Long Covid and return to work support - what works?

A Welsh Perspective

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What works from Practice and Practice based evidence?

- Primary care based and managed support to Long Covid support/rehabilitation

- Early OH based self-management interventions with sign-posting/referral to secondary care assessments

- Self-management interventions by 'In Work Support' for non NHS staff in some areas of Wales, using AHP Health & Work Report to provide recommendations for RTW

- Focus on individualised presenting problems and evidence based self-management (eg energy conservation, pacing, mood management etc)

- Timely assessment by secondary services (neuro, cardio, respiratory etc) long waits often reported with little outcome

- community Long Covid service/ Physiotherapy for employees experiencing ongoing symptoms.

- Peer support

- Occupational Health advice and recommendations to support RTW

- Supportive line-manager/colleagues/HR

- Supportive organisational polices including extended sick pay

- Signposting to WG Covid recovery app -

Recovery app launched in Wales to help support people with long covid - Keeping Me Well

Management referral advice and support

- Very extended phased and graduated return – up to 6 months in some cases, similar to what can be helpful for staff with ME or Chronic Fatigue

- Regular review with the manager, sometimes on a weekly basis to increase and decrease workload or work hours as required .

- Supporting working from home, particularly to help mitigate the effect of "commuter fatigue."

- Temporary reduced hours following a phased return.

- Flexible working, looking at later start and finish times to help manage symptoms.

- Reducing/avoiding shift work and night shift work, either entirely or altering the frequency.

- Self management advice e.g. fatigue management, pacing etc

- Staff report importance of managers continuing to keep in touch when off LTS as often feel isolated and if believe contracted Covid in work, can add to feelings of moral injury

