



# How well are people with Long COVID recovering?

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On behalf of NEL Long COVID/Post  
COVID Services

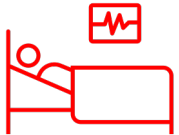
# Is Long COVID still around?



Estimated prevalence of 1.9 million in UK (ONS 2023)



1.5 million people (79%) report day-to-day activities adversely affected



381,000 (20%) report “limited a lot”

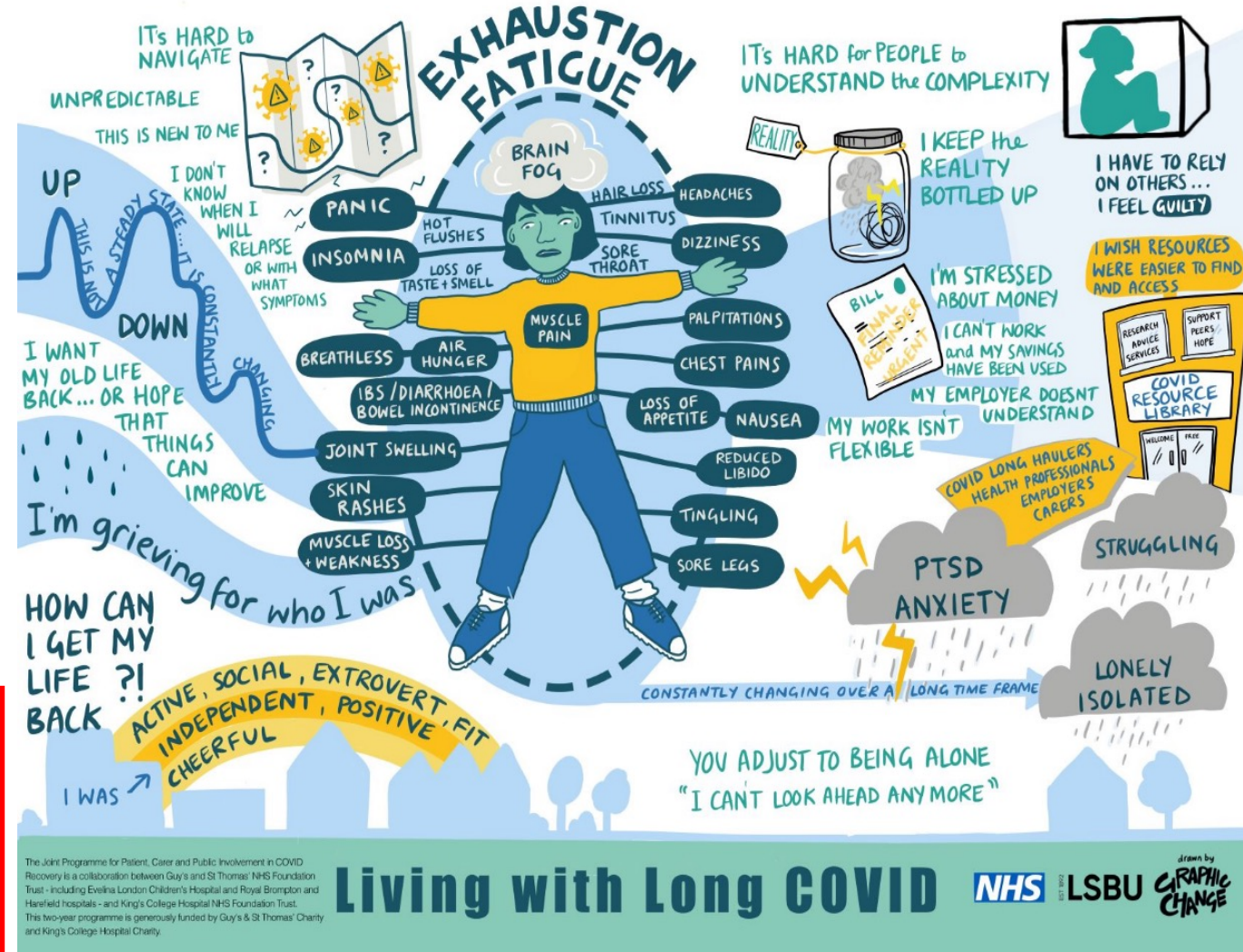
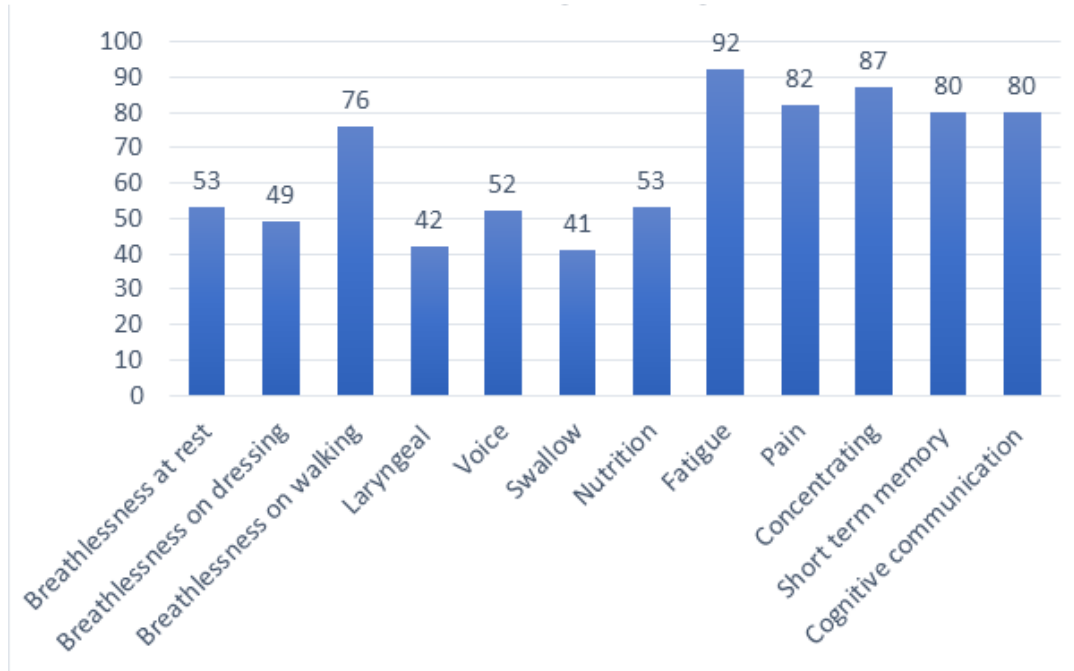


