA), and throughout the year the organisation has continued to deliver this purpose through the professionalism, dedication and generosity of its staff and volunteers. Their work has ensured that beneficiaries accessing our services feel supported, valued and safe. On behalf of the Board of Trustees, I would like to thank all those who have contributed their time, skills and expertise during the year; their ongoing commitment remains central to the charity's ability to achieve its objectives and deliver public benefit.

Significantly, 2025 saw the launch of our next three-year strategy. This new strategy began life with a substantial programme of stakeholder engagement in which we canvassed the views of staff, volunteers, healthcare professionals, commissioners and most importantly people living with RA and JIA. The resulting strategy has created clear organisational goals based around four key themes; informing and educating, supporting and empowering, campaigning and research, and funding and resilience. Through delivering this strategy we hope to dramatically increase the number of people we reach both directly, through engagement with our services, or indirectly through our influencing work and as we provide an important patient voice in research. The strategic goals are embedded in our business plans going forward and we are already taking steps to realise our ambitions by introducing a new healthcare engagement manager role and updating our young people and families strategy.

For people living with RA and JIA, and their loved ones, the healthcare environment remains challenging. Rheumatology departments are still wrestling with workforce shortages leading to services becoming increasingly stretched. For those awaiting diagnosis delays are still common and more needs to be done to raise awareness of symptoms both with the public and with primary care providers. Our survey of services in Wales, published in April 2025 highlighted some of these problems with over half of those recently diagnosed having to see a GP at least three times prior to diagnosis. The survey also highlighted the lack of signposting to services provided by patient organisations, like NRAS. With the NHS 10-year plan and its focus on prevention and community-based care it has never been more important that people have access to high quality evidence led support and education. NRAS, with its Helpline, Right Start programme and online educational tools is well placed to provide this.

Financially this has been another stable year for the organisation. We are pleased to see that our focus and investment in fundraising have led to a significant increase in income over 2025, despite a fall in legacy receipts and money from pharmaceutical companies compared to the previous year. As always we are extremely grateful to all those who support us financially. Without this support we would not be able to continue our vital work. Costs also increased, driven partially by the effects of increase in National Insurance contributions as well as other inflationary pressures. Consequently, the organisation closed the year with a modest net gain of £34.1k favourable compared to the level originally budgeted, leaving NRAS well placed to deliver its strategic objectives in the coming years.

Finally, I would like to thank two individuals who have recently stepped down from their roles and made significant contributions to NRAS. Helen Ball, Finance Director for seven years, strengthened our finance systems, governance and IT infrastructure, leaving NRAS in a strong financial position. I would also like to thank Professor Peter Taylor, who served voluntarily as Chief Medical Advisor for over ten years, and played a key role in campaigns that significantly improved outcomes for people living with these conditions.

The new 'Is it RA?' Symptom Checker

576,069
Total Reach on Socials

63,620
Total Engagement

224,140
Video Views

In September 2025, to coincide with Rheumatoid Arthritis Week, NRAS launched the new Is it RA Symptom Checker, a digital tool designed to support earlier recognition of rheumatoid arthritis.

Developed with guidance from leading rheumatology experts, the checker uses five carefully constructed questions to help individuals reflect on symptoms that may indicate the early stages of RA. Once completed, users receive tailored guidance outlining recommended next steps, empowering them to understand what action they might consider taking.

Early diagnosis remains critical. The sooner rheumatoid arthritis is identified, the sooner people can access the treatment and support needed to help prevent long-term joint and organ damage.

To maximise reach, NRAS delivered a wide-ranging promotional campaign. The symptom checker featured across all newsletters, was highlighted through press activity and formed the centrepiece of a nationwide poster campaign in motorway service stations. Each poster included a simple QR code, enabling people to access the tool quickly and easily.

NRAS created 4 individual video ads all created in-house and funded by NRAS. These targeted different demographics and were all shot in an engaging style to suit modern day social media platforms. These all touched on different aspects of RA, such as aching joints and fatigue.

The Symptom Checker is now a permanent feature on the NRAS website – take a look at **isitra.co.uk**

NRAS Services in 2025

Right Start – Flagship Service

The Right Start service is a healthcare professional referral service where our friendly, highly trained team provide tailored support, signposting and information about RA via a telephone appointment. People who use the service receive personalised, evidence-based information and can benefit from peer support at individual and community levels.

During 2025 we received 677 referrals from the NHS, local councils and social prescribers etc. This means we have seen a 6% increase in referrals since 2024 after seeing a slight downturn in referrals from summer to autumn 2025. As this unique service is currently accessed by a healthcare or professional referral, the well-known workforce pressures in the NHS appear to have impacted the number of referrals during the middle of the year but referrals picked up later in the year. To reach as many people as we can with our Right Start service, we have established a dedicated Healthcare Engagement function and recruited a new Healthcare Engagement Manager in October 2025. We were able to do this with support from The National Lottery Community Fund as they have funded 50% of the salary for this new role.

We have been working hard to continuously improve our Right Start booking processes meaning the number of people we engaged with went up to 74% from 63% the previous year. Lost appointments cost money and also prevent someone else from accessing essential services impacting on their health and so we actively monitor the "did not attend" (DNA) rate which was 6.7% which is vastly lower than the NHS DNA rate. We never mind if people need to cancel or rearrange but by letting us know we can use the appointment for someone else.

98% of people rating satisfaction with the service gave it a 5 or 6 score out of 6, which is fantastic news.