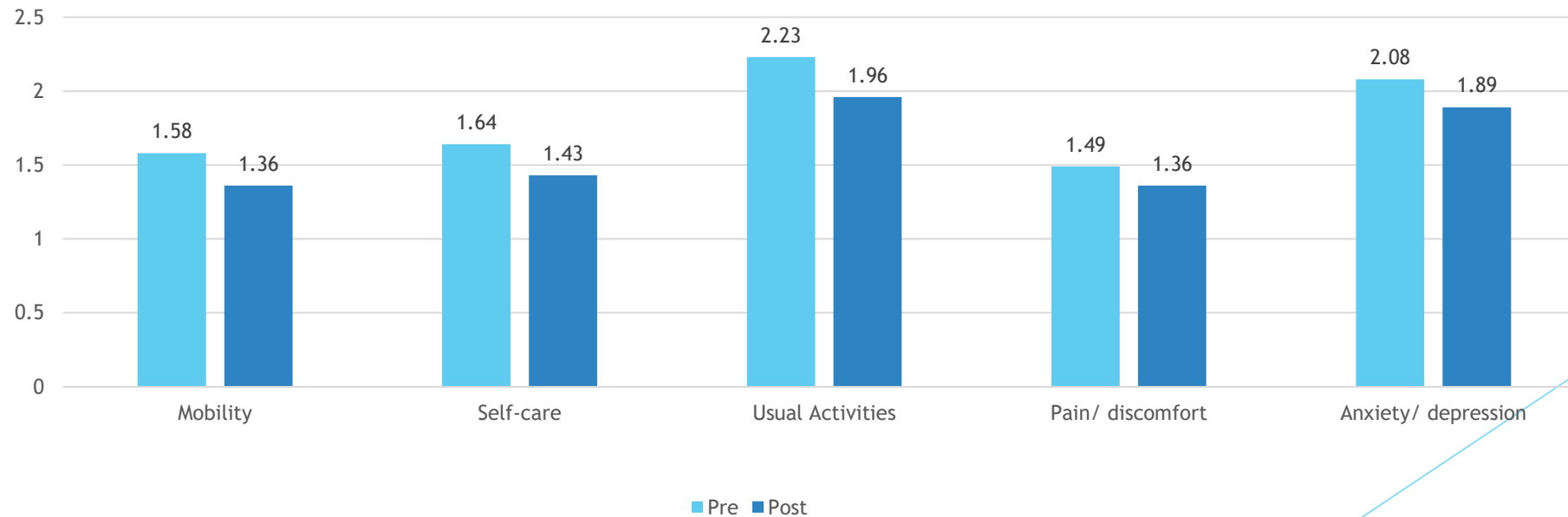# Swansea Bay UHB OH Long Covid Clinic

▶ Established November 2020 – Band 7 Occupational Therapist

▶ 141 staff supported to date

▶ Referrals from OH MDT - average wait = 18 days

▶ Virtual initial assessment - impacts of Post Covid Syndrome on daily functioning and ability to work with self-management advice, virtual peer support group and signposting.

▶ Main presenting symptoms -   Fatigue Shortness of Breath cognitive difficulties; 'Brain fog', anxiety, joint pain
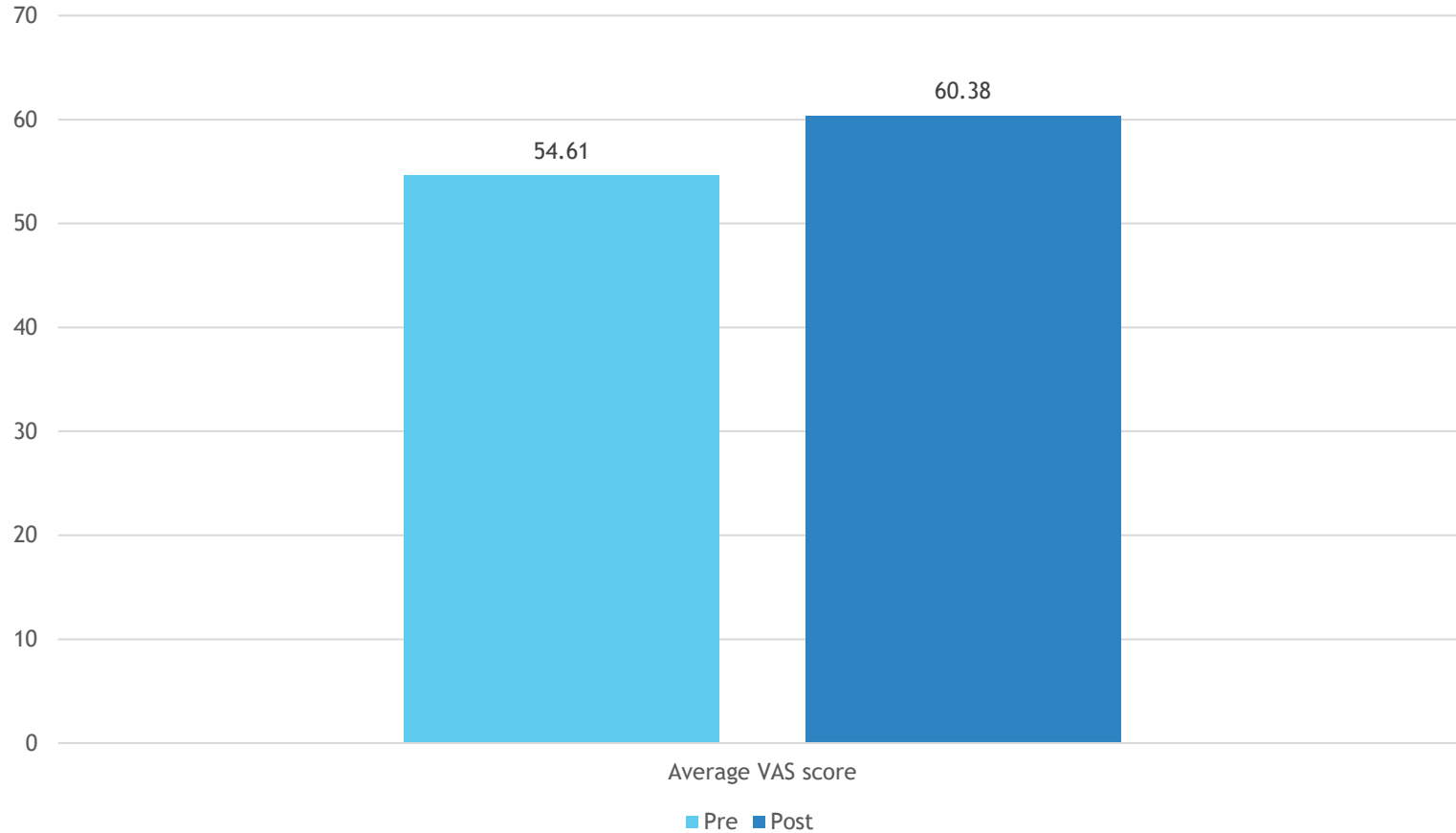
OH Long Covid Clinic - Interventions

