

To: PS(I) and SofS

From:

NR

Clearance:

Long

COVID Policy Team

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NR

## LONG COVID – WEEKLY UPDATE

### CLOCK STUDY PREPRINT

On 1 September, UCL Great Ormond Street Institute of Child health released a pre-print detailing interim findings from the CLoCk study. This is the first report from this study and describes post-COVID symptoms in over 6,000 children and young people (CYP) 3 months after they tested either negative or positive for COVID-19.

The following key findings were outlined in the report:

- CYP are more likely to have a mild illness and less likely to be hospitalised following COVID-19 infection compared to adults.
- Both CYP who tested positive and negative reported symptoms 15 weeks after taking a PCR test. At 3 months post-testing **66.5% of test positive and 53.3% of test-negatives** had any symptoms, whilst **30.3%** and **16.2%** had three or more symptoms. This led the researchers to suggest that up to one in seven (14%) children and young people who caught SARS-CoV-2 may have symptoms linked to the virus 15 weeks later.
- While there were some differences in physical symptoms reported at 15 weeks by both participant cohorts, there was little difference in mental health and wellbeing scores.
- A large proportion (40%) of CYP in both cohorts reported poor mental health, including feeling worried, sad, and/or unhappy.

### ONS Publication

The ONS published revised prevalence statistics on 2 September. The total number of people with self-reported long COVID (symptoms for 4+ weeks) was 970,000 (**1.5% of the UK population**). This is stable compared with the last month (945,000 people or 1.5% of the population, at 4 July). **817,000** people (835,000, at 4 July) had symptoms for 12+ weeks, and **384,000** (380,000, at 4 July) for at least a year. Symptoms were adversely affecting day-to-day activities of **643,000** people (611,000, at 4 July), with **188,000** (182,000, at 4 July) being impacted a lot.

The ONS will be publishing revised estimates of the prevalence of symptoms in those infected on 16 September. These estimates were last published in April (suggesting 13.7% continued to have symptoms at 12 weeks).

## **ASTHMA UK AND BRITISH LUNG FOUNDATION MEETING**

Officials met with Asthma UK (AUK) and British Lung Foundation (BLF) to discuss an online platform that they are developing in conjunction with a number of charities, including Age UK and Fifth Sense, in a project funded by NHSE England and Improvement (NHSEI).

People who have concerns about their symptoms will be able to complete a questionnaire. Following this, a report is then produced which triages patients to support from voluntary sector partners. The platform will not provide a clinical diagnosis. The platform is due to launch in November and we will invite the team to a future roundtable to present.

Officials will now be meeting with AUK and BLF on a monthly basis and have been invited to a meeting with the charities involved to hear more about their individual involvement, which is due to take place at the end of September.

## **SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCEMENT**

On 9 September, the Scottish Health Secretary announced a new £10m Long COVID Support Fund for health boards. An expert group has been established to identify the areas where this additional resource is most needed. The fund is designed to maximise and improve the co-ordination of a broad range of existing services across the health and social care system.

The funding also aims to strengthen the range of information and advice available, and ensure the right support is available within primary care, providing a response focused on each patient's needs, with referrals to secondary care where necessary. The announcement references the need for flexibility among the boards, with services tailored to the specific needs of their populations.

## **LONG COVID DEFINITIONS**

The World Health Organisation is due to issue a formal definition for Post COVID Condition during the week commencing 13 September. We will provide an overview of this as part of next week's update. The timing of the WHO publication will coincide with existing work that NICE is undertaking to update the NICE/SIGN/RCGP guideline on 'managing the long-term effects of COVID-19'. The current draft of the guidelines were published in December 2020 and any updates that emerge are due to reflect the new evidence, policy and practice that has emerged since then. DHSC has registered as a stakeholder and will be able to participate in the consultation on the updated guidance. The consultation period is scheduled to take place from Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> September – Monday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2021, with officials receiving the relevant documentation for review through on Monday 13 September. NICE will take into account the WHO definition and stakeholder reaction to it as part of the consultation process.

## **ROUNDTABLE PLANNING**

The next Long COVID roundtable will be held on Thursday 23 September and will be chaired by the Secretary of State. More recent sessions have been very research heavy and we have suggested having a greater focus on the NHS response for this

roundtable. We would also want to allow some time for general discussion focused on reflections on system-wide work over the last year and priorities moving forward.

A draft agenda can be found below. We would look to finalise the agenda next week subject to your approval.

CONTENT	SPEAKER	DURATION
Welcome and introductions	Secretary of State	5 mins
Update from ONS <i>[To discuss new data being published on 16 September]</i>	NR	10 mins [15]
Update from NHSEI <i>[To discuss newly published activity data, progress against the plan and introduce new specialty advisers]</i>	Cathy Hassell, Ian Dodge	10 mins [25]
Update on health inequalities workstream <i>[To discuss work to date and to include patient and public voice reps work on communications]</i>	Dr NR	10 mins [35]
General discussion: Reflecting on progress since the announcement of 5 Point Plan last October and priorities going forwards.	Secretary of State	20 mins [55]
Close	Secretary of State	5 mins [60]

## PQS

We have received PQs this week from Richard Fuller MP (Conservative), Rachael Maskell MP (Labour), and Caroline Lucas MP (Green), querying:

- NHSEI's delivery of their long COVID plan for 2021/22 and the role of clinicians within integrated care systems.
- Funding provided to NHSEI's primary and secondary care services for long COVID
- Long COVID's impact on NHSEI workforce planning
- Any exemptions from the NHS Charging Regulations for long COVID patients.