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LONG COVID – WEEKLY UPDATE

ROUNDTABLE PREPARATION

The next Long COVID roundtable was due to be held on Friday 30 April but this has now been postponed due to a diary clash. We are working with your Diary Manager to find a new suitable date for this session. It is likely the session will now take place in May.

PQS

We have received PQs this week from Dame Diana Johnson (Labour) and Lord Pendry (Labour) querying:

- Support for NHS staff who develop Long COVID
- Support for people living with Long COVID once the pandemic has ended.

COVERSCAN MEETING

On Wednesday 21 April, the policy team met with Dr Rajarshi Banerjee, CEO and original developer of the Coverscan technology to discuss the potential for Coverscan to be used as a diagnostic tool for Long COVID. CoverScan MD is a software suite designed to offer a one-stop-shop assessment to detect the organ damage in the heart, liver, lungs, kidneys, pancreas, and spleen.

There are some sensitivities as clinical leads within NHSEI have some concerns about whether the technology would meet clinical evidence thresholds. However, the findings from initial research appear interesting and we have extended an invitation to Dr Banerjee and a lead researcher from his company to present findings on Coverscan at a future roundtable.

DFE MEETING

We met with colleagues from the Department for Education's Coronavirus Response Unit and also PHE on Friday 23 April to join up work on Long COVID and children.

The DHSC Long COVID policy team raised concerns that patient advocacy groups have produced their own materials for schools and highlighted that there may be a role for

reactive communications. This is a sensitive area and DHSC will work with PHE and DfE to consider the issue of messaging more broadly. We will share relevant evidence with DFE and continue to develop the relationship at official level.

OCCUPATIONAL DISEASE

We are meeting with DWP and the Industrial Injuries Advisory Council on Tuesday 27 April to continue discussions concerning the call to classify Long COVID as an occupational disease for keyworkers.

CABINET OFFICE PAPER

As referenced previously, the Cabinet Office Analytical Directorate has prepared a summary paper on the Long COVID evidence base. The paper is a helpful summary of existing evidence but also includes new analysis linked to productivity costs (Section B pages 4-6). The Cabinet Office has estimated that from around 390,000 working age adults who experienced Long COVID symptoms for longer than 12 weeks, 61,755 (16%) of them had symptoms that significantly reduced their ability to perform day-to-day activities, leading to 1.4-2.8 million working days lost. The cost of absenteeism due to Long COVID symptoms was estimated at between £158-£316 million for the period from March 2020 to March 2021. This cost is only indicative and should be refined as new evidence emerges. This paper has been included as a separate attachment.