"Super start to finding out how to self-manage an increasingly difficult condition and lack of medical support within the NHS system"

"Lovely reassuring phone call from someone who has lived with the condition for 20 plus years. Very positive, thanks"

"Very nice talk today and felt at ease talking about my diagnosis and how I got there. So nice to know there is a charity for RA you can turn to if needed"

THE NATIONAL LOTTERY®

Right Start

Patient Referral Service

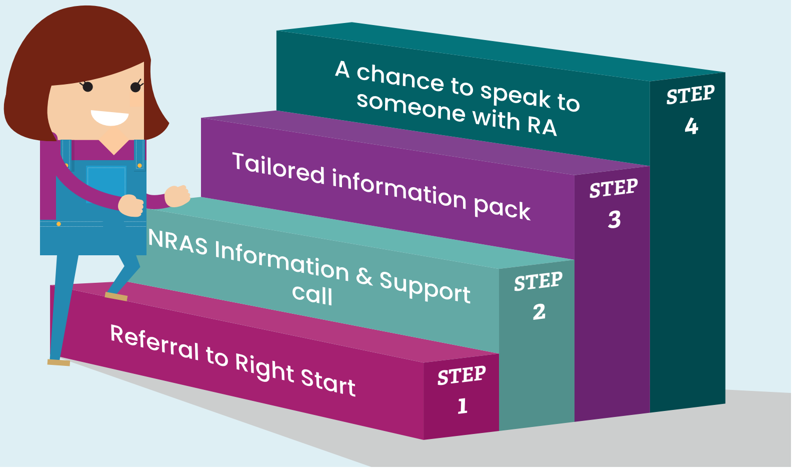
Why should I refer my patients to Right Start?

Right Start supports both those who are newly diagnosed with Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA), and those with more established disease to understand their condition and how it is likely to affect them. It offers practical and emotional support, as well as evidence-based information.

nras.org.uk/rightstart

nras National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society

JIA at NRAS



NRAS Services in 2025

Helpline

Through our Helpline service, our Information & Support team managed **1,917 calls**, answerphone messages, contact forms, web enquiries and social media enquiries from people with RA, their families and loved ones. Helpline calls and enquiries cover a vast array of topics from medicines to pain & flares to benefits and much more.

Topics broadly remained the same other than when the Government announced changes to Personal Independence Payments. We saw an increase in the number of people talking to us about their worries about how a reduction or complete loss of their benefits would dramatically affect them for the worse. The biggest volumes of calls we receive are from people needing emotional support. In those calls our team listen and where applicable signpost to specialist organisations. To provide continued support, we will offer a follow up call at a later date to check in with those people.

Most people who access our Helpline service obtain our contact details, either the telephone number or website contact forms, from visiting our website. In March 2025 Google implemented a major update to its search engine result page resulting in a dramatic negative impact on organisations across the UK, unfortunately including charities such as ours. If people are searching for information or support about RA or JIA, AI pulls together an answer but often directs searchers to organisations that are based in the US. We believe this has impacted our calls to the Helpline and so we are working with other organisations such as the Patient Information Forum, to pressure Google to stop blocking UK searchers from accessing UK-based support organisations.

"Very attentive and listened to my concerns. Put my mind at ease on a few things. Very helpful"

Service user Jan 25

"Very easy to get through and speak quickly with one of your representatives. I had concerns about my meds not working (methotrexate) as I was back to square one with regards to aching and stiff limbs and most worryingly fatigue. Kate put me at ease"

Service user June 25

"What a pleasant surprise to receive such a rapid and helpful response from Sarah Watford to my query! So refreshing to receive such excellent support and offers to help further which was much appreciated"

Service user July 25

Advancing Rheumatoid Arthritis & Menopause Support in 2025

In 2025, NRAS continued to lead the way in addressing the often overlooked intersection between menopause and rheumatoid arthritis (RA). Recognising the significant impact that menopause symptoms can have on disease activity, treatment response, and quality of life, our work this year focused on education, collaboration, and the development of practical resources to support both people living with RA and the healthcare professionals who care for them.

Developing trusted menopause resources

One of the cornerstone achievements of the year has been the development of new menopause resources, created in partnership with the British Menopause Society (BMS). Part-funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, this resource has been developed with clinical rigour and lived experience at its heart. Launching in early 2026, this publication provides evidence-based information tailored specifically to people living with inflammatory arthritis, addressing a long-standing gap in accessible, condition-specific guidance.

Supporting women with RA experiencing the menopause

During the focus group we held with patients to help with the content creation for the resource, many women expressed that they had never spoken to anyone about having RA and experiencing the menopause, let alone with their rheumatology team. It became obvious throughout the evening that some of the attendees were valuing the time to express their experiences and were interested in hearing the experiences of others. We asked them during the focus group whether they would value the chance to meet up and provide peer-to-peer support for each other. The response was a resounding yes! Our peer support team then set up a new online JoinTogether Peer Support group for RA & Menopause. As all groups are run by volunteers, we reached out to a trusted volunteer who has a background in psychotherapy to see if she would be interested in running it. We started promoting the group in the last quarter of 2025, holding the first session in January 2026.

Educating and empowering people with RA

Education for our service users remained a priority throughout the year. As part of this, an NRAS Live hosted a specialist session on Menopause and RA with Dr Vikram Taliulaker, a consultant in reproductive medicine at University College London Hospitals (UCLH). Dr Taliulaker, who also presented at the EULAR Congress in June, has been instrumental in educating rheumatology professionals about the impact of menopause on inflammatory disease. Bringing this expertise directly to people living with RA enabled us to continue vital conversations about symptoms, treatment choices, and self-advocacy during menopause, helping individuals feel informed and supported at a complex stage of life.

Influencing clinical practice through HCP Education

Alongside service user education, NRAS has continued to influence clinical practice by supporting education for healthcare professionals. Dr Elena Nikiphorou, consultant rheumatologist, Advisory Board member, kindly agreed to speak at the British Menopause Society Women's Health Symposium on 27 November 2025. Her presentation on menopause and RA from a rheumatology perspective highlighted the unique challenges faced by this patient group. Importantly, Dr. Nikiphorou used her platform to promote NRAS' menopause resources, education, and support services, helping to ensure that clinicians across specialties are aware of, and can signpost to, our work. We are extremely grateful for Elena's ongoing commitment and contribution to this project.

Building a Coalition to drive change

To sustain momentum and promote long-term improvements, NRAS convened the first meeting of a Coalition of Menopause Professionals at the end of September 2025. The coalition brings together an exceptional mix of expertise, including patients, rheumatologists, a nurse, GP, pharmacist, epidemiologist, primary care menopause specialists, representatives from NRAS, and the British Menopause Society.