First had suspected COVID-19:

- 12 weeks previously: 83,000 (4%)
- >1 year previously: 1.7 million (69%)
- > 2 years previously: 762,000 (41%)

# What does Long COVID look like?

Snapshot of most common symptoms reported by patients referred to NEL services

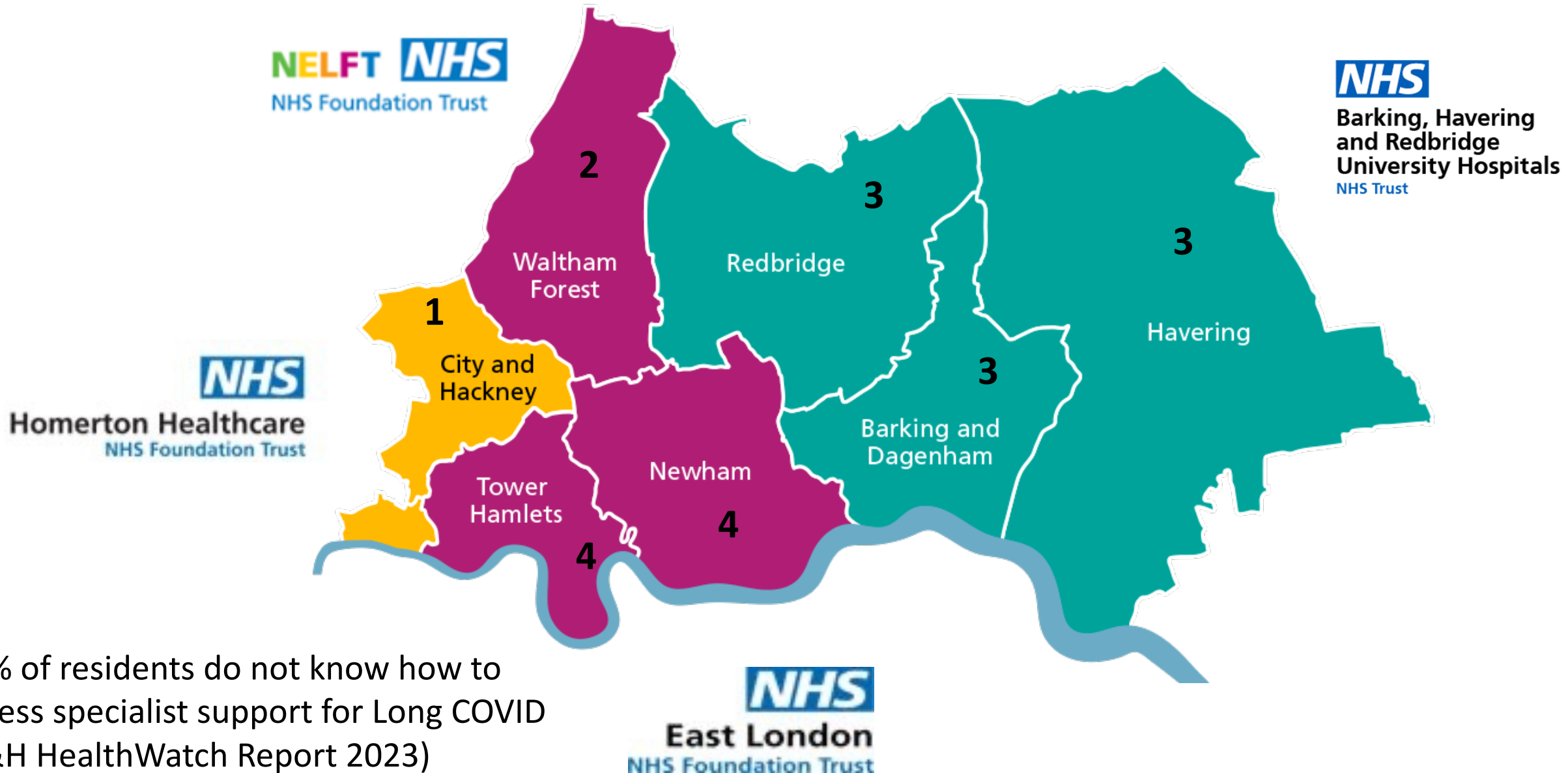


200+  
symptoms

67%  
moderate to  
severe  
depression

42%  
moderate to  
severe  
anxiety

# Long COVID Services in North East London (NEL)



38% of residents do not know how to access specialist support for Long COVID (C&H HealthWatch Report 2023)

# Consistent service offer in all Places

## Multidisciplinary assessment

- Up to 5 clinicians involved
- Average is 2; waiting times less than 6 weeks

## Rehabilitation package

- Up to 5 clinicians
- Average is 3

## No. treatment sessions

- Average 11
- Range 1-24

## Duration of treatment

- Up to 36 months
- Average 12 weeks

## Community outreach

- Partnering with voluntary sector organisations to raise awareness, scope unmet need

Teams include: physiotherapy, occupational therapy, psychology, GP, respiratory consultant, nurse, speech and language therapy, care co-ordination, expert patients, engagement lead

