

Date: 11/04/2024
Your Ref:
Our Ref: 8558

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Dear

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION – LONG COVID

I write in response to your request for information in relation to Long Covid within NHS Lothian.

Question:

1. How many patients in your local NHS area have been referred for treatment via Lothians Long Covid pathway? (as of the date of this submission).

Answer:

NHS Lothian does not have a single Long Covid service pathway. Patients are assessed on an individual basis and treatment / intervention / rehabilitation offered is determined by the presenting needs of the individual to best support optimal physical and or mental health outcomes. We have recently rolled out across the whole of Lothian access to our supported self-management platform, Tailored Talks in collaboration with Chest Heart and Stroke Scotland.

Due to know coding issues nationally we are unable to give a complete picture on numbers across all services however for the Supported Self-management pathway numbers are: 204 referred. 158 onboarded.

Question:

2. How many patients in your local NHS area have been referred for treatment via the Lothian Long Covid pathway?

Answer:

Duplicate of question 1.

Question:

3. How many staff do you have working specifically funded by the Scottish Government Long Covid Service fund?

Answer:

There are 8 staff.

Question:

4. Please provide a breakdown of staff/services funded by the Scottish Government's Long Covid service fund: FTE (full time equivalent) broken down by job title of: a) doctor; b) nurse; c) physiotherapist; d) occupational therapist; e) clinical psychologist/psychiatrist/ CBT practitioner; f) other, please specify.

Answer:

a) 0; b) 0; c) 0; d) OT 3; e) Clin Psych 0.2, f) SLT 1, Project support 1.0, Project Lead 0.5

Question:

5. For any doctors employed under the Long Covid service fund or working under /with Lothian Long Covid service pathway, please specify their specialism e.g. GP, cardiologist, neurologist.

Answer:

Not Applicable

Question:

6. Via the Long Covid treatment pathway/Long Covid service funding do medical staff in Lothian have the ability in-house to prescribe medications to long Covid patients?

Answer:

Funding has not been allocated specifically for medication. Clinicians will prescribe based on individual patients presenting complaint.

Question:

7. If so, please list the 3 most common drugs prescribed for Long Covid patients in Lothian or via the Long Covid treatment pathway?

Answer:

As per Q1, due to lack of consistency in coding of Long Covid we are unable to extract this data.

Question:

8. Under its Long Covid pathway does NHS Lothian have the ability to order tests and scans for patients referred? - also tests in Lothian are funded by the Scottish Government's Long Covid service funding if so please detail by type?

Answer:

We do not fund specific tests. Clinicians refer for whichever diagnostic testing they deem appropriate.

Question:

9. Please list the 3 most commonly ordered tests/scans/diagnostic questionnaires for Long Covid patients funded by the Scottish Government Long Covid service fund or routed via Lothians Long Covid pathway?

Answer:

As per Q1, due to lack of consistency in coding of Long Covid we are unable to extract this data.

Question:

10. Please provide figures for how many patients have been referred to clinics/service via the Long Covid pathway and/or received the following type of treatment paid for by Scottish Government Long Covid service funding:

a) A wellbeing programme; b) physical rehabilitation; c) psychological support; d) A brain retraining or Neuro Linguistic Programming-based course such as the Lightning Process, Gupta Programme or Nuffield programme (please specify which); e) drug treatment; e) other, please specify.

Answer:

As per Q1, due to lack of consistency in coding of Long Covid we are unable to extract this data as many patients with LC are supported within our mainstream services. Individuals have access to a combination of a wellbeing group programme, psychological and psychiatric support and OT interventions but we are unable to separate the data between these different interventions.

For ME / CFS service (specifically funded) 124 patients were referred with treatment being either individual sessions with an Occupational therapist, a physiotherapist or a psychologist or an MDT group (run by physiotherapy and psychology).

For SLT (specifically funded, referral numbers available from 01/04/23 onwards) numbers referred specifically for Long Covid are 50. However total numbers will be higher as patients with post/long Covid symptoms have attended the ENT-SLT voice clinic (not specific to LC) and may have been given one-off SLT advice/recommendations, without the need for onward referral for further input.

Question:

11. Which of the following types of services does the Lothian Long Covid pathway refer patients on to?

a) A wellbeing programme; b) physical rehabilitation; c) psychological support; d) A brain retraining or Neuro Linguistic Programming-based course such as the Lightning Process,

Gupta Programme or Nuffield programme (please specify which); d) drug treatment; e) other, please specify.

Answer:

b) physical rehabilitation, c) psychological support, e) other: rehabilitation includes vocational rehab, breathing pattern disorder management, voice rehab, activities of daily living management and adaptation, fatigue management, cognitive rehabilitation

Question:

12. How does Lothian measure the number of Long Covid patients/ prevalence of Long covid sufferers in Lothian and what steps has it taken to review service provisions to ensure these are fit for purpose and scaled to need within the board across the period of designated Long Covid service/pathway funding?

Answer:

We do not know the true prevalence of Long Covid due to the national coding issues. We continue to work to improve local data collection however as highlighted previously, NHS Lothian recognises the heterogenous nature of Long Covid and therefore we do not have a single Long Covid service. Patients are assessed on an individual basis and treatment / intervention / rehabilitation offered is determined by the presenting needs of the individual to best support optimal physical and or mental health outcomes. We believe this is an approach that delivers appropriate services that are needs led, underpinned by supported self-management and will be sustainable in the future.

We are making further improvements to Tailored Talks platform to ensure wide accessibility and developing new talks to meet needs identified through patient feedback.

We are anticipating an increase in referral numbers from our engagement with the pan-Lothian GP cluster quality leads, and the launch of our RefBites video to inform GPs on the services and how to refer. We have set up data collection to the period prior to video launch and will compare this to prospective data to determine the change in referral numbers from GPs' increased awareness of the services available. We also anticipate that now the GP assessment protocol has been finalised this may generate more specific referral information.

I hope the information provided helps with your request.

If you are unhappy with our response to your request, you do have the right to request us to review it. Your request should be made within 40 working days of receipt of this letter, and we will reply within 20 working days of receipt. If our decision is unchanged following a review and you remain dissatisfied with this, you then have the right to make a formal complaint to the Scottish Information Commissioner within 6 months of receipt of our review response. You can do this by using the Scottish Information Commissioner's Office online appeals service at

www.itspublicknowledge.info/Appeal. If you remain dissatisfied with the Commissioner's response you then have the option to appeal to the Court of Session on a point of law.

If you require a review of our decision to be carried out, please write to the FOI Reviewer at the email address at the head of this letter. The review will be undertaken by a Reviewer who was not involved in the original decision-making process.

FOI responses (subject to redaction of personal information) may appear on NHS Lothian's Freedom of Information website at: <https://org.nhsllothian.scot/FOI/Pages/default.aspx>

Yours sincerely

ALISON MACDONALD
Executive Director, Nursing, Midwifery and AHPs
Cc: Chief Executive