

HEALTH AND SPORT COMMITTEE

COVID-19 INQUIRY - CALL FOR VIEWS

SUBMISSION FROM Allied Health Professions Federation Scotland

Supporting the Recovery and Renewal of Scotland's Population Following the COVID-19 Pandemic

Dear Mr MacDonald MSP,

As Convenor of Allied Health Professions Federation Scotland (AHPFS), I am writing to highlight the vital contribution which the Allied Health Professions (AHP) workforce will be providing to rehabilitation of the population as we seek to resume health and social care services following the COVID-19 pandemic. As recovery plans are being drafted within each of the Board areas, it is essential that the unique skills which AHPs have to offer in rehabilitation for recovery and renewal of Scotland's population are threaded through these plans.

As we emerge from the current crisis, those recovering from COVID-19 are returning to communities, and many have ongoing rehabilitation needs. It is critical that the impact on community provision is met with the same urgency and resource as that put in place for acute services and intensive care, so we can support Scotland's population to recover from the effects of the pandemic.

As a result of disruption to the health and social care system, people's health and function is now at risk due to pauses in planned care, or because of delayed diagnosis and treatment. Furthermore, the physical and mental challenges of lockdown have been immense. Allied health professionals (AHPs) are professional experts in rehabilitation and their services are vital to the recovery of people across all of these population groups.

The challenge facing community services is now daunting, and getting ahead of the curve to plan and remobilise services must begin in earnest. What is essential is that primary care, community services and integrated health and social care is no longer under-utilised, under-estimated or de-prioritised. The delivery of effective modernised rehabilitation services, particularly in the post-COVID environment, will be dependent on appropriate resourcing, including increased and sustainable digital platforms. A digital first approach should be the norm for all AHP services and be appropriately resourced and supported.

For over a decade it has been recognised that earlier intervention, preventative care, and investment in primary care and integrated health and social care is the path to a healthier society, with reduced demand for hospital care and acute services. This

requires investment in services, and this must be accelerated to design and deliver the right care where it is needed, when it is needed.

AHPFS have identified five priority actions which will be necessary for the future rehabilitation needs of Scotland to be met. These are:

- **A right to rehabilitation:** – a rights-based approach to support people to receive the appropriate care in the right place at the right time by the right health and social care professionals to live a life to full potential.
- **A Rehabilitation strategy:** The intention to drive a strategy lead by the Chief AHP Officer is a welcome development. A national strategy for quality rehabilitation, making it an integral part of the healthcare system must be matched with resources and timescales.
- **Multidisciplinary leadership:** Expand and modernise rehabilitation services to meet the scale of need - both Covid and non-Covid related – with particular focus on delivering this in the community.
- **Workforce planning:** Grow the multi-disciplinary rehabilitation workforce, with the right skills and staff needed.
- **Revitalise services:** Learn from the impetus and changes in response to the pandemic, and use them to shape the future of rehabilitation.

Andrea Wilson

Convenor, AHPFS

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