The group agreed that its purpose is twofold: to maintain the progress generated by NRAS' menopause and RA work, and to identify new ways to improve health outcomes and service delivery for people living with both conditions. There is widespread agreement across clinical and research communities that menopause and inflammatory arthritis remain under-researched. In response, the coalition committed to actively seeking new research opportunities.

The coalition plans to meet quarterly, with formal terms of reference currently in development to clearly define its aims and governance. This collaborative approach represents an important step towards strengthening the evidence base and ensuring that future care pathways better reflect the needs of women with RA.

Looking ahead

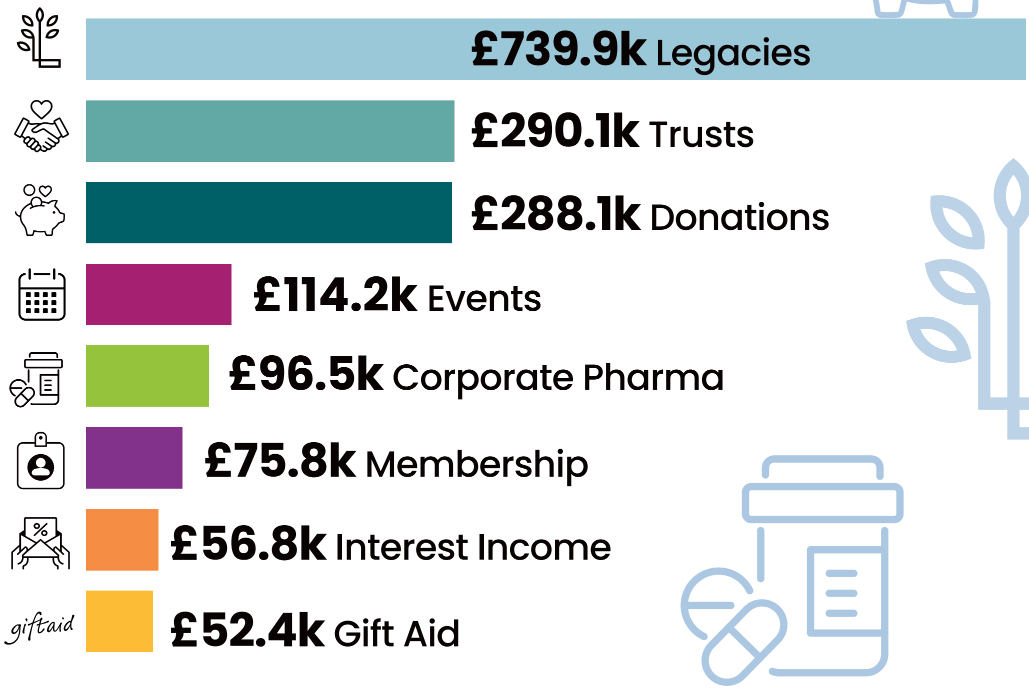
Together, these initiatives mark significant progress in an area of healthcare that has long lacked visibility. By combining trusted partnerships, high-quality education, and cross-disciplinary collaboration, NRAS is helping to shape a more informed, inclusive, and effective approach to menopause and rheumatoid arthritis now and for the future.

Bringing expertise directly to people living with RA enabled us to continue vital conversations about symptoms, treatment choices, and self-advocacy during menopause, helping individuals feel informed and supported at a complex stage of life.

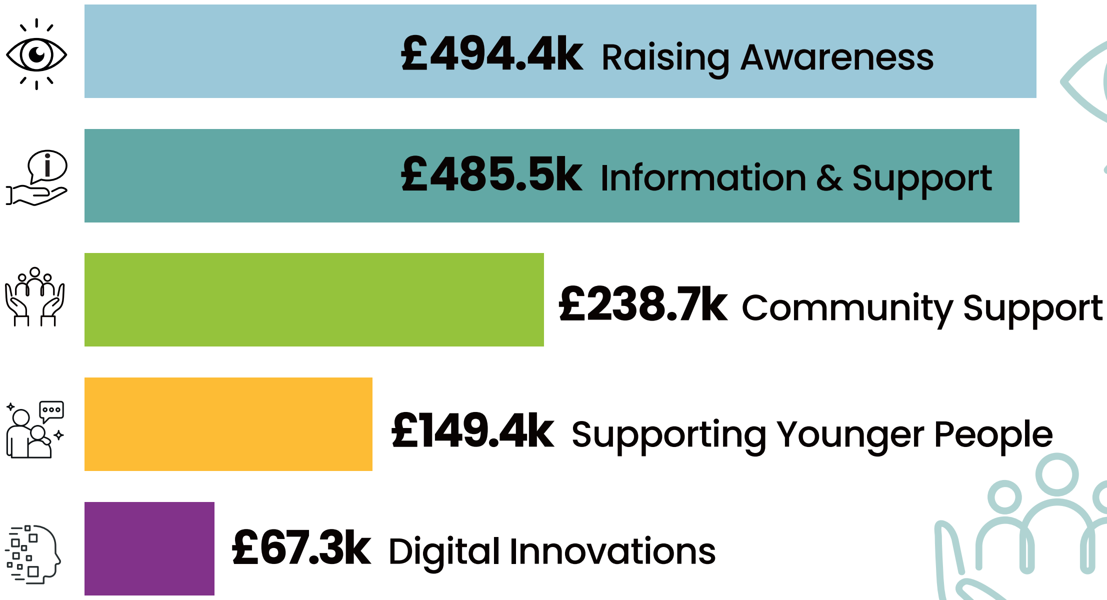
NRAS Funding/Expenditure

Where has our money come from in 2025?

Our funding sources



Our charitable costs



For every £1 raised, we spend 84p on delivering our charitable services

Further development of the NRAS SMILE-RA e-learning platform

A focus on Heart Health

Heart disease, particularly ischemic heart disease, is a common cause of death in people with rheumatoid arthritis (RA), accounting for up to 50% of premature deaths.

The main reason for an increased risk of heart disease in RA is due to chronic inflammation which accelerates atherosclerosis, the furring up of the arteries, a bit like the build-up of limescale in the pipes of your washing machine, increasing heart attack (and stroke) risks significantly.