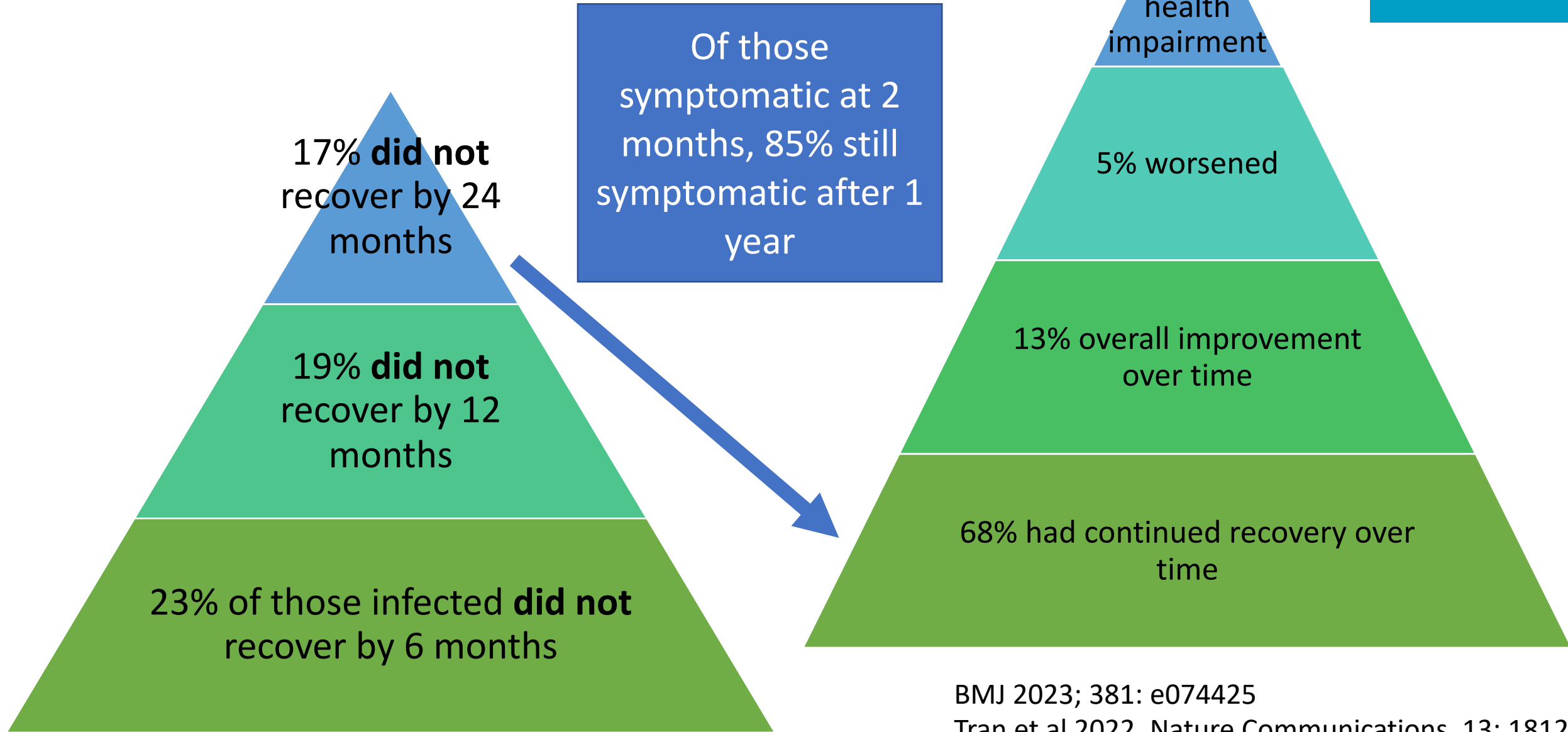
slido



**What do we mean by recovery?**

ⓘ Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.

# Research on recovery?



# Outcomes

## Work & Social Adjustment

75% improved  
with psychology

70% improved  
with Physio/OT

## Mood

96% improved  
with psychology

87% improved  
with Physio/OT

## Confidence

88% improved in  
fatigue  
management

96% increased  
confidence at  
end of treatment

Outcomes  
measuring  
mood ratings,  
impact of  
symptoms on  
work, home  
activities,  
socialising

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82% improved

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4% same

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14% worse

Ability to  
do things  
that are  
important  
to you

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67% much improved

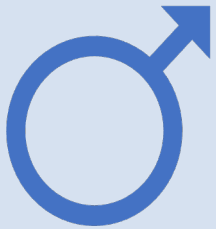
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22% improved a little

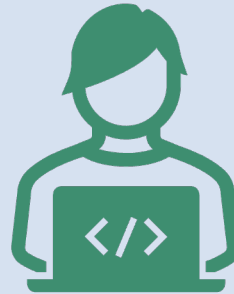
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11% no change

