

Minister for Public Health and Women's Health submission of 21 December 2023

PE1952/F: Specialist services for patients with autonomic dysfunction

Thank you for the Committee's correspondence to the Scottish Government of 2 June 2023 regarding petition PE1952: '*Specialist services for patients with autonomic dysfunction*', and the opportunity to respond to the questions posed by the Committee following its meeting of 17 May 2023.

Firstly, I would like to sincerely apologise for the delay in the Committee receiving a response to its letter. This was caused by an administrative error in the process that the Scottish Government uses to triage and issue responses to correspondence of this type.

Please find below a response to the questions raised by the Committee, which asked:

1. Whether the Scottish Government has received feedback on or evaluated its Implementation Support Note. In particular, whether the implementation Support Note has increased knowledge of Long Covid and PoTS;

On 26 July 2021, NHS National Services Scotland issued a questionnaire to 928 General Practices which contained questions relating to the SIGN/NICE/RCGP clinical guideline 'managing the long-term effects of COVID-19'. 21.7% of General Practices (201/928) responded to the questionnaire, however not every practice provided an answer to all questions contained within it.

The results highlighted that 60% (117/196) of practices were aware of the SIGN/NICE/RCGP clinical guideline. In addition, 25% (49/196) were aware of the accompanying Implementation Support Note produced by the Scottish Government. Of these 46.9% (23/49) found it moderately to very helpful. The results also highlighted that 77% (148/193) of practices indicated that some or all of practice clinicians were confident giving

verbal advice on the new and ongoing symptoms of COVID-19 after acute recovery and management.

The long COVID National Strategic Network operated by NHS National Services Scotland is currently reviewing and updating the content of the Implementation Support Note. This process is being supported by consultation with a range of relevant clinical and subject matter experts.

In addition, in June 2023 the National Strategic Network developed a recommended pathway for the assessment and management of Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome in people living with long COVID, for use by NHS Boards. This was supplemented by an educational webinar on PoTS held on 24 August 2023 for healthcare staff across Scotland supporting people living with long COVID.

2. How diagnostic and treatment pathways for people with Long Covid are monitored and tracked to ensure appropriate care is provided in a quick and coordinated way, including to people with dysautonomia;

Under the leadership of Public Health Scotland (PHS), the long COVID Strategic Network has developed a theory of change and logframe which form the basis of a comprehensive framework to evaluate long COVID services. Both the theory of change and logframe were developed in close consultation with representatives across the Network, including people with lived experience of long COVID, clinicians, researchers, service planners, local boards, PHS and Scottish Government officials.

In addition, the National long COVID Strategic Network has contracted the University of Leeds to support the initial evaluation of long COVID services in Scotland. This will provide an analysis of demand and capacity within services; analysis of longer-term outcomes for long COVID patients assessed within services; and where possible, compare differences in service models.

The previous response sent by the Scottish Government to the Committee on 17th August 2022 outlines access to clinical support for people with autonomic disorders not related to long COVID.

3. Whether the Scottish Government will request that training is provided to GPs on dysautonomia.

NHS Education for Scotland's learning platform 'Turas' contains the training resources on dysautonomia listed below. These resources are accessible to a multidisciplinary audience, including GPs.

[14 June 2022](#) – PoTs UK webinar '*Long Covid and the autonomic nervous system - a top - down and bottom - up approach*'.

[17 July 2023](#) – NHS Education for Scotland slide pack learning bite '*The autonomic nervous system and long COVID*'.

I hope the Committee finds the information outlined in this letter to be helpful.

Minister for Public Health and Women's Health, Jenni Minto MSP