

Siobhian Brown MSP
Convener
COVID-19 Recovery Committee
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

By email: Covid19.Committee@Parliament.Scot

7th February 2023

Dear Siobhian

Please find below our response to the questions outlined in your letter of the 17th January 2023 titled 'Inquiry into Long COVID'.

Details of our Programme

Thistle Foundation is a charity that supports people across Scotland who are living with long-term health conditions and disabilities, to lead good lives and achieve what matters most to them. Since 2008 we have also provided training and consultancy support across health and social care services looking to adopt an outcomes, strengths-based approach to their work.

Thistle Foundation has received £250K funding from Scottish Government to set up a national development programme which aims to reshape rehabilitation services for people living with long-term health conditions including the long-term impacts of COVID-19. The figure of £87,343 that you have referred to in your letter is part of the £250K awarded to fund this programme. The programme is aligned to the Scottish Government's Once for Scotland approach to rehabilitation.

This 'Once for Scotland' programme will not work directly with people living with long-term health conditions or the long-term impacts of Covid-19. It will work in collaboration with organisations across NHS Health Boards, Health and Social Care Partnerships and the third sector to help reshape the delivery of rehabilitation services and, specifically to:

- focus on prevention, anticipation and supported self-management;
- develop a unified, outcome focused and strengths-based approach to rehabilitation and self-management across professional groups and agencies;

- develop a person-centred approach to rehabilitation that focuses on the person, not the condition, where the individual with support from friends, family and or carers is empowered to lead and manage their situation and remain as independent as possible; and,
- make non-specialist rehabilitation more broadly accessible by introducing the principles and practices of rehabilitation to the wider health and care workforce thus enabling redesign of a wide range of current community-based services.

At our initial reporting milestone on the 23rd January 2023 £13,798.13 had been spent on initial preparatory work for launching the programme.

The programme was launched in January 2023. In line with an action plan agreed with Scottish Government, we have begun engagement activities with prospective partners and will begin the delivery of training and consultancy work in April 2023.

Barriers to service development and provision

We are experiencing and currently mitigating against a significant barrier to realising the full potential of the programme.

We learned from our Scottish Government colleagues that they are unable to disseminate any non-essential communications across Health Boards or Health and Social Care Partnerships while winter pressures continue to negatively impact the capacity of services across the NHS and Social Care. This means colleagues in government are unable to disseminate information about the programme across the Health and Social Care system.

We are mitigating against this by using our own networks to support engagement with the programme. To ensure meaningful, nationwide engagement takes place, we hope to see the emergence of a strategy for engagement with NHS, Health and Social Care Partnership and Third Sector service providers, led by our Scottish Government funders.

Any examples of good practice.

Our support is focused on the person, not the health condition and we champion a generic non specialist community based self-management approach to rehabilitation.

As outlined above, this 'Once for Scotland' programme is still in the development and early engagement phase, so we have no tangible outputs to report at this stage.

The expected outputs are that services across the Health and Social Care system will model Thistle Foundation's person-centred approach to rehabilitation and supported self-management. We expect to be able to demonstrate the positive impact of a generic non specialist approach to rehabilitation on the lives of people who experience this support within their local community.

Our non-specialist approach to rehabilitation includes:

- 1-2-1 support using a collaborative, outcomes focused and strengths-based tools and techniques; and,
- group based support through the delivery of Lifestyle Management courses delivered by Wellbeing Practitioners and Peer Volunteers. These courses help people understand stress, pacing, sleep management and exercise; and support transformative changes to better manage life with a long-term condition.

Through other projects and programmes, that we are separately funded to deliver, we have experienced an increasing percentage of people we support (40%), who report the impacts and long-term effects of COVID-19.

Below are three lived experience examples of people we have supported who are living with the long-term effects of COVID-19. In these stories you will see some of the outcomes we would hope can be achieved by people living with long-term health conditions, via the training provided to health or social care practitioners through our programme.

<https://www.thistle.org.uk/callums-story>

<https://www.thistle.org.uk/elpeths-story>

<https://www.thistle.org.uk/calums-story>

These are the types of stories we expect to hear reported in future by teams and services that we will work with through this 'Once for Scotland' programme.

Details of future plans for long covid service provision in the short and medium term.

With specific reference to this Scottish Government funded programme, we foresee this being a longer term 'Once for Scotland' programme that will grow over a period of time to engage with and support teams of practitioners working across the spectrum of services set out in the [rehabilitation in health framework](#) with interventions being tailored to the specific needs of each team or service.

Should you require any further information please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards

Mark Hoolahan
Chief Executive, Thistle Foundation