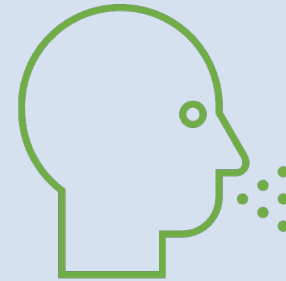
# Case study 1



41yo  
Married  
COVID-19 2021

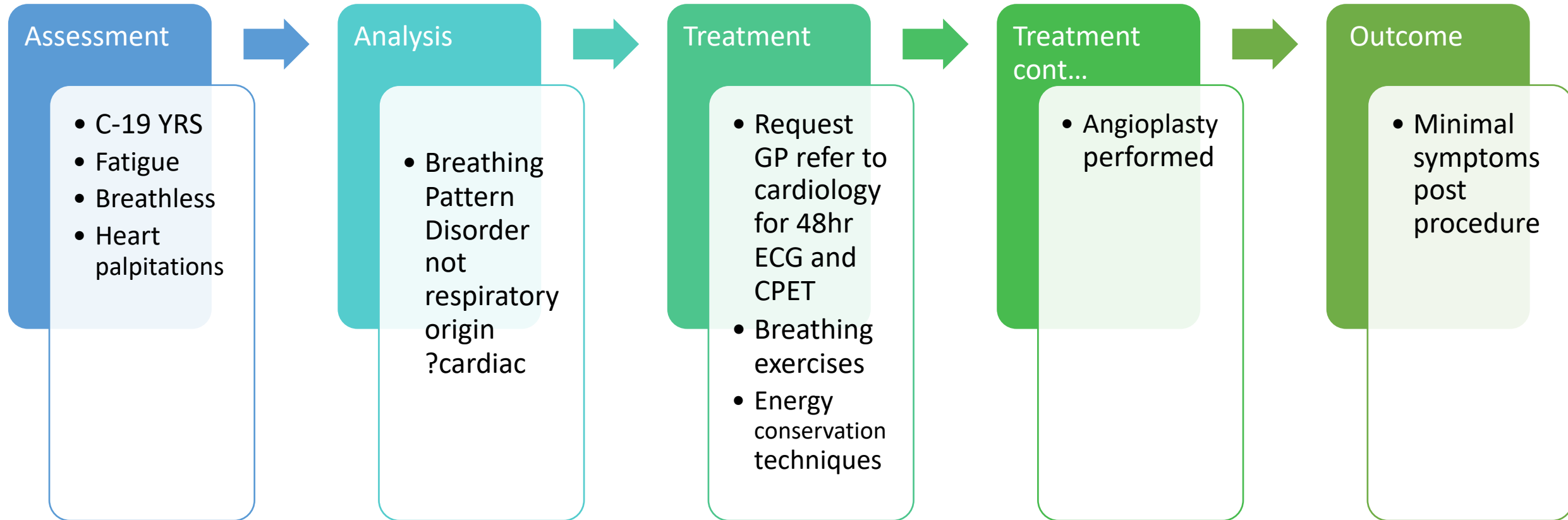


NHS admin staff  
Working reduced  
hours  
Unable to help look  
after children

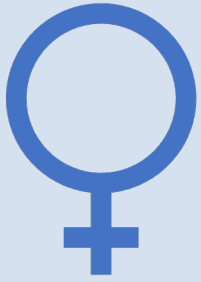


Severe  
breathlessness  
Fatigue  
Heart palpitations  
\*NAD 12 lead ECG,  
bloods, CXR

# Case Study 1



# Case study 2



41yo  
COVID-19 Feb 2021  
Referred 16 months  
later



Mother of 2  
On maternity leave  
with 4-month-old  
baby  
Had struggled  
working prior



Fatigue  
Pain  
Breathlessness  
Difficulty focusing in  
afternoons

# Case Study 2

## Biopsychosocial Assessment

- Bloods, CXR NAD
- Feeling frequently 'on edge'
- Impatient and frustrated
- Low mood
- Returned to work 2 days per week
- Reserves energy for work and childcare, not socialising
- Feeling isolated
- Already had Talking Therapy support – helped a little

## Treatment

- 8 week condition management group programme:
  - Intro to dysregulation model
  - Balance, Sustain, Nudge model
  - Energy bank
  - Values
  - ACT tools
  - Activity analysis
  - Mindfulness, self-compassion practices
  - Making behaviour change

