

A new service for Long Covid in Occupational Health



I felt this group gave me the confidence to return to work

Without the support and guidance from this service I strongly believe I would still be off work

I found this service to be a great help. It was really informative, understanding and reassuring

Lillian Bruce, Physiotherapist, Lorraine Crothers, Occupational Therapist, Linda Fleming Occupational Health Nurse, Justine Griffin, Occupational Therapist .

Introduction

In May 2021 NHSGGC Occupational health department established a Long Covid service in response to the high numbers of staff who were absent from work with long covid. Occupational therapists (OT) were recruited alongside physiotherapy (PT) and an occupational health nurse (OHN) to support the staff group to manage their long covid symptoms, its impact on their daily function and their ability to return to work . The service was funded for two years.

Remit:

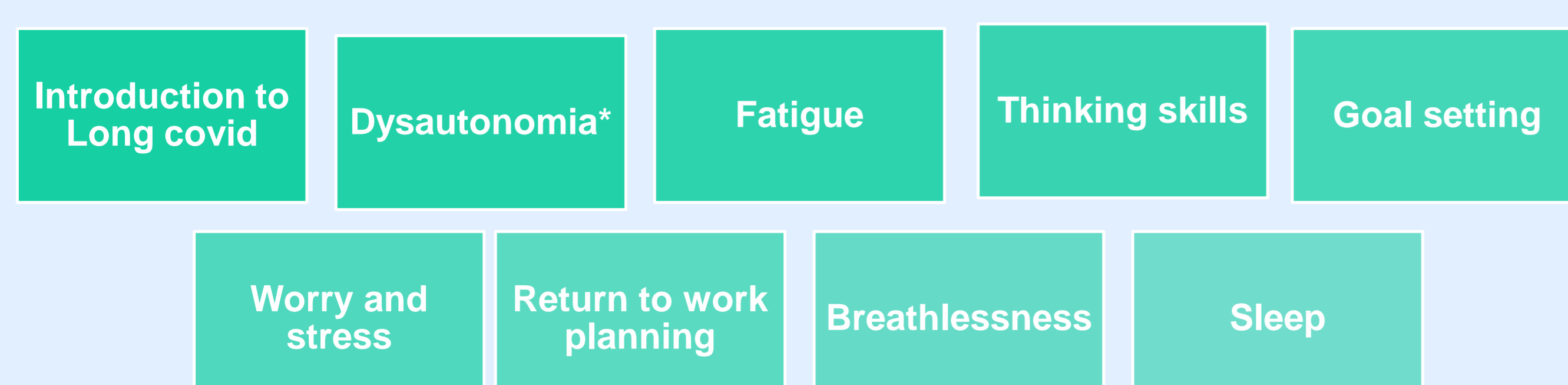
- Support staff to manage their long covid symptoms by delivering a self management programme.
- Offer 1:1 input for staff when required to address personal goals
- Support staff to increase participation in meaningful activity
- Liaise with line managers to support and facilitate employment decisions

Method

A service delivery model was designed. Referrals were accepted from line managers. Staff could have one or any combination of: management referral appointment, invitation to the group, or individual input with an OT and/or PT. The management referral (MR) appointment established the symptoms that are barriers to engagement and the areas to be addressed. It provides a recommendation of fitness to work and will detail a return to work plan if required. The self management group programme consisted of the topics in Diagram 1 and ran virtually over 8 weeks.

The OHN, OT and PT offered management referral appointments, in addition the OHN completed review appointments to establish the success of signposting and contributed to the group programme and delivered the return to work planning session. OT and PT offered individual treatment sessions based on individual assessed need and contributed to the group programme..

