



# **Holding an AS Awareness Evening**

One way of engaging not only with rheumatologists, but also the variety of staff who make up the multi-disciplinary team that support people with AS is to organise an education and awareness raising event once or twice a year.

This not only encourages joint working between branch members and the hospital, but also provides an opportunity to engage with all the people with AS who are currently patients at the hospital but who may be unaware of the branch's activities.

## Timings

- these events have been held at various times, often over the lunchtime period. To be really effective and to be accessible to the majority of people, an evening session is advisable
- it can often be difficult for people with AS to remain sitting for long periods of time, so bear that in mind when planning the timing of the event
- refreshment breaks will need to be factored and these are often beneficial to attendees to speak to one another
- it is best to avoid planning a general chat at the end as people have a tendency to leave after the presentations have finished

## Structure

An ideal event programme consists of a series of short presentations from a range of people, depending

on who is available and willing to take part. As an example agenda:

- introduction
- update on AS – new research or treatments (Rheumatologist)
- the importance of physiotherapy/hydrotherapy (Physiotherapist)
- how NASS supports people with AS in the UK (NASS staff)
- about the NASS Branch (NASS branch members)
- drugs management (Rheumatology Nurse)
- how Occupational Health can help (Occupational Therapist)
- what next?

## How to start the ball rolling...

- first of all the branch members need to agree to the idea of organising an event. It is important to have the commitment of all the members so that there are plenty of people willing to support the event if it goes ahead
- identify someone at the hospital who you think would have the authority to approve an evening event – or at least someone who might be able to seek permission
- either write a letter or arrange to meet with this person to find out whether or not they would be willing to work with you to organise such an event
- planning – make sure that you give plenty of notice as peoples' diaries can get very busy
- decide who you want to invite to speak and on what topics, i.e. consultant rheumatologists, nurses, physiotherapists (see example agenda above)
- if you haven't had any contact with the hospital for some time, then this idea could be one of the points that you bring up at a meeting with the rheumatology departmen
- contact the NASS office and let them know that you are planning an event as we can email or write to NASS members in the area and invite them along