



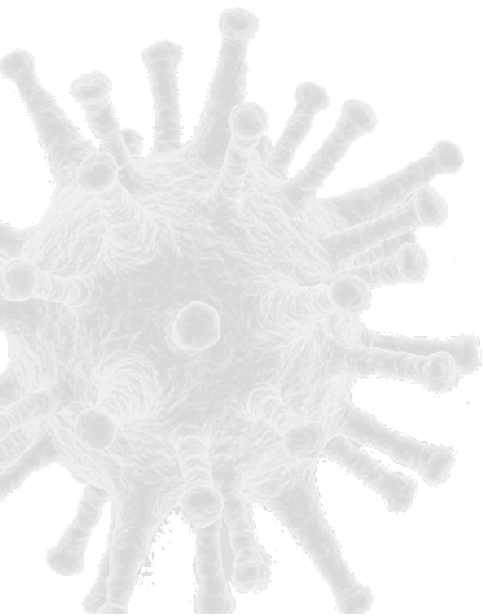
The
Queen's
Nursing
Institute

Long Covid Nurse Group Meeting Summary

'Long Covid occupational health
and revalidation after long term illness'

Friday 20 September 2024

10am - 11.30am, via Zoom



Welcome and Introductions

Helen Donovan, QN, Long Covid Programme Lead, The QNI, @HelenDon_RN

- Welcome everyone to this meeting. Today's session is devoted to 'Long Covid occupational health and revalidation after long term illness'.
- The Long Covid Nurse Group (LCNG) is a community of practice for nurses in the community to improve care and increase understanding about the physical, mental and emotional effects of Long Covid. It offers an online network of nursing colleagues; bimonthly meetings with expert speakers; regular newsletters; dedicated pages on the QNI website; Long Covid resources.
- Please get in touch if you would like to write a blog for us about either your struggles with Long Covid and/or management options, email me at helen.donovan@qni.org.uk
- To find out more or join the network, go to:
<https://qni.org.uk/nursing-in-the-community/long-covid-nurse-group/>
or scan the QR code below:
- Thank you to the [National Garden Scheme](#) for their continued support of the network.



1. Occupational Health Support and Guidance

Dr Clare Rayner, Consultant Physician in Occupational Medicine, University of Manchester; Professor Ewan B Macdonald OBE, Professor of Occupational Medicine, Head of Healthy Working Lives Group.

Facts - WHO estimated global impact

- 7,010,681 people have died so far from the Covid-19 outbreak as of 13 April 2024
- There are currently 704,753,890 cases of Long Covid confirmed
- New variants all the time - current in the UK is Covid-19 BA.2.8

Long Covid

- The sting in the tail of this pandemic
- In the UK there are 2 million people living with Long Covid
- This is for symptoms lasting more than 4 weeks
- It's a multi-system disease, but primarily a disease of blood vessels: endothelitis inflammation
- You can not have a diagnosis of Covid-19, it's a new syndrome, was not recognised initially and there is often inadequate medical care and a general lack of rehabilitation facilities
- Long term absence leads to potential job loss
- Long Covid will increase job loss in ageing workforce and reduce life expectancy further, unless we are very proactive.

Auto-immune diseases

- We need to learn how autoimmune disease develops - we are seeing people with autoimmune disease within a year of getting Covid-19.



1. Occupational Health Support and Guidance

Dr Clare Rayner, Consultant Physician in Occupational Medicine, University of Manchester; Professor Ewan B Macdonald OBE, Professor of Occupational Medicine, Head of Healthy Working Lives Group.

- Reinfections are the worst thing ever and there is lots of epidemiological data on this, we need to be promoting the prevention of reinfection
- We've got to take a more individualised approach to returning to work: more adjustment than the 4 to 6 week phased return we currently have.

