

King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust submission to the Southwark Health and Social Care Scrutiny Commission, March 2022.

King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust is one of the busiest and biggest Trusts in the country serving an inner-city population of 1.3 million people and acting as a tertiary referral centre for millions more.

This submission below sets out how the Trust, and in particular our Denmark Hill site - which cares for the people of Southwark – is supporting both our staff and members of the public with the symptoms of Long COVID.

Long COVID

King's was one of the first Trusts across the country to deliver support for people living with the symptoms of Long COVID and we continue to work with partners from across the region to provide Long COVID support.

There are three ways in which our Trust is involved in providing Long COVID services:

1. *Joint community service between King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust and Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust (GSTT).*

Since April 2021, we have been jointly running Long COVID specialist multidisciplinary assessment clinics for residents in South East London at three of our acute sites. For King's, assessment clinics are run from King's College Hospital in Denmark Hill and the Princess Royal Hospital in Bromley. These clinics assess patients who have been experiencing symptoms of Long COVID for three months or more and refer them on as appropriate so that they can receive the best care for their symptoms, in a timely manner. Depending on the severity of their symptoms, people with Long COVID could be referred to our specialist vocational rehabilitation clinic (as set out below) or be signposted to community group support. This assessment service has been co-developed in collaboration with partners across the integrated care system with a strong emphasis on patient and public engagement.

Clinicians from King's and GSTT as well as community healthcare representatives from Southwark and Lambeth and other partners meet regularly to discuss strategic direction and plan and agree the service delivery together on a regular basis. As part of this work, there are plans in place to set up a single point of access service across Southwark and Lambeth, strengthening our community based and specialist care offer. Single point of access services significantly improves patient experience as they streamline the referral processes, making it easier and quicker for people to access the treatment and support they need without multiple appointments and assessments.

2. *Vocational Rehabilitation for people living with Long COVID*

King's was the first specialist vocational rehabilitation service exclusively set up to support members of the public with Long COVID across the country. Vocational rehabilitation is a process which enables people with functional, psychological, development, cognitive and emotional needs or health conditions to overcome barriers to maintaining or returning to employment, volunteering or education.

The symptoms of Long COVID can detrimentally impact on someone's ability to work. We see and treat people referred to our service with the most severe symptoms of Long COVID and following an initial assessment, co-ordinate an individualised programme of support to help them return to work. This includes working directly with the patient's employers to put in place meaningful adjustments so that a return to work, or maintaining their job, is possible.

Since the service began – on charitable, proof of concept funding, we have treated 89 patients, all of whom are either still receiving treatment, have returned successfully to their substantive employment or found alternative employment more suited to them while they continue to manage their symptoms. The pioneering specialist service has now received longer term funding support from the CCG and recruitment is underway to enable us to reduce waiting lists and support more people living in Southwark and South East London.

3. Occupational Health support for Trust staff

Across King's we support all our staff who are managing symptoms of Long COVID. We do not yet know whether the Omicron variant of COVID-19 will cause Long COVID symptoms in people who caught the virus since it emerged in late 2021. This is because it takes three months of persistent symptoms for a diagnosis of Long COVID to be made.

Our support programme for staff includes an occupational health physician, nursing staff, occupational therapists, physiotherapists and involvement from colleagues in psychology. The team supports staff to manage their physical, cognitive and psychological symptoms working towards recovery. It includes implementing adjustments, developing coping with symptom strategies and peer support to enable people to return to work or maintain their current roles.

Of the staff referred to our service for support managing their Long COVID symptoms, 63% were currently off sick from their role and 36% were working adjusted hours. The service has made a substantive contribution to meaningfully supporting staff – working in a range of roles, at varying levels of seniority – back into the jobs they enjoy and want to do. We will continue to ensure that this support is available to all staff who need it.

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