

To: SofS

From:

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Clearance:

**Adam McMordie, Deputy
Director Patient Access and
Flow Team (PAFT)**

Date:

30/07/2021

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Long COVID - Weekly update

At our introductory meeting on 23 July you requested a weekly update note. We have been producing regular updates for Lord Bethell and have used a similar format focusing on key publications, stakeholder activity or developments over the week. If you would prefer a different focus or format, we can make changes for the next update note.

SAGE

Last week, Long COVID was discussed at the 94th SAGE meeting on COVID-19 held on 22 July 2021. The summary of the discussion was as follows:

The prevalence of long COVID symptoms at 12 weeks post SARS-CoV-2 infection is uncertain and estimates vary by study design, ranging from 2.3% to 37% in those infected. 'Long COVID' is likely to be several syndromes. Symptoms may be substantially less for individuals who are vaccinated (low confidence). There are limited data available for children, but the data which are available suggest that long illness duration after SARS-CoV-2 infection in school-aged children is uncommon (low confidence).

This was an initial discussion at this stage, and we expect that SAGE will return to Long COVID at a later date. The paper prepared by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) for SAGE prior to the meeting is available [here](#).

Americans with Disabilities Act and Long COVID

On 26 July, President Biden announced that Long COVID could be recognised under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), where Long COVID is described as a 'physical and mental impairment'. The Guidance also says that Long COVID could be recognised as a disability if it substantially limits one or more major life activity, which will be determined by an individual assessment. People whose Long COVID qualifies as a disability are entitled to the same protections from discrimination as any other person with a disability under the ADA. This is consistent with the current interpretations of how Long COVID would be considered under the Equality Act 2010. We will continue to engage relevant OGDs to develop positions on calls from some trade unions to specify Long COVID as a disability on the face of the Act. Accompanying guidance was also produced for schools, which we have shared with relevant officials in DfE. Officials are also speaking with officials from British Consulate General in San Francisco next week to discuss developments in the United States.

DfE meeting

Officials from DHSC and DfE met to discuss guidance for schools on Long COVID. DfE officials have agreed to start drafting guidance with the aim of publishing to coincide with schools returning in September, and we will support and input as appropriate alongside colleagues from NHSEI and PHE.

School infection survey

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) produced a COVID-19 Schools Infection Survey (SIS) which assessed the role of schools in COVID-19 transmission and how transmission within and from school settings can be minimised. During the 2020/21 academic year, the study established a cohort of approximately 24,000 participants comprising pupils and staff from 150 schools in England. We worked with colleagues last year to ensure that questions on Long COVID were added to the questionnaire that was used. Officials met with the Surveillance team in DHSC this week who are developing a business case for the survey to be run again during the upcoming academic year.

APPG on Coronavirus session

The All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Coronavirus met on 27 July 2021 to examine the impact of Long COVID on keyworkers. The session heard personal experiences from keyworkers including a GP, a hospital pharmacist and a teacher. The session also heard calls for clear guidance and support for employers in this space, as well as access to sufficient occupational support (such as flexible working) for keyworkers. The session is available to view [here](#).

ONS prevalence release next week

At the introduction meeting you asked whether the ONS held data on the vaccine status for the 962,000 people self-reporting Long COVID. We asked ONS and while they have been considering the question, senior officials are not confident in the data as it could be misleading and highly biased. As such, they are not prepared to release the estimates to us. We have asked for an update on whether they will be able to improve the validity of the data.

On 5 August, the ONS are due to release their next publication of showing the estimates of the prevalence of self-reported “Long COVID” and associated activity limitation. We will provide an overview these findings in next week’s update note.

Interesting news stories/publications

A study was released covering COVID-19 breakthrough infections in vaccinated health care workers in Israel. Among 1497 fully vaccinated health care workers, 39 breakthrough infections were reported. While most breakthrough cases were mild or asymptomatic, 19% had persistent symptoms at 6 weeks. While the numbers were small and follow-up limited to 6 weeks, the study points to the need for us to understand more about longer-term symptoms in those with mild infections included those who have been vaccinated.