Long Covid: A Manager's Guide

- The Society of Occupational Medicine released this guide in March 2024:
https://www.som.org.uk/sites/som.org.uk/files/SOM_Long_COVID_A_Managers_Guide_April_2024.pdf
- It's targeted at managers, but it's for all people.
- It recommends a 5 stage approach to getting people back to work safely and staying at work:

Step 1: Early - stay in touch while the worker is absent from work

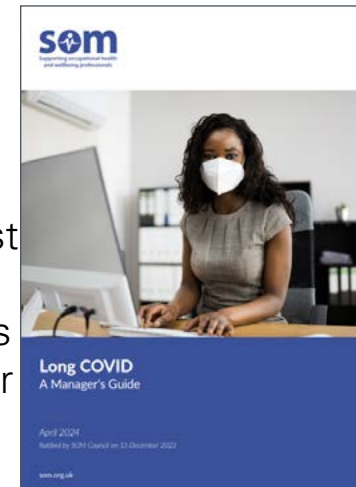
Step 2: Regular meetings

Step 3: Plan the worker's return

Step 4: Provide support during the early days of the return to work

Step 5: Regular review and ongoing support

- We lose confidence, structure and contact with other people - this is all lost in the first few weeks of absence.
- The problem for the country is we have a lot of people in this situation: huge numbers affected, it's nearly doing a PR job with the managers/organisation: you won't get your workforce back if you don't do this.



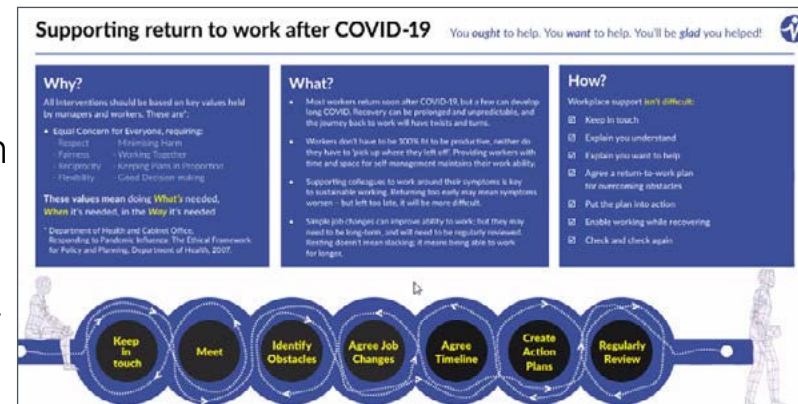
1. Occupational Health Support and Guidance

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- Two things are successful in helping people back:
 1. Individualised approach
 2. Prolonged phased return - long and slow over several months; the most successful returns occur where the employer can take that flexibility.

Questions

- How do we raise the profile of Long Covid as a disability?
- **Clare answer:** this is a challenge for all of us, we seem to be in massive denial, I can't believe the government and employers don't see this. It's about being brave enough to keep saying this and the reiteration of the same message: PEOPLE WILL NOT GET BACK TO SUSTAINABLE EMPLOYMENT IF THEY HAVE ENERGY-SAPPED CONDITIONS LIKE THIS, IF THEY DON'T HAVE THIS SUPPORT.
- **Ewan answer:** Most people with Long Covid do recover, but some people take a very long time and managers and employers don't have the HR guidelines to accommodate that. People being off work for a year with Long Covid is not unusual, but the problem is sickness/absence policies don't accommodate this condition.
- People do recover if they don't get reinfected repeatedly, we have to think about that too.



2. Understanding professionals with a disability revalidation

Anne Trotter BEM, Assistant Director, Education and Standards, NMC

- Revalidation introduced in 2015 by NMC.
- In 2020 we found that disabled people were not revalidating as much as non-disabled people. We have just published a report about this, see it in full here:

<https://www.nmc.org.uk/globalassets/sitedocuments/revalidation/2024/disabled-professionals-summary-report2.pdf>

- Following this report we tried to find out why and analysed data from 2016 - 2022, spoke to people from all 4 countries, of different ages, range of disabilities.

