



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Matt Hancock MP
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care
Department for Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London, SW1H 0EU

11 May 2020

Dear Matt

I hope you are keeping well during this time. Thank you for your work in leading the response to the coronavirus pandemic thus far.

I am writing to draw your attention to the vital role that rehabilitation plays and will continue to play in helping people to recover from Covid-19, and to seek assurance that the Government has the plans in place to meet the inevitable increase in demand for rehabilitation in the wake of this crisis.

Rehabilitation – both in the community and in hospital – is crucial for the care of those patients most severely affected by Covid-19. Many of those being discharged from ICUs will require ongoing rehabilitation due to the scarring on their lungs. Others will have mental health needs due to suffering psychological trauma. Those with pre-existing, long-term conditions may need complex and individual rehabilitation.

The challenge this presents for already stretched rehabilitation teams, including physiotherapists and occupational therapists, must not be underestimated. The pandemic is already exposing the poor state of community rehabilitation provision, resulting from years of underfunding. The additional pressure created by the Covid-19 crisis may prove insurmountable without real investment.

There will undoubtedly be a tsunami of rehabilitation needs as the country recovers from the pandemic. Can you confirm that the Government is urgently developing a strategy to guarantee the provision of these key services? These must include:

- Provisions to ensure enough staff capacity to meet rising needs, particularly where many occupational therapists and support workers have been redeployed away from rehabilitation.
- Provisions to prioritise the 1.5 million people who have had to self-isolate for the (minimum) 12 week period, many who will be unable to access rehabilitation in their conventional way and will need new support.

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- Plans to recruit and retain the multi-disciplinary rehabilitation workforce to deliver ongoing rehabilitation.
- Guarantees that people being discharged from hospitals will have timely access to rehabilitation services and that these services will be personalised to meet people's individual needs.
- Assurances that the needs of those suffering from non-Covid-related conditions are not compromised as a result of the increase in Covid-19 rehabilitation needs.

Ensuring that the workforce involved in hospital and community rehabilitation is supported and well-resourced is also crucial if we are to meet the UK's rehabilitation needs during and after this pandemic.

The Royal College of Occupational therapists and the Chartered Society of Physiotherapists recently launched their rehabilitation priorities, alongside the important work they are doing with over two dozen organisations through the 'Community Rehabilitation Alliance', which includes the likes of Age UK and Alzheimer's Society. I would encourage you to engage their expertise in terms of rehabilitation planning to meet the needs of the population in the next year and beyond as we recover from the crisis.

Allied healthcare professionals are working in community settings and social care, ensuring the successful discharge of patients from hospitals, providing rehabilitation and community-based rapid response services. Given the risk of community transmission of Covid-19, will the Government now ensure that all allied healthcare professionals are prioritised for access to vital personal protective equipment, to allow them to do their jobs as safely as possible?

It is clear that hospital and community rehabilitation is and will continue to be a crucial component in enabling the recovery of Covid-19 patients. The pandemic will pass but we must be confident that the Government has taken steps to make sure the lasting health impacts of coronavirus are considered and dealt with effectively.

Yours sincerely

Munira Wilson
MP for Twickenham

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