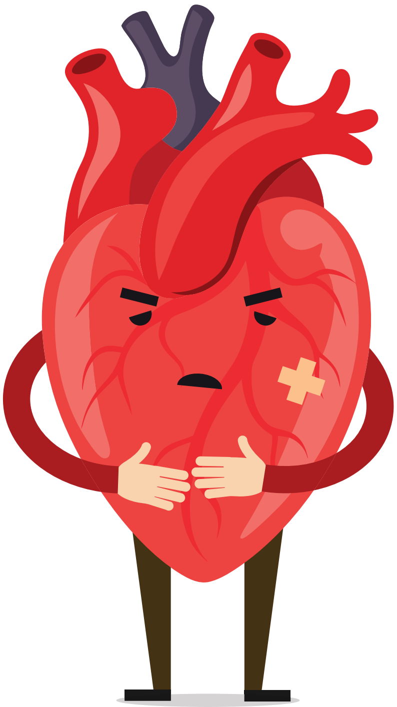
However, there is much that people with RA can do to mitigate and reduce their risks of heart disease by addressing the risk factors that are within their control to change, by adapting lifestyle and by making sure certain risks are monitored appropriately.

Over the years, I have spoken to many people who are unaware of the fact that RA puts them at greater risk of heart disease. No-one has ever talked to them about this, they say. That is why, in 2025, we prioritised the development of three modules on the topic of heart health for our e-learning programme, SMILE-RA. We decided it would be more appropriate to launch the new modules in early 2026 rather than close to the end of the year, when people were more likely to be consumed with end-of-year deadlines and the minor distraction of Christmas!

The key aim with these new modules was to provide a new and unique learning experience to help people better understand the association between RA and heart disease. Additionally, they show how to manage specific risk factors and how diet and nutrition, as well as exercise, play an important role in helping people to live a heart-healthier lifestyle.

Another reason we wanted to produce these modules is that, for the last few years, patient initiated follow-up (PIFU) pathways have been introduced across all health areas, including rheumatology. We explain all about PIFU in our SMILE module, ‘How to have the best consultation’.

Due to PIFU and to the long waiting lists in many areas, what we are finding is that the annual or periodic reviews – where risk of developing other conditions such as heart disease, osteoporosis, eye or mental health problems are checked – are being carried out less and less. GPs are well placed to do these kinds of health reviews but are not incentivised (paid) to through the Quality and Outcomes Framework (QOF), and so it’s not universally happening and rheumatology teams are often reluctant to take this on, so, it really is important that people understand how to look after their heart and general health as well as possible.



To produce the three new modules, we partnered with: Professor George Kitas, consultant rheumatologist and world expert on RA and heart disease: Dr. Elena Nikiphorou, a Consultant Rheumatologist with a keen interest and expertise in diet and nutrition in RA; and Emma-Jayne Adams, an NRAS life member and volunteer who has RA and is a registered Nutritional Therapist.

- Module 1 focuses on the connection between RA and heart disease, the different types of heart disease and the risk factors.
- Module 2 goes into more detail on the individual risk factors, such as blood pressure, cholesterol, blood sugar levels, diet and others, and how we should monitor and measure such risks.
- Module 3 is all about how diet and nutrition affect inflammation and how you can make small changes which all help to improve your heart health. We touch on exercise in module 3, but as we already have two modules on RA and exercise as well as five 15-minute videos on different types of exercise, we felt it wasn’t necessary to go into detail here.

Behind the scenes of creating the new e-learning modules

These new modules as well as all the other modules within SMILE, are free to access by anyone, including health professionals, friends and family of people with RA and industry colleagues as well. Health professionals tell us that these resources can act as training tools for nurses and allied health professionals new to rheumatology and for industry colleagues who move into rheumatology for the first time.

In module 2, about the risk factors, Professor Kitas is asked why each risk factor affects our health, how that risk is caused and how to measure and monitor it. For example, take blood pressure (BP): many people don't know what their blood pressure is and the problem is that you may not be experiencing any symptoms at all, which puts your health at increased risk. Prof Kitas explains that a study done in 2007 showed that two-thirds of people with RA attending hospital had high BP and, even when treated, two-thirds did not have sufficient treatment to control their BP. This study was repeated in 2021 with more than 15,000 people across 40 countries, including the UK, and nothing had changed; the situation was just as bad. Prof Kitas says that people attending hospital for long-term care should demand that their doctors/nurses take their BP.

> There's a lot to learn but also a lot that people with RA can do to improve longer term health outcomes

So, we are urging our beneficiaries to do these three modules. There's a lot to learn but also a lot that people with RA can do to improve longer term health outcomes. No one would expect everyone to immediately do everything that is recommended, but making small changes, taking small steps over time, will help to improve people's heart health. Also, making sure that people get things like BP and cholesterol levels checked periodically will also prevent problems they may be unaware of from becoming major health issues later.

It's easy to sign-up or log in to SMILE – just go to **www.nras.org.uk/smile**

Further reading

To access the new modules, sign in or register here: **www.nras.org.uk/smile**

NRAS Services in 2025

Information Resources

Publications

We distributed more than 17,000 publications during 2025! Our information resources are well regarded by the healthcare community so lots of our topic-based booklets are ordered by healthcare professionals to hand out to patients. We have seen a large demand for our digital versions also this year, which are usually ordered directly by service users.

We launched two new publications at the end of 2024 ***Stress Matters*** and ***Relationships Matter*** meaning the early part of the year was spent promoting and distributing those titles.

We reviewed and republished one of our core publications, ***New2RA***.

Most of the year was spent, working in collaboration with the patients, British Menopause Society and rheumatology specialists to create a new resource ***Rheumatoid Arthritis & Menopause***. More can be read about our menopause work on page 8. The booklet was due to be published in early 2026 but its creation started in June 2025 when we held a focus group with 9 women from diverse backgrounds to understand their experiences of menopause & RA. With 3 times more women than men having RA and average diagnosis age is between 40-60, lots of women experience worsening existing RA symptoms or indeed, are diagnosed with RA at or after menopause. This area of health has been neglected so we set out to create information so women could educate themselves in preparation for discussing it with their medical teams. The collaboration has been highly successful and is a model we will replicate in further development. The resource was developed with the support of The National Lottery Community fund.

