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Covid19.Committee@Parliament.Scot

Date 15 February 2023
Your Ref
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Enquiries to Calum Campbell
Extension
Direct Line 0131 465 5804
Email
EA

Dear Ms Brown

INQUIRY INTO LONG COVID

Thank you for your letter of 17 January 2023 and follow up letter of 9 February 2023 confirming the extended deadline for replies. Please see the NHS Lothian response below to the questions raised.

Details on the current services available including information on how the Scottish Government funding has been used:

- People presenting with Long Covid in Lothian are currently assessed on an individual basis with appropriate treatment / intervention / rehabilitation offered, determined by the presenting needs of the individual to best support optimal physical and or mental health outcomes.
- Individuals with long COVID have access to a wide range of services including but not limited to Respiratory, Neurology, Rheumatology, Musculoskeletal and Fatigue Management teams. A number also progress onto Vocational Rehabilitation services to support them to return to work.
- Funding allocation for current financial year (2022/23) is being utilised in two key areas:
 - i. Roll out of supported self-management pathway:-** An initial pilot group of GP referring to our Long-Covid supported Self-Management Pathway utilising a digital self-management tool and CHSS advice line was evaluated and found to be well received by those who engaged. Funding is now being used for a staged scale-up of this pathway commencing in Midlothian in January, with learning from each phase of the rollout informing the next stage to implement the pathway across NHS Lothian and its other partnership areas of East Lothian, West Lothian and the City of Edinburgh throughout 2023.
 - ii. Application of data to develop clear clinical pathways / Lothian model for Long Covid:-** In the absence of robust data to inform services / pathway development we are undergoing a process of applying existing data to inform the development of the Lothian

model for Long Covid services. This dataset includes number of referrals for people reporting symptoms of Long Covid, plus number who have received a clinical intervention, type of intervention and the routes taken to access these services and service user feedback.

Delivery of this work is under the clinical leadership of our AHP Consultant informed by a multidisciplinary Clinical Expert Reference Group. This group are considering the 4 key elements outlined in Scottish Government's paper "Scotland's Long Covid Service" i.e.

1. Supported self-management
2. Primary care and community-based support
3. Rehabilitation support
4. Secondary care investigation and support

We expect our revised Long Covid delivery model and pathways to be determined by end March 2023 with 23/24 funding being utilised to enhance appropriate clinical services. Whilst this is currently being finalised early indications suggest some services will require funding to enhance capacity and this will be allocated accordingly when 2023/24 funding is confirmed.

A multidisciplinary and multi-agency oversight board that includes patient representatives oversees our all our Long Covid service development work.

Any barriers to service development and provision;

- Paucity of robust data in terms of demand and symptom profile of Long Covid, uncertainty of diagnostic criteria and emerging and changing evidence of efficacy of therapeutic interventions made early identification of service need challenging.
- Initial lack of certainty of funding beyond 2022/23 also made recruitment to new posts challenging

Any examples of good practice:

- Collaboration between NHS Lothian, Chest Heart and Stroke Association Scotland and POGO Studios has led to successful development of an innovative Supported Self-Management approach, supported by a Digital Platform and utilising expertise across NHS, third sector and industry colleagues.

Details of future plans for long COVID service provision in the short and medium term:

- See also answer to bullet point 1 above

Long Covid is a diagnosis that encompasses a broad range of signs and symptoms that are variable across individuals therefore individual's support needs are also varied.

As such, rather than develop a single service for Long Covid, NHS Lothian have taken a considered approach, applying available data and evidence where it is available, enhanced by our knowledge and learning from management of other Long-Term Conditions to develop a sustainable model for the future.

This model will deliver for people across Lothian a Long-Covid supported Self-Management Pathway in partnership with CHSS and utilising a digital platform. We expect this model to be fully available across all Lothian residents by end 2023.

In parallel with the supported self-management approach, clinical pathways, determined by individual patient presentations will be articulated and implemented to enhance clarity and enable seamless navigation for patients, carers and clinicians alike.

Where requirement for enhanced capacity in specific clinical services is identified, this will be delivered through Scottish Government Long Covid Funding.

Our combined approach will deliver a flexible model that supports patients with long Covid to access services that result in interventions that are delivered based not on a specific service model but on an individual person's needs.

Yours sincerely

CALUM CAMPBELL
Chief Executive