Findings were split into 3 sections

Section 1:

- Illness, impairment and workplace discrimination can make revalidation requirements more difficult to meet and to record.
- Long term sick leave can make it difficult for some to accrue the required practice hours
- Accessing Continuous Professional Development (CPD) can be a challenge due to poor health, reduced mobility or vulnerability
- Lack of employer support can hinder ability to achieve CPD requirements
- Reflective discussion can be hard if employer relationships are strained
- Professional unclear about declaring health conditions and their consequences



2. Understanding professionals with a disability revalidation

Anne Trotter BEM, Assistant Director, Education and Standards, NMC

Section 2

- The extra challenges of living with a disability, as well as discrimination inside and outside the workplace, affected revalidation too
- Workplace and employer relationships were seen as central to revalidation
- Disabled professionals may move to work more flexibly, but this can cause isolation

Section 3

- Increased support and reasonable adjustments may help ensure equal access to revalidation, and offering flexible options to meet revalidation criteria may be key to equity.
- A call for clear and consistent guidance using straightforward language
- Participants wanted flexible and fair approach to fulfilling requirements
- Professionals wanted proactive support from NMC and employers

Extensions

- Short extensions are possible - if you extend the extensions period you're building up a challenge, but we're looking at this. Flag it immediately with your employer if you need an extension, do get in touch with the NMC, they should be able to help you.
- The short extensions tend to be between 8 to 12 weeks so it's not a long term extension, but we are going to be reviewing that in our revalidation guidance next year.





3. Helping registrants with Long Covid with their NMC revalidation

Dr Alison Twycross, Chair of Supporting Healthcare Heroes

My background

- I'm living with Long Covid, I took my pension early because of it.
- I'm really pleased to be talking about this - it was issues with my own revalidation in 2020 that got me talking to the NMC, it persuaded me I had a role to play in advocating for healthcare workers with Long Covid.

Supporting Healthcare Heroes UK Charity

- We aim to help all healthcare workers: from porters and cleaners to midwives and doctors. I was really keen that everyone that was affected would get help.
- Our mission is to stand shoulder to shoulder with UK healthcare workers who are living with Long Covid and
 - -to reduce the financial hardship caused by Long Covid, to relieve isolation and give Long Covid workers a voice;
 - -to disseminate research and raise awareness;
 - -to support and advocate for workers with Long Covid;
 - -to advocate for the improvement of indoor air quality in hospital and care establishments.

Why revalidation is an issue

- People with Long Covid struggling to complete the revalidation due to Long Covid symptoms such as fatigue and cognitive dysfunction
- Finding a confirmer/someone to do reflective discussion can be difficult on long term sickness.



3. Helping registrants with Long Covid with their NMC revalidation

Dr Alison Twycross, Chair of Supporting Healthcare Heroes

- I've done lots of writing over the years but when I got Long Covid in March 2020 I remember saying to a friend that I was finding the writing difficult: I got an extension but the fact I was struggling to do a reflective account made me think.
- Most of us with Long Covid have cognitive dysfunction, fatigue and sitting down to write is a challenge.

How SHH-UK is helping

- Producing guidance on our knowledge base about completing your NMC revalidation
- Presentation focusing on CPD hours
- Confirmer matching service
- Calling for examples of practice hours that aren't clinical (for example this session!)
- Working on a presentation focusing on practice hours
- Find out more here: <https://shh-uk.org/knowledge-base/knowledge-base/>

Reinfections

- I had two infections at the end of last year, now a lot of the symptoms that were manageable now are very bothersome.
- It's devastating how reinfections can be.
- Just because you don't get Long Covid from infection one or two, doesn't mean you won't get it from infection 4 or 5. I've just had to buy a mobility scooter so I don't have to walk far.

More information

- Website: <https://shh-uk.org>
- info@shh-uk.org



Next meeting:

- Tuesday 19 November, 10am - 11.30am:

Long Covid where are we now? Causes and impact

Featuring speakers Prof. Trish Greenhalgh, Professor of Primary Care Health Sciences at the University of Oxford and Prof. Danny Altman, Professor of Immunology at Imperial College London.

To book your place or to find out more go to:

<https://qni.org.uk/news-and-events/events/long-covid-nurse-group-meeting/>



Thank you to all delegates who attended today's meeting.

FEEDBACK:

Thank you so much, very interesting and informative

Absolutely fantastic session again.
Thank you.

Wonderful and insightful session with lots of great discussion. Thank you for arranging and to all the speakers for their amazing presentations.

Thank you all- a very informative and thought provoking meeting.

Great session and thank you to all the speakers.

Thank you, excellent meeting, very informative

Thank you , this has been an excellent discussion this morning

