

[sent via email]

Tuesday 1 December 2020

Dear colleague,

Re: Referral pathway for patients with symptoms of long covid

From the beginning of December, patients in our region will be able to receive dedicated care and treatment for symptoms associated with long covid.

As you will no doubt have seen through your own day-to-day work, more and more people are living with the unpleasant side effects of coronavirus long after the initial period of illness has passed.

Among the most common symptoms of long covid are breathlessness, chronic fatigue, pain and brain fog, as well as persistent stress and anxiety.

Estimates suggest that up to 100,000 people across the country are suffering from long covid, which means it is highly likely that hundreds of people in our communities are also living with this debilitating condition, and looking for help.

The good news is that the CCG has now approved plans to provide these patients with practical help and support, most of which is already available through existing health and care services.

As GPs, you are patients' most-common route into NHS care, and we are sure you will acknowledge that your support is very much key to getting this new support service up and running.

From Tuesday 1 December, should any patients who have previously tested positive, or who seem highly likely to test positive, for coronavirus contact you regarding persistent symptoms linked to long covid, please bear in mind that tailored support for the condition is now available.

Patients can be referred for a long covid assessment by yourselves, as well as hospital consultants and other healthcare professionals, using the referral form, which is now accessible through the Ardens system.

The telephone-based assessment will be managed by a dedicated clinician who will signpost patients to the care and support most relevant to their condition, which, in most cases, is likely to be a form of self-care.

Patients with more complex symptoms will be discussed by the team in the virtual multidisciplinary clinic, who will be responsible for allocating more specific support from an existing NHS or voluntary sector service.

It should be noted that patients are unable to self-refer to this MDT support, and can only receive care through an NHS referral.

We are confident that this new offer of support will make a real difference to a large number of local people, and we'd like to thank you in advance for your continued support, professionalism and dedication.

Should you have any queries relating to anything mentioned in this letter, please do not hesitate to send questions to bswccg.postcovidpathway@nhs.net.

Additionally, if you know of any patients who would be willing to lend their experience of long covid to the ongoing design of the care pathway, please get in touch by sending an email to lucy.baker8@nhs.net.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Ruth Grabham,
Medical Director

Lucy Baker,
Director of Service Delivery