## Review

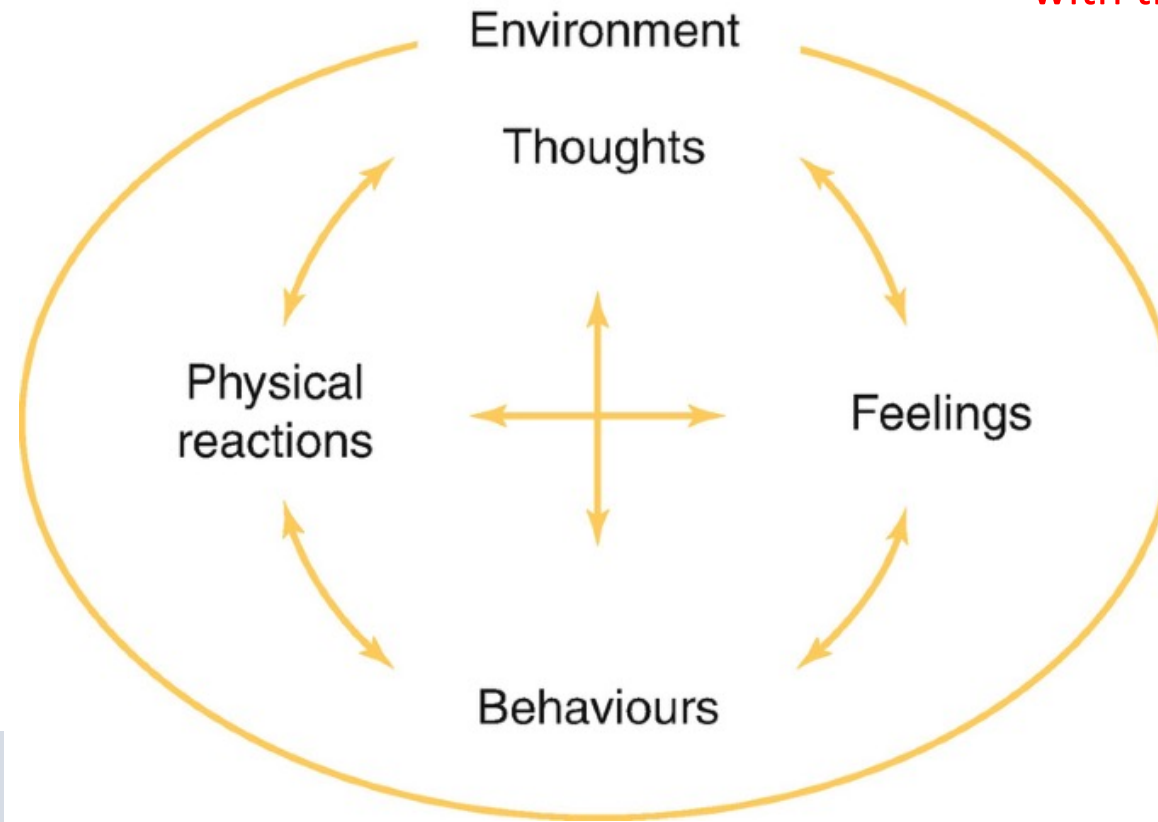
- Struggled to put strategies from group into practice
- Persisting high levels of fatigue, stress, irritability with challenges of prioritising health in context of busy family life
- Opted for psychological support

# 5 area model

What if others doubt my symptoms?; What if they think I'm no good at job?; If others can't see that there is something wrong, they can't understand; How will I manage people's expectations of me?; Am I dealing with the symptoms in the right way?

**Self-critical thoughts:**  
I should know better

Anxious,  
frustrated



Tension in upper body  
Mind goes blank  
Need to move - fidgety/twitchy  
Mind goes blank  
Loss of concentration

## Historical influences:

Felt pressure of high expectations from parent growing up  
High expectations of self academically – worked hard for internal and external validation

Try to find answers  
Push through/carry on  
Pretend its not there  
Hide symptoms from others

# Intervention



# Outcome

1. Ongoing symptoms of Long Covid
2. Less stress associated
3. More able to make helpful choices that support living well alongside Long Covid

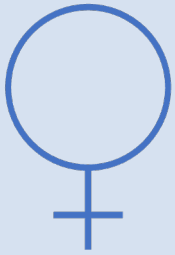
“My responses to stressful and challenging events are more adaptive and balanced, I feel proud of myself again”.

“I’m able to savour the moments of connection with my family despite the challenges I face.”

“I’m more able to notice worrying thoughts and show compassion to myself”

“I’m not as swept along by the train of thoughts as I used to be – I have more choice”

