



## Covid-19 Recovery Committee Consultation – Long Covid Feb 2023

### 1. Details on the current Long Covid services available, including information on how the Scottish Government funding has been used

Currently within NHS Fife, for patients we do not have a specific co-ordinated Long Covid service. However, as patients are referred with this diagnosis, they are receiving assessment and interventions from our existing range of services e.g. Post Viral Fatigue, Pulmonary Rehabilitation, Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Psychology etc. They are also accessing GP services for consultation and onward referral for diagnostic testing, and further specialist review.

Unfortunately, we have had no spend in this year against the Scottish Government funding that is available (Fife - £178,051). The primary reason for this is that we have had recruitment challenges into our specified posts (Rehabilitation Co-ordinator, Occupational Therapist and Physiotherapist).

For staff affected by Long Covid, our Occupational Health Service has had a dedicated post supporting staff with Long Covid / Fatigue since July 2022. The aim is to assist staff who have experienced Covid and as a consequence are experiencing fatigue impacting on their return to, or functioning at, work. The majority of individuals referred require between 6-8 sessions of intervention and this is delivered via telephone, Near Me virtual appointments or Face to Face, as required

All referrals are made by an Occupational Health Nurse, or Occupational Health Physician, following initial management referral. Individuals can be either off work at the time of referral, or struggling with the impact of fatigue and demands of workload whilst at work. Support is often required from the service when an individual is planning a phased return, to help staff to consider what this might look like, and to balance their recovery with an appropriate level of work-related activity. Support is regularly provided to both the individual and their manager at this point. The average waiting time is currently 4 to 5 weeks from referral to initial assessment.

A total of 49 staff members have been referred to the service to date; 23 staff members are currently open to the service and receiving regular input, of which 11 are in work and 12 are currently off work.

Input is individualised depending on the client's specific identified needs and priorities, based around the development of self-management strategies to support the individual in gaining control of their fatigue and related symptoms, to promote functioning in activities of daily living, in particular work.

Emerging trends include:

- Need for education around fatigue management strategies
- Sleep Hygiene
- Guided Relaxation
- Job Site Evaluation, i.e. recommendations regarding adjustments to work role or environment

2. Any barriers to service development and provision

There are several significant barriers to developing and providing a co-ordinated patient-facing service. Nationally and locally, we are experiencing significant challenges around the recruitment of a wider range of staffing groups, but particularly within nursing, occupational therapy and physiotherapy; and these groups of staff are the one we were targeting for our posts.

The other significant challenge has been around the non-recurring nature of the funding. Therefore, when advertised, these posts are temporary in nature with the offer of a 21-month fixed term contract. Given the significant challenge we have in recruitment across these professions for permanent posts, the temporary nature of these makes them less attractive to prospective applicants.

However, as stated in response to Q1, we do provide services to individuals with the diagnosis of Long Covid; however, these services are not as co-ordinated and responsive as we would like given the challenges in recruiting to key posts.

3. Any examples of good practice

In Fife we developed information packs for Long Covid that provided a range of information and signposting for patients and carers. This has been shared with other health boards, who have adapted for their local use.

We also utilise the Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland (CHSS) Service and refer patients to it directly. We also direct them to the CHSS website, where they can access further information about symptoms and support groups.

4. Details of future plans for Long COVID service provision in the short and medium term

We are currently exploring a different model to allow us to map pathways, service, and referral routes, as well as work around patient identification and data collection. We are hopeful that if agreed we can then re-advertise for the co-ordinator post based around a programme/project manager approach. This would be underpinned with the development of a clinical reference group and would also need to develop links with lived experience groups to ensure that voice is included.

The clinical Occupational Therapy and Physiotherapy posts are also being reviewed, to see if we might be able to look at different models of care and skill mix to build capacity in our existing teams and services.