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# Allied health professionals' role in rehabilitation during and after COVID-19

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This statement outlines our four nations' collective strategic priorities and approach to AHP rehabilitation leadership during and after COVID-19. Rehabilitation is critical to ensuring our population's recovery from the impacts of the pandemic and the long-term sustainability of the health and social care system. As AHPs we are at the centre in shaping the rehabilitation agenda while working as part of the wider multidisciplinary and multiagency teams across all sectors.

This collective approach is necessary as we anticipate an increase in the need for rehabilitation across four main population groups:

1. people recovering from COVID-19, both those who remained in the community and those who have been discharged following extended critical care/hospital stays
2. people whose health and function are now at risk due to pauses in planned care
3. people who avoided accessing health services during the pandemic and are now at greater risk of ill-health because of delayed diagnosis and treatment
4. people dealing with the physical and mental health effects of lockdown.

The rehabilitation needs of these at-risk groups are vitally important and need to be met as we collectively support people to recover, regain health and wellbeing, and reach their potential, and ultimately ensure we flourish as a nation.

## **We will maintain our commitment to people and populations**

We will continue to adopt a whole-population and whole systems approach to rehabilitation. While we currently prioritise interventions for those at greatest risk, we will ensure that the needs of others are not overlooked. We will engage with the widest cohort possible, through new ways of working, to achieve greater reach and to minimise avoidable deterioration. We will work with system partners to identify groups at risk of avoidable harm.

## **We will pursue personalised care**

We will focus on what matters to the individual, using shared decision-making to work in partnership with them and others and embracing opportunities to support self-management. We will adopt holistic approaches to rehabilitation, recognising the physical, psychological and social impact of the pandemic.

## **We will embrace new ways of working**

The pandemic has demanded our quick adoption of new ways of working, eg our use of digital technology and our approach to skill mix. Where these new practices are benefitting patient experience and staff satisfaction, clinical outcomes, productivity and environmental impact, we will retain and further develop them as a legacy benefit. We will commit to using released resources to direct more energy and effort at reducing health inequalities.

## **We will use all available resources**

We will proactively and creatively support students, AHPs returning to the NHS, colleagues in social care and the voluntary/independent sectors, family and friends to maximise rehabilitation. We will support practitioners to work to the top of their licence. We will adopt the principles of social prescribing, recognising that physical, psychological and social health and wellbeing will be supported through a holistic approach, and we will use community assets safely during the pandemic.

## **We will take care of ourselves and our colleagues**

The pandemic has affected all our professional and personal lives, both physically and emotionally. We will prioritise self-care and build team resilience by ensuring we are working in a physically and psychologically safe environment and enabling access to physical and mental wellbeing resources. Where AHPs have changed roles during the pandemic, we will support them to return to AHP services in the future, and further advance the professions by building on their new skills and knowledge. Everyone's contribution will be valued, whether this is frontline delivery of rehabilitation or other essential activities that enable this.

## **Finally, thank you**

AHPs and their support staff are making a major contribution to the COVID-19 response and we will be pivotal as this pandemic enters its next phase. We are immensely proud of the AHP response. There are challenging times ahead as we support the rehabilitation needs of

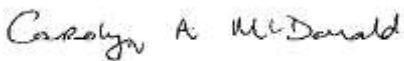
those who have had COVID-19 as well of other at-risk groups. We know the dedication, professionalism and hard work of AHPs will continue, and we would like to thank you sincerely for all your efforts, knowing that this experience will make us stronger together, now and in the future.



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