> "I loved the aesthetic! Information was clear, key and very well delivered. Thank you very much. I was looking for scientific sources and didn't expect to find one so easy and engaging to read"
>
> Service user Nov 25

> "I'm a healthcare professional who signposts and refers to your service. You provide an amazing service. The new publications look great and compliment the information we give so well. You really do make our lives easier and know my patients praise the support you offer"
>
> Service user Jan 25

> "Publications are great and you can keep referring back as and when you need to"
>
> Service user June 25

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My Rheumatoid Arthritis Journey with NRAS

Emma-Jayne Adams

Registered Nutritional Therapist and NRAS Member

My experience of Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) began more than 20 years ago, when I was in my early twenties and living in New York City, working in the banking sector.

My diagnosis followed a sudden and frightening episode in which my body seemed to freeze completely. At the time, I had been working long hours in a high-pressure environment, often sacrificing sleep and coping with the challenges of cold winters. In hindsight, my body had been sending warning signs for some time, but like many young people, I chose to ignore them, believing I was resilient and that serious illness was something that happened to others.

After returning to the United Kingdom, I made changes to support my recovery while continuing to build a successful and varied career in banking. My roles remained both challenging and rewarding, but I became more aware of the need to balance ambition with my health. Over the years, I have been supported by several rheumatology teams. While their medical care has been invaluable, I often felt there was limited guidance beyond medication, particularly in relation to diet and lifestyle. This led me to begin exploring research independently.

I started to make gradual changes, adapting my diet to reduce potential trigger foods and placing greater emphasis on lifestyle factors such as sleep and oral health. These were small but important steps in helping me feel more involved in managing my condition.

A significant turning point came after the birth of my second child, when I experienced a severe flare. This was an incredibly difficult time, physically, emotionally and mentally. I felt a loss of control and uncertainty about the future, alongside a growing concern that I might be running out of medical options. Seeking further support, I booked an appointment with a nutritional therapist. That decision proved life changing.

Although I had previously considered myself relatively healthy, I began to understand the importance of vitamins and minerals, particularly in the context of RA, and how food can influence biological systems such as the gut and immune system. While improvements did not happen overnight, this knowledge gave me the confidence to make informed decisions and take a more active role in supporting my health.

This experience ultimately led me to make a significant career change. In 2021, I returned to university to train as a registered Nutritional Therapist, specialising in RA and autoimmune conditions. What began as a personal need has grown into a professional purpose, allowing me to support others navigating similar challenges.

Throughout my journey, the National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society (NRAS) has played a vital role. In the early days following my diagnosis, the organisation provided clear, evidence-based information that helped me understand my condition, treatment options, and potential risks. This enabled me to have more informed and confident discussions with my rheumatology team, giving me a greater sense of control at a time when I felt uncertain.

As my journey progressed, NRAS became more than just a source of information. It became a platform through which I could support others. As a patient advocate, I have had the opportunity to contribute to NRAS member events, including webinars, where I share both my lived experience and professional perspective. These sessions are an important way of connecting with others in the RA community, helping individuals feel informed, supported and less alone.

> Throughout my journey, the National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society (NRAS) has played a vital role.

I have also been proud to contribute an expert perspective as a Nutritional Therapist within the Smile-RA "Love Your Heart" modules. Being able to combine my personal experience with professional training to support the development of accessible, evidence-based resources has been incredibly meaningful. These modules provide practical guidance to people living with RA, empowering them to better understand and manage their condition.

In addition, I have been involved in research initiatives, particularly in raising awareness of the impact of menopause and perimenopause on RA. When I first raised this topic with NRAS, I felt genuinely listened to and supported. I was invited to contribute to the patient group supporting the recent menopause booklet. I have also attended several research working groups over the last few years (many are ongoing), as a patient advocate of NRAS, to help clinicians and researchers to understand how the menopause (including transition) impacts those with musculoskeletal conditions. Women (and men) must know they are not alone and that their experiences are recognised. Through collaboration with colleagues and research teams at Keele University and the University of Manchester, I am hopeful that we are helping to drive greater understanding and change in this important but often overlooked area. I look forward to continuing this work, actively representing NRAS and the patient voice, once funding is secured for focused research projects in this important area.

Attending EULAR Congress in 2024 further reinforced the impact of NRAS. It was inspiring to see the organisation so highly regarded by clinicians, researchers and healthcare professionals worldwide. I heard NRAS learning resources described as "gold standard" patient materials, which reflects both their quality and accessibility. Experiencing this recognition first-hand gave me a deeper appreciation of the team's dedication, professionalism and commitment to improving the lives of people with RA.

NRAS has given me not only knowledge and support, but also a sense of community, confidence and purpose at a time when I needed it most. The organisation, and Ailsa Bosworth, not only supported me as a patient but also enabled me to find my voice and purpose beyond my diagnosis. It has given me the knowledge, confidence and opportunities to contribute meaningfully, whether through advocacy, education or research. Importantly, it ensures that support and information are accessible to everyone, regardless of background or financial means, something I feel strongly about. Knowing that sharing my experience and expertise may help others to feel more informed and less alone is incredibly important to me, too.

Living with RA has required me to adapt, but it has not defined who I am. I have always wanted to live fully, even if that looks a little different from others. Today, I feel better equipped to manage the challenges I face, supported by knowledge, community and a sense of purpose.

I am incredibly proud to be a life member of NRAS, and deeply grateful for the role it continues to play in my journey.

