

# The Long COVID Clinic for Staff: Caring for colleagues.

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# Factors influencing delivery:

- **Collaboration Occupational Health and Allied Health services**
- **Return to work (RTW) plan designed by Occupational Health service**
- **Allied Health clinical support-symptom management/feedback & recommendations to Occ Health to inform modifications to RTW plan**
- **Communication pathways internal/external**
- **Role of GP and work capacity medical certificate-challenges with fluctuating capacity**
- **Boundaries and professional scope/expertise agreement**
- **Client versus Clinician versus Organisational goals**
- **Sequential single profession input versus concurrent MDT input-flexible response to changing/new/priority symptoms**



# Foundation tools & strategies:

- Clear statement of clinical boundaries & information sharing
- Check & clarify shared language/understanding
- Validation of experience/symptoms
- Calibrate expectations-self/organisation
- 'Permission' to adopt strategies/accommodations-external and intrinsic- self
- 'Prescription' of strategies. Value and confidence in efficacy-evidence based
- Removal of barriers- Appts during paid work time, included in RTW plans, COVID leave support scheme



# Symptom targeted inputs:

- **Fatigue management- Occupational Therapist focuses on cognitive fatigue**
- **Physical capacity-Physical demands/exertion need to be significantly adapted in the presence of autonomic dysfunction. Collaboration with Physiotherapy**
- **Management of impact of impaired cognition/brain fog**
- **Moderation of sensory sensitivity**
- **Cheerleading/problem solving**
- **Communication strategy/education of key people-work/home**
- **Driving- Waka Kotahi: Medical aspects of fitness to drive. No specific advice for COVID or Long COVID. Medical practitioners to use general principles of medical fitness to drive and encourage self restriction based on symptoms**

# Work Plan considerations:

- Ability to adhere to work plan
- Managed transitions-return to work and worksite
- Work task analysis, identification of safety critical tasks

- Effective fatigue breaks- 'recharging', flexible to fluctuating baseline and demands of tasks prior to breaks
- Rationalising energy expenditure

- Health information disclosure
- Commute options & safety
- Implications for commercial vehicle insurance cover and use



# Typical Work Plan alterations:

- **Altered timing-Start/finish times**
- **Altered hours-reduced/flexible**
- **Altered patterns-distribution/rest days/scheduling of critical tasks**
- **Altered shifts/rosters**
- **Workload considerations-Quantity, timeframes, deadlines**
- **Altered tasks-modified/restricted tasks or alternative duties**
- **Additional supports-Buddy systems, facilitation of self care, EAP**
- **Location-Home based, altered work environment**
- **Aids-Technology, timers, energy saving devices, memory supports**
- **Physical modifications-compensatory equipment, ergonomic assessments**



# What's been most effective?

- **Validation**
- **Written resources with images-trusted information sources**
- **Collaboration with Occupational Health**
- **Time to attend appointments-valued and enabling**
- **Permission to use strategies reinforced- self**
- **Very slow RTW plan progression**
- **Flexible RTW plan versus traditional Graduated RTW plan, non-linear design**
- **RTW plans-Either increase in intensity of task or increase in duration not both together**
- **Time for successful adaption to each increase prior to next adjustment**
- **Inbuilt Flexibility with degree of autonomy for self monitoring**
- **Scheduled appointments with prn/as required access between these to problem solve subject to staff availability**



# Challenges to delivery:

- Expected date of return/anticipated capacity is almost impossible to predict
- Maintaining confidentiality in on site delivery to colleagues
- Self pressure to exceed RTW plan
- Identifying available accommodations
- Cover arrangements for flexible RTW plans
- Unpredictable progression (relapse/remit)
- Lack of longitudinal data for predictive outcomes



## References:

[www.wfot.org/news/2020/wfot-public-statement-occupational-therapy-and-rehabilitation-of-people-affected-by-the-covid-19-pandemic](http://www.wfot.org/news/2020/wfot-public-statement-occupational-therapy-and-rehabilitation-of-people-affected-by-the-covid-19-pandemic)

[How to manage post-viral fatigue after COVID-19 - RCOT](#)

[NHS England » Supporting colleagues affected by Long COVID](#)

[Supporting recovery after long COVID | NHS Employers](#)

[Post-COVID Syndrome \(Long Covid\) - RCOT](#)

[Long COVID and Return to Work What Works 0.pdf \(som.org.uk\)](#)

[COVID-19 return to work guide for managers.pdf \(som.org.uk\)](#)

[COVID-19 return to work guide for recovering workers.pdf \(som.org.uk\)](#)