# WRITTEN STATEMENT

# BY

# THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

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| **TITLE**  | **‘Long COVID' Longer Term Impacts of COVID-19**  |
| **DATE**  | **22 October 2020** |
| **BY** | **Vaughan Gething, Minister for Health & Social Services** |

The Welsh Government took prompt action as the evidence began to emerge in the spring identifying the likely need for rehabilitation for people recovering from COVID-19, which is now popularly referred to as ‘Long COVID’, and for those people indirectly affected by the lockdown measures. Long COVID is especially but not exclusively used as a term for people with long standing health impacts from COVID-19 that may not have required hospital treatment. Working with stakeholders, we published a National Framework for Rehabilitation in May.

This Framework identified four population groups: those who are recovering from COVID-19; those whose usual care for a health condition has been paused, those who have delayed approaching health services during the pandemic period for whatever reason and those whose health may have been affected by reduced activity, or contact with others as a result of restrictions, shielding and self-isolating.

Over the summer, we published a suite of guidance and resources to support health boards and their partners to model their population needs and to plan and develop their local rehabilitation services.

We have emphasised the importance of developing rehabilitation services in our Winter Protection Plan and planning guidance to the NHS.

Our approach to people recovering from COVID-19 is focused on providing care and support as close to home as possible, tailored to meet an individual’s specific needs.

We believe this can be best achieved by providing integrated rehabilitation services for the range of longer term effects of COVID-19, such as fatigue, breathlessness, heart, physical or psychological impacts, whether as a result of COVID-19 or other pre-existing conditions. The majority of people can access the rehabilitation support they need from the multi professional health and care services in the community and, only where necessary, from inpatient rehabilitation services.

We are continuing to learn about COVID-19. Wales is working in a number of areas to ensure our response is based on the latest evidence and research. We are participating in the development by NICE of a clinical definition of Long COVID and subsequent guidance on diagnosis and care.

Wales is participating in the UK Post-Hospitalisation COVID-19 Study (PHOSP-COVID), funded by the National Institute for Health Research (NIHR) and MRC UK Research and Innovation. This world leading study has been established to assess the long-term effects of COVID-19 on patient health and recovery in 10,000 participants with the aim of informing the development of care pathways to help patients recover as fully as possible after having experienced the disease.

The Welsh Government has and will continue to take action to support people with Long COVID. I will issue further updates as more information is available.

This statement is being issued during recess in order to keep members informed. Should members wish me to make a further statement or to answer questions on this when the Senedd returns I would be happy to do so.