



**Councillor Marie Bashforth  
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**Councillor Howard Sykes MBE**

Our ref: HDS/KR/4632

Date: 2 September 2021

Dear all,

**Re: Supporting patients with chronic pain and fatigue conditions**

I am writing to request the Health and Well-being Board revisits the provision of care for patients living with chronic pain and fatigue conditions within the Borough.

**Long-COVID Clinic**

I welcomed the establishment of a specialist clinic under the auspices of the Northern Care Alliance at the Royal Oldham Hospital, as part of a government-funded national network, for the treatment of long-COVID patients in the borough.

Clinical evidence suggests one in five people who have contracted COVID-19 exhibit long-term post-viral symptoms, including brain fog, anxiety, depression, breathlessness, pain and chronic fatigue.

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These symptoms are similarly experienced by sufferers of Myalgic Encephalopathy, Fibromyalgia, Chronic Fatigue Syndrome, Post Viral Fatigue Syndrome, Rheumatoid Arthritis, Osteoarthritis, and other chronic pain and fatigue conditions.

Given their similarities, I would be grateful if the Board can examine whether the capacity and expertise of the long-COVID clinic could also support patients with these conditions?

As I understand it presently Oldham patients can access the Greater Manchester Mental NHS Foundation Trust 'Living with Pain and Fatigue Service' and Northern Care Alliance NHS Group 'Acute and Chronic Pain Service'.

Could the Board therefore also examine how these services could work with the long-COVID clinic to provide a more holistic and accessible service for patients and their carers?

### **Drug-free treatments**

In addition, I should like the Board to look at the availability of approved non-drug treatments locally to ensure that patients wishing to access drug-free treatments can be best served?

I am sure you are aware that NICE (the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence) in August 2020 published its 'Guideline - Chronic pain in over 16s: assessment and management' paper for consultation.

I have yet to see the response to the consultation, but the paper included the following recommendations of non-drug therapies to health authorities:

### **Exercise for chronic primary pain**

Offer a supervised group exercise programme (for example, cardiovascular, mind–body, strength, or a combination of approaches) to people aged 16 years and over to manage chronic primary pain.

Encourage people with chronic primary pain to carry on with their exercise for longer-term general health benefits.

### **Psychological therapy for chronic primary pain**

Consider acceptance and commitment therapy (ACT) or cognitive– behavioural therapy (CBT) for pain for people aged 16 years and over with chronic primary pain.

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## Acupuncture for chronic primary pain

Consider a course of acupuncture or dry needling, within a traditional Chinese or Western acupuncture system, for people aged 16 years and over to manage chronic primary pain

I would like us to determine if this provision is available locally and if patients electing for non-drug treatments are able to have their needs met?

This also fits well with our agenda to promote social prescribing. Access to free yoga and mindfulness classes, an allotment or community gardening project, or a walking group is I am sure greatly beneficial in many instances to patients living with chronic pain and fatigue conditions, who often sadly also suffer social isolation and depression.

## Listening to patients and carers

I am sure we are all committed to co-production ensuring patients and carers, and their representative organisations, are properly consulted prior to improvements in health care.

I would venture that will probably partnership working with Healthwatch Oldham, Carers Centre, Action Together and national bodies such as the M.E Association

<https://meassociation.org.uk/> and Fibromyalgia Action UK <http://www.fmauk.org/>

Can I therefore please recommend we reach out to these patients, carers, and to local and national groups, to take account of their lived experience?

Our efforts will be more inclusive and robust as a result and will help ensure our Oldham offer is the best for these most deserving patients and those who care and support them.

Thanks for your consideration of these requests. I look forward to your response and to seeing how we can take them forward through the Health and Well-being Board and with our partners.

Yours sincerely,



Howard Sykes

Your privacy is important to me. Your local Liberal Democrat Councillors are committed to ensuring that we are transparent about ways in which we use your personal information and who we share that with (e.g. other Councillors, Council Officers or Officers from other bodies like the NHS, Police, Transport, United Utilities, Environmental Agency etc.) to help resolve any issues you have. The Liberal Democrats will also keep in touch from time to time about issues, but you can always ask us to stop at any time.

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