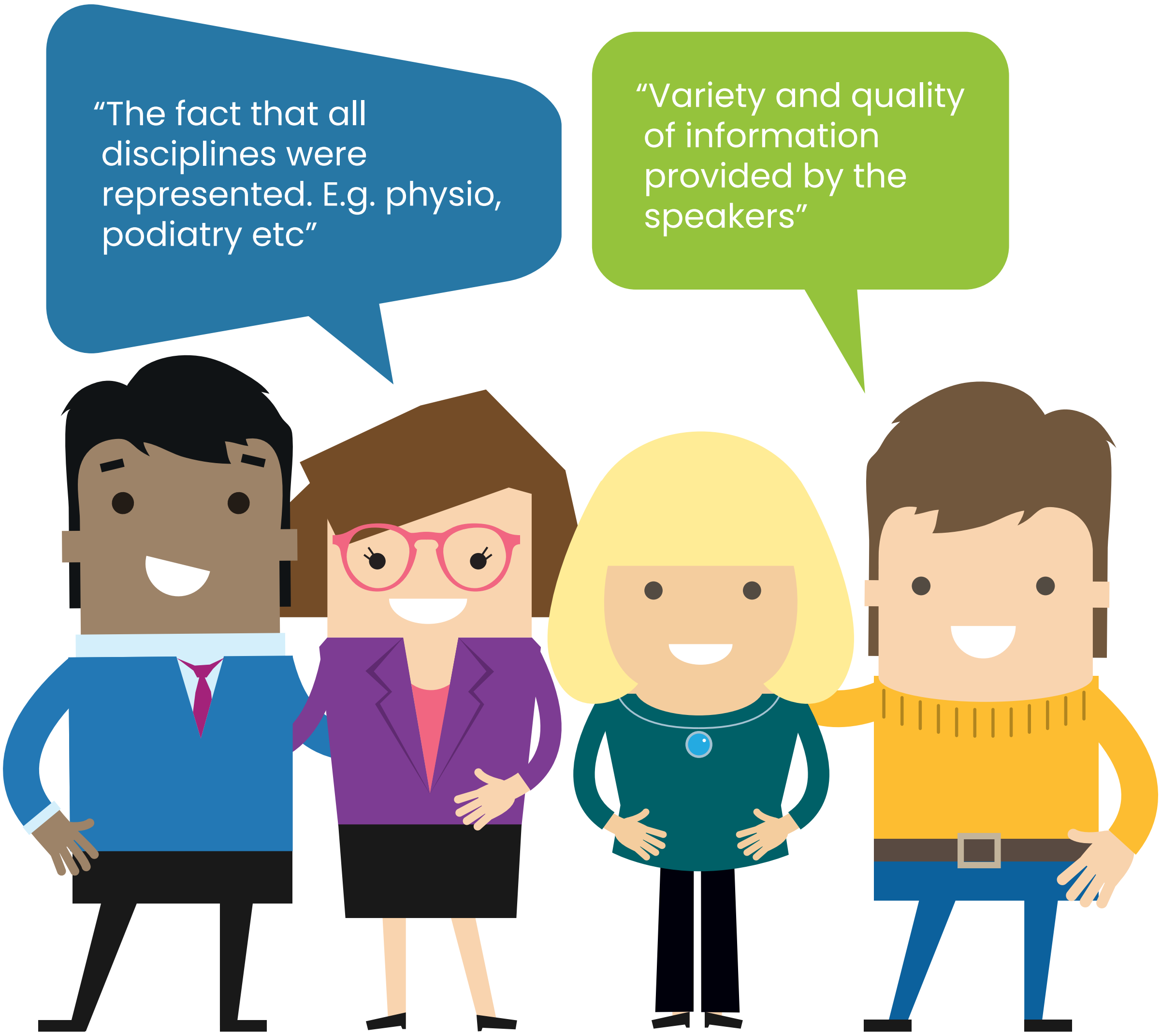
> Living with RA has required me to adapt, but it has not defined who I am.

Mid-Wales Patient Event

Working in collaboration with Prof. Karim Raza, Consultant Rheumatologist at Hywel Dda University Health Board, based in Aberystwyth and Nurse Specialist, Sarah O'Donovan, we developed an in-person Patient Information Event in Aberystwyth, which took place in October 2025.

Donagh Stenson, Innovation & Service Delivery Director, Maddy Roberts, Young People & Families Manager, Sadé Asker, Senior Policy Officer and our brand new Healthcare Engagement Manager, Sarah Parsons, created the event so representatives from the rheumatology multidisciplinary team could have stands in the room so patients could talk to them. Donagh and Prof. Raza gave presentations. More than 80 people registered to attend with more than 60 people attending. It was heart-warming to see people made the effort to come to the information evening as some had come from quite a distance. We surveyed everyone who attended and 100% of people responding told us they were satisfied/very satisfied with the event.

Asking them what they liked about the event:



We are planning to replicate this inspiring event in Scotland during 2026.

Sadé Asker

Senior Policy Officer

Policy and Campaigning 2025

As an organisation representing people living with RA and JIA across the UK, there is a lot of work that goes on behind the scenes across the four nations.

We've highlighted some of the projects we've been involved in this year, noting that this is not everything, but a snapshot of things we have been working on. Some of these projects and campaigns will run for months if not years and span across the four nations and even into Europe.

England – 10 Year Health Plan

The much-anticipated publication of the 10-Year Health Plan in July 2025 set out a vision for the future of the NHS in England. We were pleased to read that people living with long term conditions have been highlighted in this plan and there is a commitment to having access to care plans and education around supported self-management. We have been engaged with NHS England and Department of Health colleagues to look at how these ambitious aims can be achieved and look forward to helping create a road map for the future of care in England for those living with RA and JIA.

Wales – Inflammatory Arthritis Report and beyond

Following a Wales wide survey completed in Autumn 2024, we produced a report analysing the results to gauge people's experiences of receiving care in Wales. The results indicated that many of the experiences of people from our 2016 report were still issues today. We hosted a webinar in April 2025 with Dr Ceril Rhys-Dillon, consultant rheumatologist and clinical lead for the Rheumatology Clinical Implementation Network in Wales. The report has been used more broadly to help inform and develop policy in Wales.

In addition to this, we also responded to a consultation on paediatric rheumatology services in Wales and anticipate further work happening in 2026.

