

9 March 2021

Management and recording of the long-term effects of COVID-19 (Long COVID)

Dear Colleague,

I am writing to confirm the current position for the planning and delivery of care to people experiencing long-term effects of COVID-19.

As you may be aware, on 18 December 2020 the Scottish Intercollegiate Guidelines Network (SIGN), the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP) published [a rapid clinical guideline](#) covering the identification, assessment and management of the long-term effects of COVID-19, often described as 'Long-COVID'.

This outlines recommendations for healthcare professionals caring for people who have had suspected or confirmed acute COVID-19 and present to any healthcare setting, irrespective of whether they were hospitalised or had a positive or negative SARS-CoV-2 test (PCR, antigen or antibody).

Clinical definitions are provided for the effects of COVID-19 at different times;

- **Acute COVID-19** - Signs and symptoms of COVID-19 for up to 4 weeks.
- **Ongoing symptomatic COVID-19** - Signs and symptoms of COVID-19 from 4 weeks up to 12 weeks.
- **Post-COVID-19 syndrome** - Signs and symptoms that develop during or after an infection consistent with COVID-19, continue for more than 12 weeks and are not explained by an alternative diagnosis.

The guideline contains information that Primary Care teams will find helpful in the planning and delivery of care to people experiencing long-term effects of COVID-19, and I would encourage you to share the document with relevant colleagues to ensure that it informs clinical practice within your Board area.

The guideline has been developed using a 'living' approach, which means that targeted areas of the guideline will be continuously reviewed and updated over time in response to emerging evidence.

You may also wish to be aware of the following complementary resources;

- A [patient facing version](#) of the guideline, produced to help people experiencing long-term effects of COVID-19 to understand what it means for them
- '[Guidelines into practice](#)' article by Dr Ashish Chaudhry and Dr Harsha Master on recognising and managing long COVID-19 symptoms in primary care
- Self-management information available on the [NHS Inform platform](#) and the [Your COVID recovery website](#)

Next steps

The Scottish Government is producing national guidance to assist Primary Care teams in supporting patients with long-term effects of COVID-19. A further update circulating this guidance and supporting information will follow at the end of March.

Recording of long term effects of COVID-19

As you will appreciate, accurate recording of information within clinical systems is necessary in order to provide an accurate picture of activity in relation to this new condition. To support this, local codes have been developed for the EMIS PCS and Vision information systems as below.

System	Term	Search keyword	Code
EMIS PCS	Ongoing symptomatic COVID-19	Ongoing cov	^ESCT1348648
EMIS PCS	Post-COVID-19 syndrome	Post-COV	^ESCT1348645
Vision	Ongoing symptomatic COVID-19	CORONA	A7955
Vision	Post-COVID-19 syndrome	POSTCOVID	AyuJC

I recommend that local Primary Care teams use these codes and would be grateful if you could communicate this to them. Use of these codes will enable us to develop a better understanding of prevalence over time, and help inform our approach to supporting people with long-term effects of COVID-19.

I hope that you find the information contained in this letter helpful.

Dr Gregor Smith, Chief Medical Officer for Scotland



Co-signed

Dr David Shackles, Joint Chair, RCGP Scotland



Dr Chris Williams, Joint Chair, RCGP Scotland

