

Post (Long) COVID Service Review Pre-engagement Report

Beth Fletcher
Public Involvement Manager

Introduction and background

The Derbyshire Post COVID Syndrome Assessment Clinic was launched in December 2020 to provide physical, cognitive, and psychological assessments to patients experiencing complex Post COVID Syndrome (Long COVID) symptoms.

In April 2022 the service was expanded to include rehabilitation hubs in the north and south of the county to manage patient symptoms. The rehabilitation offer includes support for breathlessness, chronic fatigue, occupational health, vocational and health psychology.

The Post (Long) COVID Service is provided by:

- Derbyshire Community Health Services (DCHS): lead on the assessment clinic and provide psychology and coordinator staffing within the rehabilitation hubs.
- University Hospitals of Derby and Burton (UHDB): lead on the south rehabilitation hub. Staffing includes occupational, physio, pulmonary rehabilitation, and chronic fatigue therapists.
- Chesterfield Royal Hospital NHS Foundation Trust (CRH): lead on the north rehabilitation hub. Staffing includes occupational, physio, pulmonary rehabilitation, and chronic fatigue therapists

Why is a Service Review being done?

The key challenges identified include:

- Referrals: Since December 2022 there has been a downward trend in referrals from 20 per week to approximately 12 per week. This is in line with national trends.
- 2024/25 Funding: Derby and Derbyshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) have been notified by NHS England (NHSE) that funding will be significantly reduced in 2024/25 due to the reduction in referrals across the region. This brings into question the financial sustainability of the service.
- Workforce recruitment and retention: Staff are aware of the financial and reduced demand challenges faced by the service for 2024/25. There is a risk that staff will start to look for alternative employment, destabilising the service in-year.

A [Case for Change Document](#) / [Summary of the Case for Change Document](#) was developed that looked into this in more detail.

Service opportunities

A monthly Operational Delivery Group is chaired by the ICB to support service delivery, embed NHSE guidance, and review performance. The membership of this group includes providers and patient representatives. Due to the key challenges identified, the group has started to consider and discuss future service model opportunities.

The initial service opportunities include:

1. Decommission the Post (Long) COVID Service (signpost www.yourCOVIDrecovery and existing services).
2. Enhance existing services to accommodate Long COVID patients.
3. Provide a nominal service based on the current model and review how this would look with reduced staffing and funding.
4. Develop a service that maintains the integrated and holistic approach that has been embedded in the service and additionally considers the opportunity to reduce service health inequity.

The formal options development and appraisal process will not commence until pre-engagement exercises are complete.

Engagement

The methods of engagement included a survey and five workshops. The key areas that were engaged on included:

- People's knowledge of Long COVID and the Derbyshire Post (Long) COVID Service
- People's experiences of the current service – what works well and what could be improved
- What is important to people for the future service

See the [Engagement Approach](#) for full details.

Outcomes:

- 20 attended the face-to-face events
- 24 people attended the online events
- 177 people completed the online survey

Summary of key findings of the report

Awareness and understanding

- There is a lack of awareness of the Post (Long) COVID Service with nearly 90% of people who have not used the service not being aware of it and 66% of people who have used the service not being aware of it before accessing.
- Just under 50% of people that do not use the services feel that they know what the symptoms are of Long COVID.
- 70% of people who attended the service felt they knew the symptoms of Long COVID prior to using the service.

Summary of key findings of the report

Current service

- Nearly 70% of people rated the current service as good and above, 92% rated it as acceptable and above, and 8% rated it as poor.
- The key areas that people said worked well were treatment and care, the staff, communication, knowledge, support and understanding and the coordinated approach.
- The key areas people said needed improving were service/care coordination and pathways, communication, waiting times, education and research, care planning and personalisation and professionals understanding and diagnosis.
- 68% of people stated that they did not receive information while they were waiting to access the service and of these almost 80% said they would have found it useful. Key Information people said they would have found useful was: self-support information and initial advice, reassurance that they were in the system and not forgotten and what to expect from the service.
- Over 60% of people rated the communication as good or very good, with 82% rating it as acceptable and above, and 18% rating it poor.

Summary of key findings of the report

Future service

People identified the most important things to them for the future of the Post (Long) COVID Service in Derby and Derbyshire were:

- Treatment, specialised care and diagnostics
- Service availability and accessibility
- Support and ongoing care
- Education and awareness
- Empathy and understanding
- Research and up to date information
- Multi-disciplinary approach (hub model) and holistic approach

Summary of key findings of the report

Health inequalities

The research suggests that people who need the Post (Long) COVID Service are not accessing it. This includes people living in deprived areas as well as some people from inclusion health groups. The barriers to accessing this service that may be faced by some of these people include:

- Low digital and health literacy
- Frequent moving
- Low trust in and/or trauma from services
- Knowledge about Long COVID
- Knowing to see their GP
- Trouble getting a GP referral
- Overlap of symptoms
- Problems getting to the clinic

Next steps

- Involvement of patients and the public for the Post (Long) Covid Service review for the Pre-Engagement Report and development of a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats). A template will be provided as a basis for exploring the factors and recording the information and from the findings a discussion document will be written and then shared as part of the evaluation pack.
- From the engagement events held, patients who have expressed an interest in further work to develop the service will be included in the next steps process, along with the two patient representatives who were recruited to work on the Post (Long) Covid Service and have been invited to attend the:
- **Pre-engagement Report session and details of the SWOT analysis** – this session will be used to discuss the findings from the pre-engagement work and share details of how to complete the SWOT analysis. The findings from this exercise will be included in the information packs for evaluation to aid panel decision making.
- In addition, the Pre-engagement report will be shared with staff who have been actively involved in the development of the high-level options, the details of the report will be considered and incorporated into the models. The stakeholders will also be completing the SWOT analysis across the four options.
- The evaluation panel will include representatives from patients and staff across the providers (Integrated Care System (ICS)) who are involved in the Post (Long) Covid Service.
- The evaluation process and governance are to be led by the Integrated Care Board.

Contact Details

Name: Beth Fletcher

Title: Public Involvement Manager

Email: beth.fletcher2@nhs.net

Web: www.derbyandderbyshire.icb.nhs.uk

Web: joinedupcarederbyshire.co.uk