Benefits Bill 2025

In Spring 2025, the UK Government announced that benefits related to disability were likely to have a substantial cut. We were involved in multiple partnerships with other charities calling for the benefit changes, as initially proposed, be scrapped and that serious consideration was given to reforming these benefits. More than 120 MPs signed up to challenge the bill proposed by the government and serious concessions were made. We are continuing to work around the proposed changes to benefits including the Minister of State for the Department of Work and Pensions, Stephen Timms, review into PIP, namely the Timms Review in 2026.

Homecare Medicines

The project on homecare medicines has been ongoing since 2023. The House of Lords completed an inquiry into homecare medicines in 2024 and ongoing work has been had with both the NHS and private homecare medicine companies. NRAS is at the forefront of this because rheumatology as a specialty and those living with RA are the most common users of this service. We currently sit on the National Clinical Homecare Associations Patient Advisory Committee as Chair and an associated seat within the National Homecare Medicines Committee which sits across the NHSs in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Prescription Charges

NRAS has been part of the Prescription Charges Coalition for many years calling for an end to the prescription charge in England or a revision in the list of medical exemptions from paying the prescription charge.

Scotland – Immune Mediated Inflammatory Diseases Survey

Following on from our successful Wales Survey and associated report, we decided to collaborate with 4 other charities, namely Crohn's and Colitis UK, Lupus UK, National Axial Spondyloarthritis Society and the Psoriasis Association, to create a survey across Scotland of the experiences of people living with autoimmune conditions. The survey was live from 1 September 2025-13 October 2025. We received 1261 eligible responses and will be creating a report detailing our findings from the survey in Spring 2026.

Europe – MDR-RA Research

In addition to all the work we have been doing across the UK, NRAS is also involved in a European study named the Multi-Drug Resistant - Rheumatoid Arthritis Research Project. The project brings together leading rheumatology centres, data experts, and patient organisations across 12 countries to better understand why treatments fail and to design more personalised, effective care. We hope that our involvement in this research study will help develop policy for those living with very complex RA in the UK and wider across Europe. We give thanks to Professor Costantino Pitzalis for asking NRAS to be involved as the UK Patient Organisation representative.

NRAS Insights
Real world data, lived experience

NRAS involvement in research 2025

NRAS conducts its own research to better understand the impact of rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and related conditions on people's lives, and how care and treatment is delivered and experienced in the UK. These insights inform the development and delivery of our services, ensuring they meet the needs of our beneficiaries. Our research also underpins our policy and campaigning work, enabling us to advocate effectively for improvements in rheumatology service delivery across the UK and Europe.

Supporting the UK Rheumatology Research Community

As a trusted research partner of choice, we work closely with academic and industry researchers in the UK and Europe to provide high-quality patient and public involvement and engagement (PPIE) in the design, recruitment and support of studies and clinical trials. Feedback from researchers continues to reflect the strength of this offer: 85% rated our research support service as five-star, with the remaining 15% awarding four stars - demonstrating consistently high performance. This recognition reflects not only the expertise and dedication of NRAS staff but also the invaluable contribution of our Patient Views Representatives (PVRs) and our Patient Voice Advocates (PVAs), who ensure the lived experience of RA is at the heart of research. During the year, we further strengthened our service by implementing enhanced project management and data tools, improving efficiency and GDPR compliance.

Research studies supported by NRAS have been wide-ranging, from welfare and benefits to innovations such as 3D vision-based remote monitoring. An example of collaboration with industry researchers includes support for a study by Boehringer Ingelheim on rheumatoid arthritis-associated interstitial lung disease (RA-ILD), resulting in both a poster and oral presentation at the 2025 British Society for Rheumatology (BSR) conference. This work explored patient awareness, the care pathway and monitoring. We also provided representation for a real-world patient data panel for people living with RA-ILD. Across all projects, patient voices have remained central, reflecting our commitment to person-centred research. We have also supported a considerable amount of research into inequalities in access to healthcare, medicines and education by the South Asian populations in the UK, led by researchers at the University of Birmingham, some of which have resulted in additional assets in Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi being added to the Apni Jung area on the NRAS website for these communities. **nras.org.uk/apnijung**

In early 2025, NRAS launched the findings of the 2024 Welsh Survey on Inflammatory Arthritis (IA) and full details of the report are available on our website. Building on these insights, NRAS lead a further collaborative to deliver a Scotland-wide patient survey examining NHS services for people living with common immune-mediated inflammatory diseases (IMIDs). Launched in September 2025, findings are expected in early 2026. For more details, please see page 19.

Health inequalities remain a key theme emerging from our research collaborations. NRAS is committed to ensuring research is inclusive and accessible to all, regardless of gender, socio-economic status, education, ethnicity or geographic location. Addressing disparities in access will be a core focus within our 2026–2029 strategic plan.

Planning the future of Young People and Families Services

In 2025, Young People and Families Services made significant progress in strengthening its strategic approach to supporting children, young people and families living with and supporting those living with juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA), with a clear focus on future service development, digital transformation, and system-wide influence.

JIA Awareness Week 2025, held in July, provided an important opportunity to continue raising awareness of JIA among families, professionals, and the wider public. The campaign centred on a series of short educational videos designed to improve understanding of the condition and its impact on young people's daily lives, including school, treatment, and emotional wellbeing. While awareness of JIA remains a challenge, the campaign contributed to ongoing efforts to address misconceptions and encourage greater recognition of the condition.

Alongside awareness raising activities, a key priority during the year has been the continued development of a more structured, targeted and sustainable service offer for young people and their families. Significant progress has been made in defining and initiating the first phase of this work. Funding applications have been submitted to support the development of a dedicated e-learning platform for 11–16-year-olds living with JIA. This platform will form a core part of future service delivery, providing accessible, age-appropriate information and self-management support in a format that reflects how young people engage with digital content. It represents an important step towards empowering young people to build confidence, knowledge, and independence in managing their condition, with a particular focus on readying young people for the transition from paediatric to adult care.