- Fatigue management (planning and pacing; realistic goal setting)

- Mood management

- Anxiety management

- Managing concentration/memory

- Advice and recommendations to line manger to support RTW or sustained placement in work

- Sign posting- GP, local community based long covid clinic, 30% = NHS staff

OH Long Covid Clinic - Outcomes

➢ Improvements in functional ability reflected in EQ-5D-DL.=29 data sets = approximately 28% of the individuals who have accessed the service at time of initial evaluation.
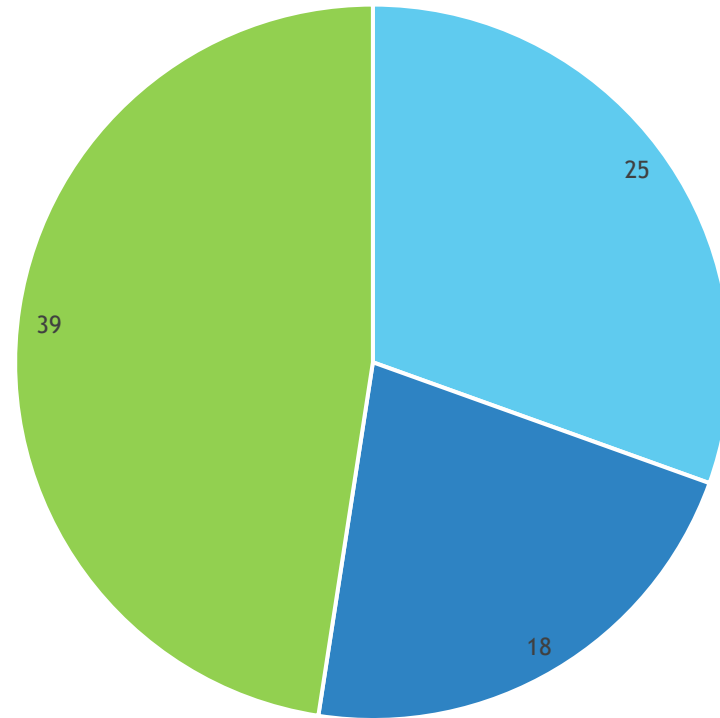

Chart showing Pre and Post values:

Category	Pre	Post
Mobility	1.58	1.36
Self-care	1.64	1.43
Usual Activities	2.23	1.96
Pain/ discomfort	1.49	1.36
Anxiety/ depression	2.08	1.89