Diagram 1: Self management group topics



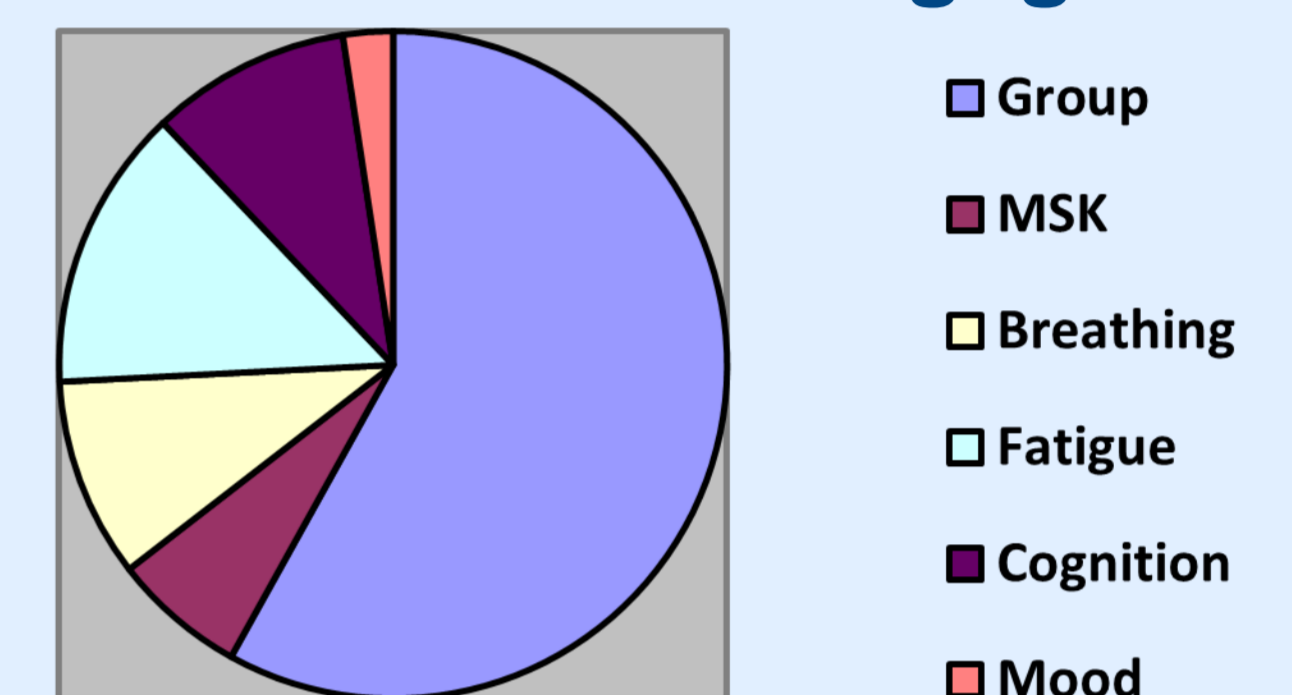
* Dysautonomia is an umbrella term to describe any disorder of the autonomic nervous system.

Results

The service operated between June 2021 and February 2023. The total number of referrals to the services is 503 with 49 staff not opting into the service.

All staff engaged with the MR process. In addition a percentage of staff engaged in a range of treatment activity and treatment methods. 27% of staff had the group programme in isolation, 20% had the group in addition with PT, 25% the group in addition with OT and 8% engaged with the group, OT and PT.