In parallel, work has begun on a strategic review and redevelopment of the Young People and Families digital offer. This includes initial planning for the integration of the JIA website into the main NRAS website, as part of a wider

organisational website transformation project. This work goes beyond a simple merge, providing an opportunity to reassess how content is structured, accessed, and maintained. A comprehensive review of existing content has been initiated to ensure it is accurate, relevant, and aligned with cohort needs, while also identifying gaps and opportunities for improvement. The long-term aim is to create a more cohesive, accessible, and user-friendly digital experience that better supports patients, families, and healthcare professionals.

> Alongside awareness raising activities, a key priority during the year has been the continued development of a more structured, targeted and sustainable service offer for young people and their families.

Collaboration and influencing activity have also been central to the progress in 2025. We have worked closely with other charities and stakeholders to contribute to the review of the *Getting It Right First Time (GIRFT)* report, published in December 2025. Through this work, the organisation has played a vital role in ensuring that the perspectives and experiences of children, young people, and families are reflected in national discussions on service improvement.

Following the publication of the GIRFT report in December 2025, we have continued to engage with GIRFT leads and partners to support implementation of its recommendations. This includes ongoing advocacy to improve pathways to diagnosis, strengthen access to specialist care, and promote a more consistent, multidisciplinary approach to treatment and support across the UK. This work is critical in helping to drive meaningful, system-level change that will improve outcomes and experiences for young people living with JIA.

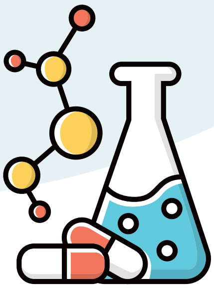
Working with the Pharmaceutical Industry

The National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society (NRAS) is dedicated to improving the lives of people affected by Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) and Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis (JIA).

As part of our commitment to delivering meaningful support and driving better outcomes, we recognise the value of working collaboratively with pharmaceutical companies that research and develop treatments for these conditions. These partnerships help us further our mission and strengthen the impact of our work.

We therefore would like to thank the following companies for supporting the work of NRAS in 2025 and acknowledge financial payment of any consultancy provided by NRAS for the work undertaken by industry partners.

Alfasigma UK Limited
AnaptysBio Inc.
Biogen Idec Limited
Boehringer Ingelheim Limited
Eli Lilly and Company Limited
Medac Pharma LLP
UCB Pharma Ltd



£96.5k

Total funding received from the pharmaceutical industry in 2025

For more information, please visit **nras.org.uk/funding-disclosures/partners-2025**

Volunteers at NRAS 2025

Our Volunteer & Peer Support Manager, Nicky Goldstone, dedicated the year to gathering insights from key stakeholders to develop our new Volunteer Strategy, which will begin rolling out in 2026 and align closely with NRAS' three-year strategy.

As part of this work, she consulted past, current, and prospective volunteers, engaged with volunteer teams across the charity sector, and collaborated with internal departments. She also reviewed the wider volunteering landscape, drawing on key studies and resources including the NCVO Time Well Spent survey, the Digital in Volunteering toolkit, the Vision for Volunteering toolkit, and Investing in Volunteers.

Throughout 2025, the Volunteer Team focused on strengthening our volunteer management processes. This included introducing a new online application form integrated with our CRM system, developing dashboards to support more efficient reporting, and conducting a full audit of our volunteer database. They also enhanced processes for our groups by creating an online form to capture new contacts for both local and digital groups, as well as introducing feedback surveys to support impact measurement.

Our Volunteer Group leaders had an outstanding year, delivering a mix of in person and online meetings, ranging from relaxed social gatherings to informative sessions featuring expert speakers. With the support of our Volunteer Team, who coordinated scheduling, invitations, and promotion across our platforms, the groups hosted a total of 138 meetings throughout 2025, welcoming a record breaking 2,000+ attendees.

The refreshed Movement & Exercise JoinTogether group, led by our newly onboarded volunteer host was a popular choice, focusing on the importance of exercise for both improved mental and physical health for those living with RA or JIA. Expert speakers presented to well over 100 online attendees each session on topics including *"Moving and exercising through flares, fatigue and pain"*, *"The benefits of chair yoga for people living with Inflammatory Arthritis"* and *"Low Impact Exercise."*

A heartfelt thank you from all of us at NRAS

We have received amazing support in 2025, which has enabled the charity to continue providing vital services, as well as to innovate and improve our services, for those living with rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA).

We'd like to say a huge thank you to those who have chosen to support NRAS. You are the reason we are able to reach people living with RA and JIA across the UK, as well as their families, carers and the healthcare professionals who treat them.

All of us at NRAS would like to thank every individual, NRAS group, company and organisation that has supported us in 2025. In addition, we would like to highlight our gratitude for the sizeable donations we received from the benefactors below:

Colefax Charitable Trust

Derek Draper Trust

Doris Field Charitable Trust

Frazer Trust

Garfield Weston Foundation

Joan Ainslie Charitable Trust

Maristow Charity

MBJ Charitable Fund

Sir Jeremiah Colman Gift Trust

The T K Maxx and Homesense Foundation

The Ardwick Trust

The C M Lowe Charitable Trust

The Clive Garner Memorial

The Davies Foundation

The Hospital Saturday Fund

The JGW Patterson Foundation

The Lady Hind Trust

The Michael and Anna Wix Charitable Trust

The National Lottery Community Fund

The National Lottery Community Fund Awards for All Scotland

The Parker Foundation

The Pharsalia Charitable Trust

The Tompkins Foundation

The Tula Trust Ltd

The Vandervell Foundation

Joanna and Richard Kennedy

Premier Care in Bathing

To all those individuals, friends and family members, who lost a loved one in 2025 and chose to honour their memory with a donation to the charity, a sincere and much appreciated thank you for thinking of others during a difficult time.

NRAS are very grateful for the gifts in Wills we have received in 2025. It makes a huge difference to our work. Thank you to those individuals who also pledged a gift to NRAS, in their Will, in 2025.

We would also like to thank the NRAS Groups based across the UK, who continued to support the charity's work with donations.

Thank you to all our dedicated fundraisers and supporters in the community who continued to raise vital funds.

nras
National Rheumatoid Arthritis Society

JIA at NRAS

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