■ Pre ■ Post

Average EQ-5D-5L visual analogue scale (VAS) 0-100, pre and post scores

Pre & Post Average Brief Fatigue Inventory
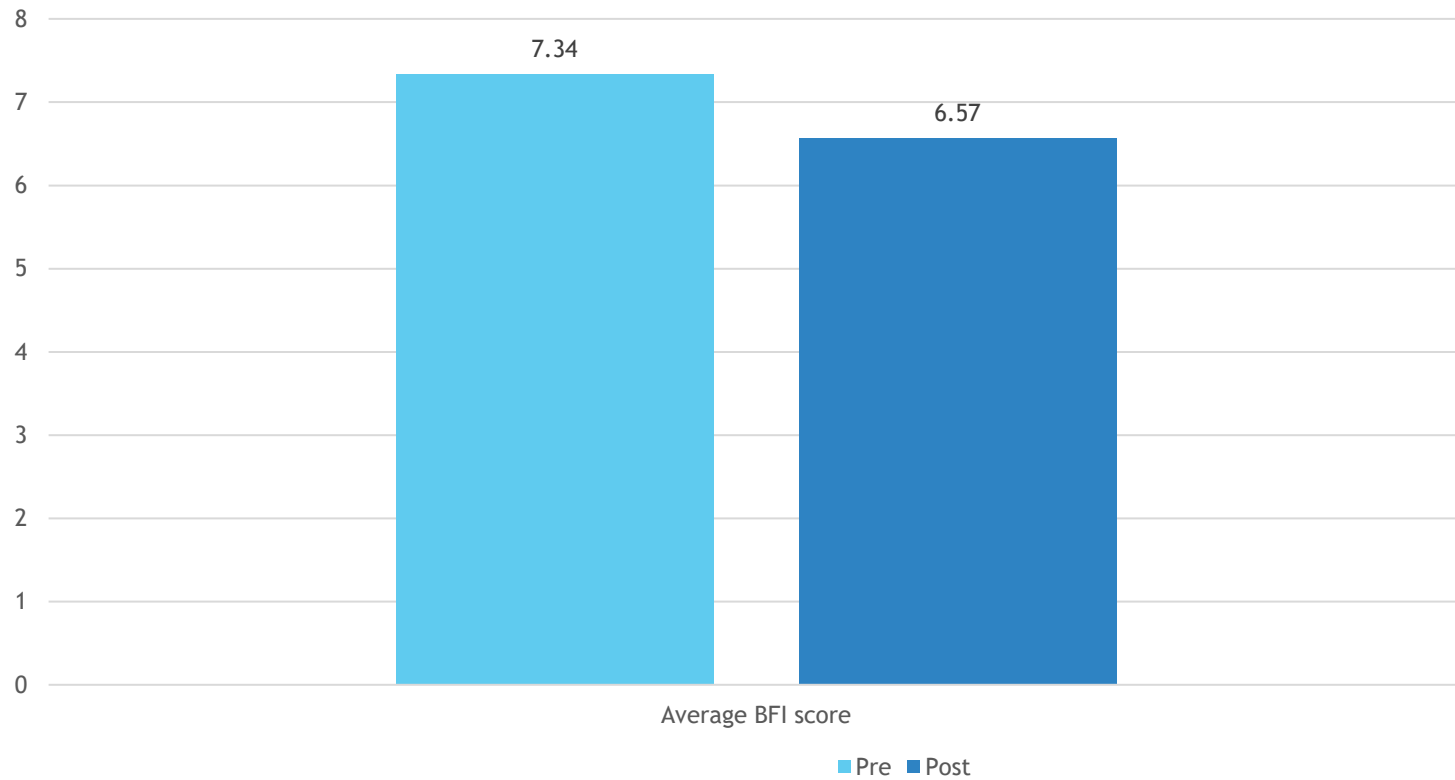
Work status during intervention (n=82)

- Remained in work throughout
- Returned to work during intervention
- Remained on sickness absence throughout

Outcomes cont...

- Feedback given that advice has been beneficial in increasing levels of activity and managing symptoms which had improved mood and wellbeing

- Return to Work advice given

  - Phased return to work

  - Reasonable adjustments

  - Redeployment

  - Admin/sedentary or alternative roles

  - Using accrued annual leave to manage RTW

- Improved confidence reported in discussing RTW with their Manager

3 words to describe the service

Welsh Government Minister for Health & Social Care visits Long Covid Services Feb 22