



Sammie McFarland  
CEO & Founder  
Long Covid Kids

26th March 2025

**The Rt Hon Wes Streeting MP  
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care**

**Ashley Dalton MP  
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Public Health and Prevention**

**Department of Health and Social Care  
39 Victoria Street  
London, SW1H 0EU**

**Subject: Invest in Long Covid & M.E. Urgent Action Needed to Stop Clinic Closures & to Fund Improved Clinical Care and Research**

Dear Secretary of State and Minister Dalton,

We, the undersigned organisations, charities, and individuals – alongside more than 13,000 people who have signed our petition – are calling for urgent action to support the millions living with Long Covid and M.E. This includes over 100,000 children (1) affected by Long Covid in England and Scotland, and many more living with M.E., PoTS, and other related conditions.

Long Covid is part of a wider group of post-viral and immune-mediated conditions – including M.E./CFS, PoTS, and others – that sit within a spectrum of complex, often overlapping illnesses. Paediatric Long Covid is a newly recognised childhood disease, emerging since 2020, which demands urgent recognition, research, and individualised care.

This is not just a health crisis, it is an escalating economic and social emergency that affects children, families, and the wider workforce.

This letter aligns directly with the **NHS 10-Year Plan** launched in 2024, which aims to overhaul healthcare and improve access to treatment, especially for those with complex and chronic conditions. Ensuring adequate support for people with Long Covid and M.E. must be a key part of that strategy, with a focus on improving patient outcomes, embedding robust data collection, and continuously evaluating the effectiveness of care and services.

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These often-overlapping conditions have left thousands bedbound, unable to socialise, attend school or work, and without access to the medical and educational support they urgently need. With the right investment in care and services, we can begin to reduce inequalities and increase opportunities, ensuring that these children and young people have the same chance to thrive as their peers.

As the pandemic enters its fifth year, many of the children first affected are now teenagers and young adults, navigating the difficult transition into adult services while still managing complex, chronic symptoms. Ensuring continuity of care through this transition is crucial to reducing the risk of long-term harm and helping to give every young person the best possible chance of recovery and stability.

Recent research by the University of Southampton, based on NHS England survey data, found that almost one in ten people in England report symptoms consistent with Long Covid, but are unsure due to the lack of appropriate diagnostics(2). This highlights not only the scale of potential unmet health need, but also the urgent need for greater awareness, diagnosis, and support.

### **Despite the devastating impact of these complex conditions:**

- Specialist NHS Long Covid services are being defunded and closed as described in the recent report by Long Covid Support and Long Covid Kids.(3)
- Children and adults with Long Covid and M.E. are left without access to treatment or support
- No additional dedicated government funding has been allocated for Long Covid research since 2021, despite emerging scientific evidence that further investment could lead to effective treatments.
- None of the newly announced £26 billion in NHS funding has been allocated to Long Covid research or care, nor to implementing the M.E. Delivery Plan.

Compared to the scale of investment in other major health challenges, funding for Long Covid has been a drop in the ocean, leaving millions without answers, compromising patient safety, and allowing vital research opportunities to go unexplored. NHS England has allocated funding to ICBs, but without accountability, services are being defunded despite ongoing need.

Without dedicated funding, people with these complex, long-term health conditions will continue to suffer without access to the specialist care they need, and urgent opportunities to invest in biomedical research will continue to be missed.

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## **We Need Immediate Action.**

We urge the government to commit to the following:

1. **Develop a long-term strategy** to fund biomedical research, treatment, and monitor the wider impact of Long Covid and M.E. in adults and children, informed by lived experience.
2. **Stop clinic closures** and commit to long-term, effective care, support, and treatment for Long Covid, M.E., and overlapping conditions, grounded in robust biomedical research and co-designed with patients. NHS England has allocated funding to ICBs, but without accountability, services are being defunded despite ongoing need.
3. **Train doctors and healthcare professionals** to expand and sustain specialist services.

The previous government failed to address the scale of this crisis, leaving many children and adults struggling without support. However, your government has an opportunity to take decisive action, show leadership, and bring meaningful change. Addressing these conditions is essential to improving patient outcomes, reducing long-term pressures on the NHS, and ensuring that everyone, whether in education, employment, or unable to work, receives the care and support they need to live full and meaningful lives.

We would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss how we can work together to implement these solutions. Please let us know a convenient time to do so.

This is a unique opportunity to break from past inaction, deliver on your vision for a stronger NHS, and change lives.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We look forward to your response.

Signed by:

### **Sammie McFarland**

CEO & Founder, Long Covid Kids, CYP Lived Experience Representative for The Clinical Post Covid Society

### **Professor Mark Faghy**

Professor in Clinical Exercise Science, University of Derby  
Trustee, Long Covid Kids

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## **Charities and Organisations**

Action for ME  
British Association of Clinicians in ME/CFS (BACME)  
Long COVID Physio  
Long Covid SOS  
Long Covid Support  
National Association for Hospital Education  
The ME Association  
MEAction UK  
PoTs UK  
School and Public Health Nurses Association (SAPHNA)  
Supporting Healthcare Heroes UK

## **Individuals**

Professor Nisreen Alwan, Professor of Public Health at the University of Southampton

Theo Anbu MBBS, FRCPCH, DCH, MSc Consultant General Paediatrician, Clinical Lead for CFS/ME in children, Clinical Lead for CYP Long Covid services

Professor Ami Banerjee, Professor of Clinical Data Science, on behalf of the STIMULATE consortium

Dr Kate Dharmarajah – General Paediatrician, Lead Paediatrician Post COVID Service

Todd E. Davenport, PT, DPT, PhD, MPH, Professor & Chair, Department of Physical Therapy, University of the Pacific, Scientific Advisor, Workwell Foundation

Anna Gregorowski, Consultant Nurse, Paediatric and Adolescent Division, University College London Hospital and Chair of the British Association of Clinicians in ME/CFS (BACME)

Professor Stephen Griffin, Professor of Cancer Virology, Leeds Institute of Molecular Research, School of Medicine

Dr Melissa Heightman, Post COVID Researcher on behalf of the STIMULATE consortium

Dr Binita Kane, Consultant Respiratory Physician

Cath Kitchen OBE, Chair, National Association for Hospital Education

Anne Marie McConway, Early Childhood Lecturer, Primary School Teacher

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Professor Tim Rhodes, Covid Made Long, London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine

Dr Terry Segal, General and Adolescent paediatrician, previous Convenor of Young People's health special interest group ( affiliated to Royal College of Paediatrics and child health RCPCH), Co-lead of Pan London Children and Young People's Post COVID Service

Dr Charles Shepherd, Hon Medical Adviser, The ME Association

Dr Richard Tozer, Consultant Paediatrician, Lead for Gastroenterology, Metabolic, ME/CFS, POTS and Long Covid

Dr Alison Twycross PhD RN, Retired Professor of Children's Nursing

## References

1. **ONS Data, March 2024**  
Self-reported coronavirus (COVID-19) infections and associated symptoms, England and Scotland  
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/conditionsanddiseases/articles/selfreportedcoronaviruscovid19infectionsandassociatedsymptomsenglandandscotland/november2023tomarch2024#long-covid>
2. **Exploring Long Covid Prevalence and Patient Uncertainty**  
By Sociodemographic Characteristics Using GP Patient Survey Data, Health Expectations Journal  
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/hex.70202>
3. **Joint Report by Long Covid Support and Long Covid Kids – Executive Summary**  
<https://www.calameo.com/brand-and-soul/read/0005611769c6970ed066f>

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