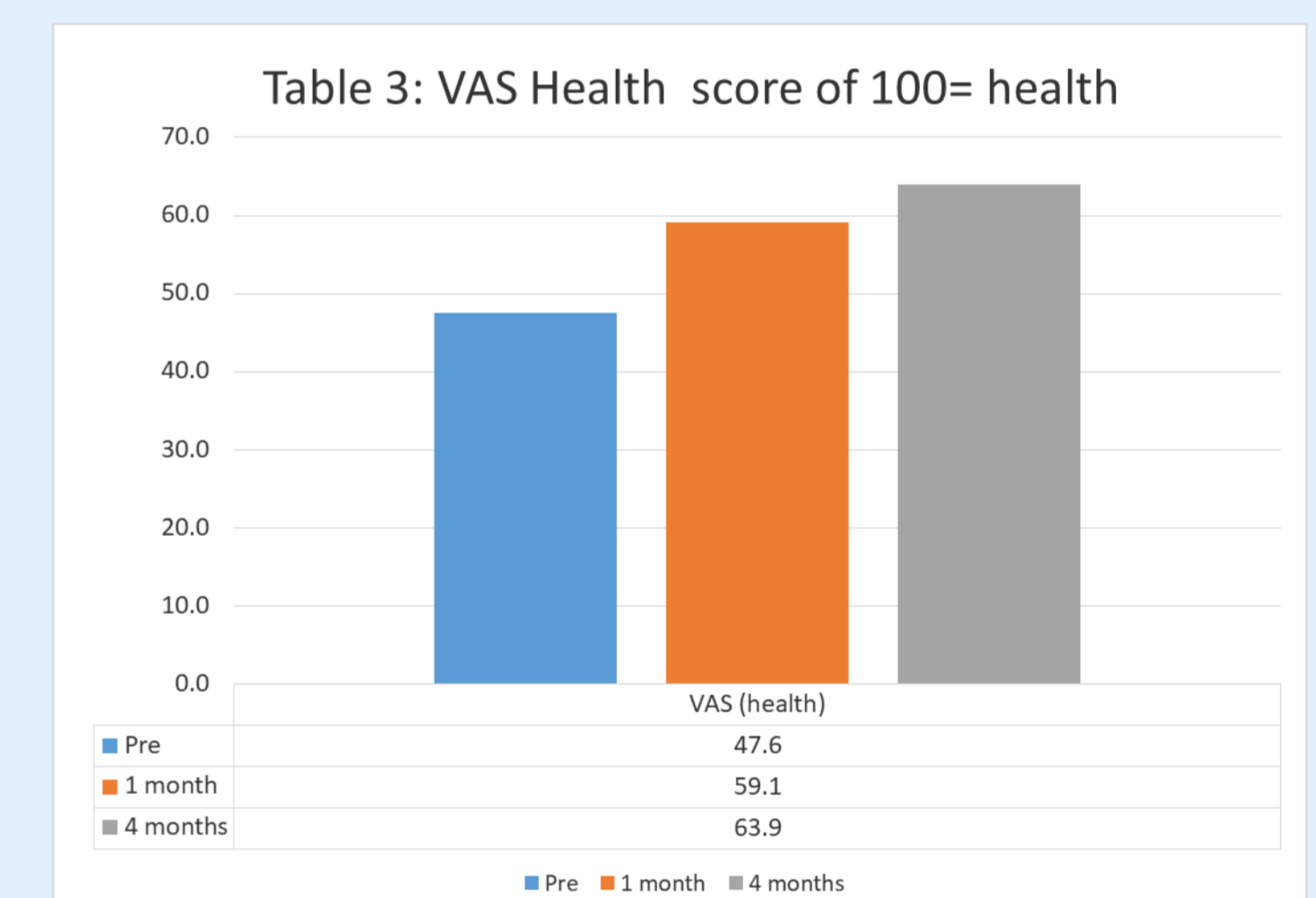
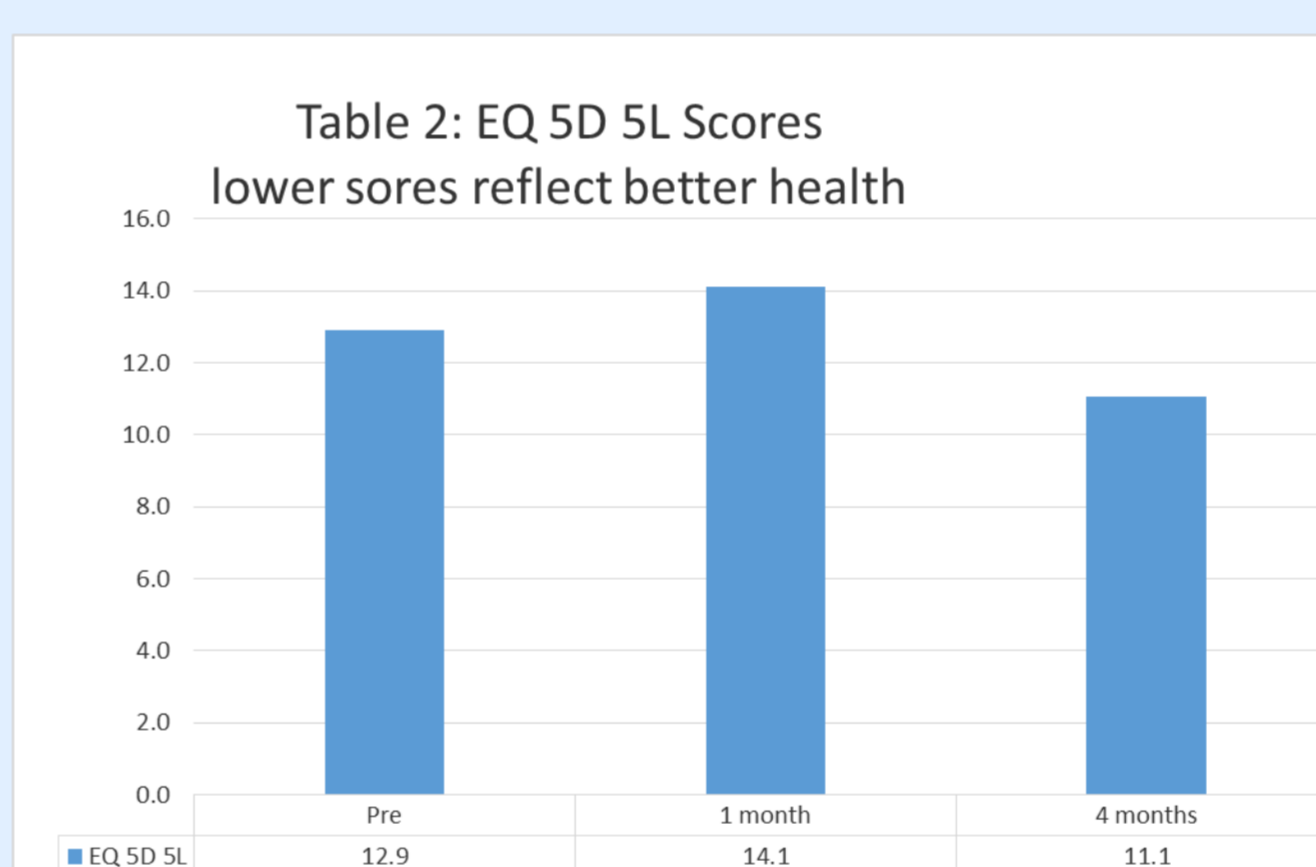
The types of treatment and frequency can be viewed .