# Case study 3



39yo  
Single  
COVID-19 2021

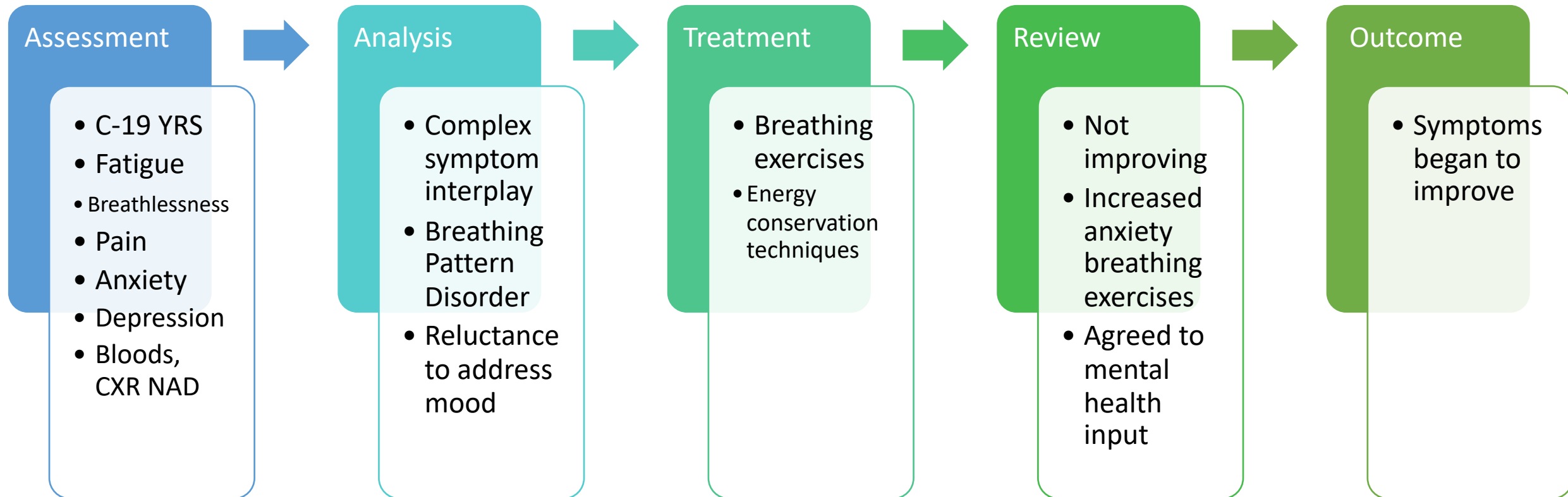


Lawyer – unable  
to work  
Moved in with  
parents



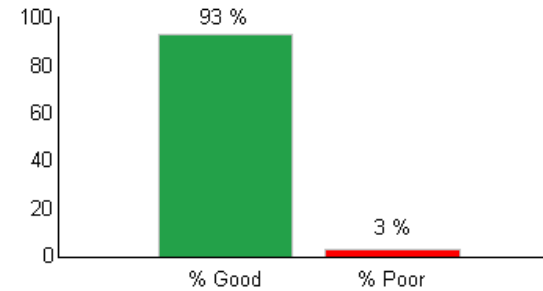
Referred with  
severe fatigue  
Breathlessness  
Pain

# Case Study 3



# Patient Experiences

Friends and Family Test



“This service has been invaluable. You’ve been the first people to understand this illness and make me feel like I’m not exaggerating or going crazy. The support group aspect has been wonderful to connect with others, and the tips you’ve given **have made a real impact in my everyday life**. Slightly anxious about what will happen once the group ends!”

“Learning about models which describe the impact long Covid has on my body [was good]. Using this as a foundation for strategies **to manage my condition**. All of the sessions on this were hugely useful.”

“Before I started these long covid sessions I was in a very bad place, I find this has **help [sic] me to be able to deal with some of the issues I face whilst battling most days**, it has really been a long journey, but after attending these group sessions **I realise a change, not 100%, but I am positive things will improve.**”

**“I feel like I came into the program in a crisis and although I still have long Covid, I am exiting in a really different place** - I have learnt so much in the groups and in my 1-2-1 occupational therapy work... I have also been able to keep in touch with three people from the...group on WhatsApp and this has provided a type of peer support.

I feel so lucky to have received the support to understand what’s happening in my body and to **meet my situation with acceptance and compassion**. Long Covid can feel very unsafe and I feel the support I have received from your service has been essential for **creating the safety needed for recovery to begin**.

I also have to say that your support has **also enabled me to manage my long term anxiety and symptoms connected to trauma**. Techniques such as mindfulness have been life changing for me.

**I feel very aware that the journey ahead will probably not be straight forward in terms of health**, and that’s a bit scary, but **I feel so much more able to manage it all** and it’s also really helpful knowing that I can reach out to you for support in the future if I need to.

I just feel full of gratitude for everything you have done and I think you deserve an award for the work you do to support people with long Covid! Thank you!!!”