

NHS NATIONAL SERVICES SCOTLAND

Scottish Long Covid Network

Submission to the Committee Inquiry into Long Covid

1. Purpose

To provide the COVID-19 Recovery Committee Inquiry into Long Covid with a summary update of the achievements to date of the Scottish Long Covid National Strategic Network.

2. Background

The Long Covid Support Fund of £10million was established to resource the development of services over a three-year period for people with long term effects of COVID-19.

In March 2022 NHS National Services Scotland (NSS) were commissioned to develop a National Strategic Network (NSN) to provide national support to building the capacity, capability and co-ordination of health and social care services for people with long term effects of COVID-19.

To deliver this, the NSN has established a strategic framework (Appendix 1) to engage health board representatives, clinical representatives from across the pathway and people with lived experience.

The NSN is overseen by a Strategic Oversight Board which links into the key NHS national groups and reports to the Scottish Government.

The delivery of services remains the responsibility of the NHS Boards and Health and Social Care Partnerships. Recommendations will be developed on the supporting actions required at a national level to support service delivery in an evolving area.

The NSN provides support for all people with long term effects from infection with COVID-19 in line with the definitions outlined in the SIGN/ NICE/ RCGP Guideline for Ongoing symptomatic COVID-19 (4-12 weeks) and Post COVID-19 syndrome (12+ weeks).

The Strategic Oversight Board agreed that:

- the scope of the NSN should encompass all ongoing symptoms arising from an infection with COVID-19 that are not related to a pre-existing condition.
- the NSN should have a role in Education/ Social Care and employment which have all been raised by people with lived experience as priorities.

NSS were allocated funding of £370,000 in 2022/23 for this purpose. £200,000 was set aside for the procurement of a national digital tool to support the assessment, intervention, and evaluation of care for people with Long Covid. The remainder was required for programme support staff, clinical sessions and

to commission The Health and Social Care Alliance Scotland (the ALLIANCE) to establish the Lived Experience Network.

The spend for the digital tool will now move to 2023/24 to allow time for the procurement exercise to complete. Recruitment of lead clinician support was not concluded until February 2023 so a reduction in funding was agreed with Scottish Government. The planned expenditure in 2022/23 NSS is shown below.

Resource	WTE	Year 1 2022/23
Clinical sessions	Flexible	£11,000
Band 8a Senior Programme Manager	0.33	£22,800
Band 6 Assistant Programme Manager	1	£46,500
Operational budget		£1,000
Lived Experience Network (Alliance)		£20,200
Total		£101,500

It is expected that funding will continue in 2023/24.

3. Vision and Objectives

The NSN's vision is that ***“All people with long term effects of COVID-19 have the support they need to live as active and healthy a lifestyle as possible”***

To do this the NSN will:

- Listen to the priorities of people with lived experience of long-term effects of COVID-19 to understand what support would make a difference for them
- Enable services to build their capacity to support people with long term effects of COVID-19 through additional resources and development of knowledge and skills
- Evaluate the effectiveness of increased capacity and adapt approach based on learning
- Support people to access the services they need through raising awareness of the services and support available
- Connect services with evolving evidence base and clinical opinion to ensure service delivery

4. Key Achievements

The following has been achieved since the NSN was commissioned in March 2022:

- The development of NSN governance structure, appointment of Chair of the Oversight Board, involvement of service planners, clinical Subject Matter Experts and People with Lived Experience (PLE), alongside other working groups.
- The network Action Plan was developed, with key aims and objectives for different aspects of the network set out in the plan.
- An early piece of work undertaken by the network was to look at gap analysis with service health board representatives and clinical colleagues. Key areas were identified through the gap analysis, some of which will sit within the remit of the network, and some will sit with territorial boards to deliver.
- In August 2022, ALLIANCE were commissioned by the NSN to launch their network for people affected by Long Covid. Following the launch, ALLIANCE released an online survey to capture the priorities needed to support Long Covid - 114 responses were received. A full report is available, however most respondents stated that all options provided should be prioritised, requesting that a holistic approach is taken to care provision, as well as further legislative recognition of Long Covid as a disability.
- The Lived Experience Group was established as part of the network, to allow PLE to feed into the development of strategy. The first Q&A session with service planners from NHS Scotland Boards and PLE was held in January 2023 to ensure that PLE felt more engaged with developments.
- The network has co-ordinated work with NHS Scotland Boards and National Procurement to procure a digital tool through Softcat, which will support the assessment, intervention, and evaluation of care for people with Long Covid. The procurement process is nearing completion and the successful supplier will be announced as soon as possible. A training plan is being developed to allow implementation over the next few months.
- NHS Scotland boards have been progressing with recruitment to roles to support Long Covid services in their areas.
- In November 2022 Peer Network sessions were established. These provide education on topics suggested by members and the opportunity to seek support from peers and share good practise. A second session was held in February 2023, and a follow up is being planned.
- In December 2022 the first Public Health Scotland Long Covid Bulletin was shared with the clinical and subject matter expert group.

5. Challenges

In a new and evolving area, the following challenges have been identified:

- **Data** – with little Scottish data available, there are challenges in knowing how large the population requiring access to the Long Covid Pathway will be. This will continue to be reviewed as results from the EAVE II survey become available.
- **Education** – there are limited studies available to evidence education, therefore this has remained at a relatively informal level to date, with Peer Network sessions offered on a regular basis, as described under 4. Key Achievements.

6. Future Plans

Key actions going forward include the following:

- Rollout and implementation of national digital tool
- Continue regular sessions to update clinical and service planning teams around developing evidence.
- Establish MDT sessions whereby clinicians can bring the more complex cases to discuss with a team of experts.
- Scoping and development of clinical pathways
- Publication of Self-Management Workbook developed by NHS Lanarkshire to provide workbook that can be shared with patients to support clinical pathways.

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APPENDIX 1: STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

