

Recommendations for: Sheffield Teaching Hospitals (Long Covid Rehabilitation Hub)

Since the initiation of this evaluation, the Long Covid Rehabilitation Hub has experienced significant changes and improvements in how we deliver care to our service users. These enhancements are in response to the evolving clinical understanding of this novel condition, as well as changes in patient needs and the number of individuals seeking our services.

We have collaborated with organisations such as Healthwatch, voluntary and community groups, primary care providers, and researchers to continuously refine and expand our offerings. We are therefore pleased to say that many of the recommendations in this report have already been addressed, in particular in relation to the information provided to people who use the service. We will continue this work with the ongoing development of a service leaflet and web page to support patients prior to their initial appointment.

Any further developments to the service will depend on the recommissioning of the service beyond March 2025.

Recommendation/area for improvement	Response/actions to be taken
<p>Create an accessible resource detailing the approach and full range of services available at the Long Covid Rehabilitation Hub - ensuring patients have a comprehensive understanding of what to expect and how to access available support.</p>	<p>We offer a personalised approach, based on the widely recognised What Matters to You framework¹. Therefore, the offer from the hub will vary patient to patient. The treatment plan is discussed and agreed collaboratively with the patient.</p> <p>We have a service leaflet in development that will be published soon and circulated to patients when their initial appointment is made as well as circulated to GP's/referrers. This will provide further clarity regarding the symptom management rather than medical approach to managing this long-term condition.</p> <p>The hub offers a number of leaflets to explain virtual group programmes, pain, disordered breathing, chest pain and palpitations, exercise, brain fog, stress management and information for employers.</p> <p>We recognise our online presence could be developed and will be keen to develop this further if the service is recommissioned.</p>

¹ Asking “What matters to you?” is about understanding what matters to an individual in their life. It’s about having meaningful conversations with individuals, as well as their families and carers. These conversations can help inform decisions about a person’s health and care. See. <https://www.whatmatterstoyou.scot> for more information.

Recommendation/area for improvement	Response/actions to be taken
	<p>We would welcome continued joint working with HealthWatch to ensure any of our literature is accessible and co-produced.</p>
<p>Consider implementing a self-referral option to the Long Covid Rehabilitation Hub. Allowing patients to directly access the care they need without needing a referral from a GP. This would help to overcome some of the barriers in primary care and so improve accessibility.</p>	<p>Medical screening is essential part of the package for managing long term conditions. It is vital that the patient has medical screening prior to attendance in a rehabilitation focused team to ensure there are no other causes of the presenting symptoms.</p> <p>Due to the changes in covid testing, patients are able to access the service without a confirmed positive covid test.</p> <p>We offer patient initiated follow up (when a patient is known to the service, they are able to initiate an appointment when they need one, based on their symptoms and individual circumstances) and self-referral within a year to patients who have previously attended the Hub. We find that this isn't used often but provides patients with reassurance.</p> <p>Working alongside patients and Healthwatch, we have engaged with GP's to educate regarding Long Covid and the significant impact symptoms can have on an individual. This is an ongoing process, and we continue to complete this work. We have a digital story from a patient of the Long Covid Rehab Hub which is ready to share to promote the value of the service.</p>
<p>Continue the approach of community outreach that supports people to understand the Long Covid service offer and promotes accessible information about the condition.</p>	<p>As part of our current service, we continue to engage with diverse community groups and primary care. We hope that we will be able to continue to support this work if the service is recommissioned.</p>
<p>Provide a supporting role to client's application for PIP and/or other welfare benefits, to confirm diagnosis and impact of condition.</p>	<p>The hub recognises the value of supporting with benefit applications. As we often haven't seen patients face to face, to complete a physical assessment, we offer a letter or rehabilitation plan with a full summary of needs and outlining functional difficulties which patients can use to complete PIP applications.</p>

Recommendation/area for improvement

Response/actions to be taken

We also provide detailed and personalised letters to employers. These include condition education, symptoms and recommendations for patients within the workplace.

We are able to signpost to agencies who can support with completion of application forms.

If recommissioned, we would explore further integration with social work teams to facilitate/streamline this process for patients.