



Eich cyf/Your ref P-06-1488  
Ein cyf/Our ref JMHSC/11064/24

Carolyn Thomas MS  
Chair  
Petitions Committee

[petitions@senedd.wales](mailto:petitions@senedd.wales)

17 January 2025

Dear Carolyn,

**Petition P-06-1488 Establish a 'Care Society' to Tackle the Long COVID Crisis in Wales**

Thank you for your letter of 5 December regarding the above petition.

In Wales, the need to invest in services to support people with Long-Covid has been acknowledged since the start of the pandemic. We are clear that continuing to support people with, and recovering from, the long-term effects of Covid-19 is a priority for the Welsh Government and the NHS in Wales.

We launched the Adferiad (Recovery) programme in June 2021 and invested £10m between 2021 and 2023. Health boards developed community-focused integrated, multi-professional rehabilitation services, which allow for referral to specialist assessment where needed. Adferiad-funded services can be accessed via primary care clinicians or other clinicians involved in an individual's care.

In March 2023, the then Minister for Health and Social Services announced an increase in annual funding for Adferiad services, with £8m now being allocated to health boards on an ongoing basis ([Written Statement: Adferiad Programme Update \(14 March 2023\) | GOV.WALES](#)). The increased funding has enabled health boards to widen access to Adferiad-funded services to people with other post-acute infection illness on a needs/symptom led basis, including people with conditions such as ME/CFS and fibromyalgia, as well as those with persistent physical symptoms, but no confirmed diagnosis.

It was decided that local services, supported by access to the necessary specialist services, was the optimal model in Wales to improve outcomes for people affected by long Covid, and to ensure an equitable access model. The approach adopted in Wales is consistent with the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence ([NICE](#)) [guideline](#), supported and guided by clinicians in Wales. Our policy direction and service model will continue to adapt as we learn more about the long-term effects of Covid- 19. As the evidence base grows, alongside evidence about treatments and different types or presentations of Long-Covid, this will further inform the optimal model and pathways required, and present opportunities to develop Adferiad-funded services further.

Health and Care Research Wales is actively scanning for research and trials to offer opportunities for people with Long-Covid to access potential treatments and therapies. In April 2023, we invested £6.93m over five years to create the Health and Care Research Wales Evidence Centre to produce timely evidence for policy and practice decision makers. This centre welcomes questions from practitioners and policy makers across health and social care, including questions relating to Long-Covid. It also seeks input from those with lived experience in refining their activities.

## **Economic Participation**

Employers are responsible for ensuring their employees are supported during periods of ill health and to return to work after any period of illness, including Long-Covid. Where necessary, they should make reasonable adjustments to facilitate this. We expect organisations to be fulfilling their requirements as employers, as outlined by the Equality Act 2010 in providing reasonable adjustments for disabled staff. The Equality and Human Rights Commission is the regulator for the provisions of the Equality Act, 2010. Regulation of public bodies is not a matter for Welsh Government. The Equality Advice and Support Service ([equalityadvisoryservice.com](http://equalityadvisoryservice.com)) may provide a useful source of information.

Recognising the particular issues NHS staff were experiencing, in July 2023 NHS Wales Employers developed a guidance document to [support colleagues with Long COVID-19 to return to work](#). This guidance reminded employers of the need to consider, on a case-by-case basis following discussions between manager and member of staff, whether it is appropriate to provide ongoing enhanced sick pay support above half pay or no pay. The guidance also asked line managers to consider every option open to them, to explore the flexibilities, and to do their utmost to support individuals with Long-Covid to return to the workplace wherever possible.

With regards to benefits this is a reserved matter and, as such, I refer the petitioner to the following websites for information: [Long-Covid disability benefits | Disability charity Scope UK](#).

## **Infrastructure**

In Wales, the Welsh Government, with the support of NHS Wales Shared Services Partnership – Specialist Estates Services (NWSSP-SES) and Public Health Wales (PHW), continues to introduce measures to improve air quality across health and social care. Effective ventilation and filtration are key to achieving this and by doing so, to mitigate the risks of infection. Some key actions have included:

- The issue of a new Welsh Health Technical Memorandum (WHTM) 03-01 – Specialised Ventilation for Healthcare Buildings Parts A & B which covers design, validation and operational performance. These documents provide detailed

ventilation recommendations for all healthcare buildings, including primary and social care.

- Every health board and NHS trust in Wales has appointed Authorised Persons (APs) for ventilation. They ensure installations, maintenance and monitoring is completed to a compliant standard.
- Ventilation Safety Groups (VSG) are in place in all health boards and NHS trusts in Wales. These groups have the responsibility of ensuring all ventilation systems are designed, installed, tested, and maintained in accordance with the guidance.
- NWSSP-SES provides the services of an Authorising Engineer-Ventilation (AE-V) which is appointed as an independent advisor by health boards and NHS trusts to undertake assessments of Authorised Persons, audit systems and their associated operational management. The Authorising Engineer is also a member of the Ventilation Safety Group.
- NWSSP-SES engineers undertake full validations on specialist ventilation systems when they are first installed. In addition, they complete critical ventilation plant verifications annually and external contractors are also commissioned to carry out this work which ensures all specialist ventilation systems are covered.

The social care sector in Wales has been provided with advisory publications through PHW and the Welsh Government with a focus on infection transmission and clearly referencing the importance of effective ventilation systems to mitigate these risks and improve air quality. Social care settings, such as care homes, are people's home and not a clinical environment. The terms "air filtration" and "sterilisation" in relation to air quality are only relevant for healthcare settings.

Under Section 44 (4) (a) of The Regulated Services (Service Providers and Responsible Individuals) (Wales) Regulations 2017, providers of regulated services must ensure premises are "accessible, adequately lit, heated and ventilated". The regulating body, Care Inspectorate Wales, carries out regular inspections of the services and the environment is one of the areas reported on.

With regards to ventilation in schools, it is the duty of the local authority and/or governing body to provide effective and suitable provision to ensure that every enclosed workplace is ventilated by a sufficient quantity of fresh or purified air in accordance with the Workplace (Health, Safety and Welfare) Regulations 1992.

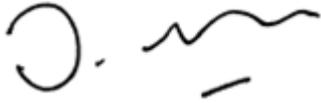
32,000 carbon dioxide monitors were distributed by the Welsh Government to assist in the monitoring and management of ventilation and air quality across schools during the pandemic. The guidance for monitoring carbon dioxide levels developed during that period remains valid and has a positive impact on air quality, accepting that this is only one element of air quality monitoring.

Where air handling systems are installed in new school buildings, filtration is an essential requirement of the systems and is of higher importance due to the air tightness of the new buildings.

Finally, we have committed, alongside the UK Government, to large scale green infrastructure projects such as City and Region Growth Deals, Freeports and Investment Zones, alongside our Optimised (Housing) Retrofit Programme. There is a range of skills support available, including fully funded upskilling and re-skilling training under our Personal Learning Accounts or Apprenticeships.

Our Communities for Work+ programme provides specialist employment advisory support and intensive mentoring for those aged 20 years old or over and Working Wales provides a range of careers related support including career reviews to support those thinking about new possibilities/career changes.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'J' followed by a series of wavy lines and a short horizontal stroke at the end.

**Jeremy Miles AS/MS**

Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Iechyd a Gofal Cymdeithasol  
Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care