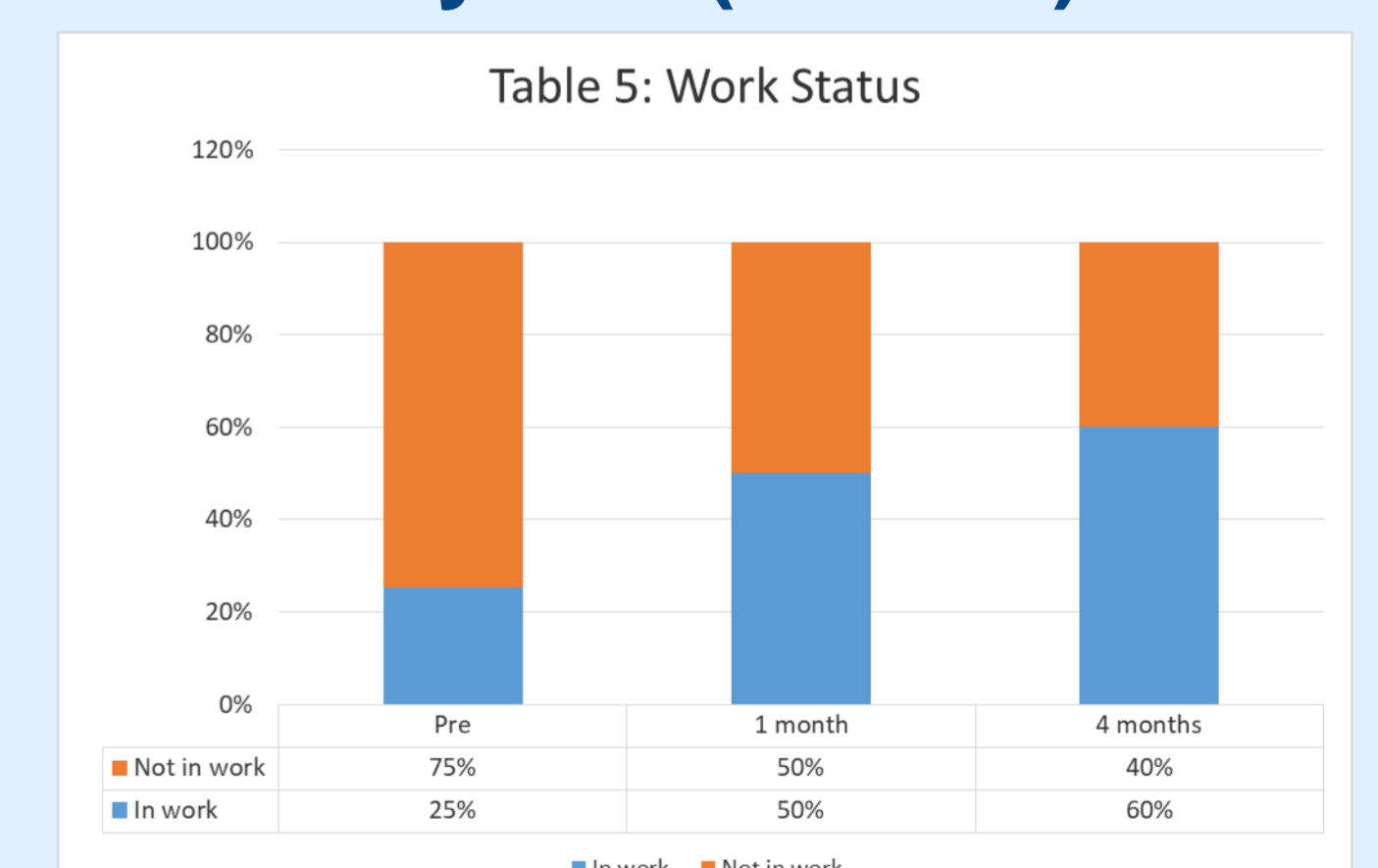
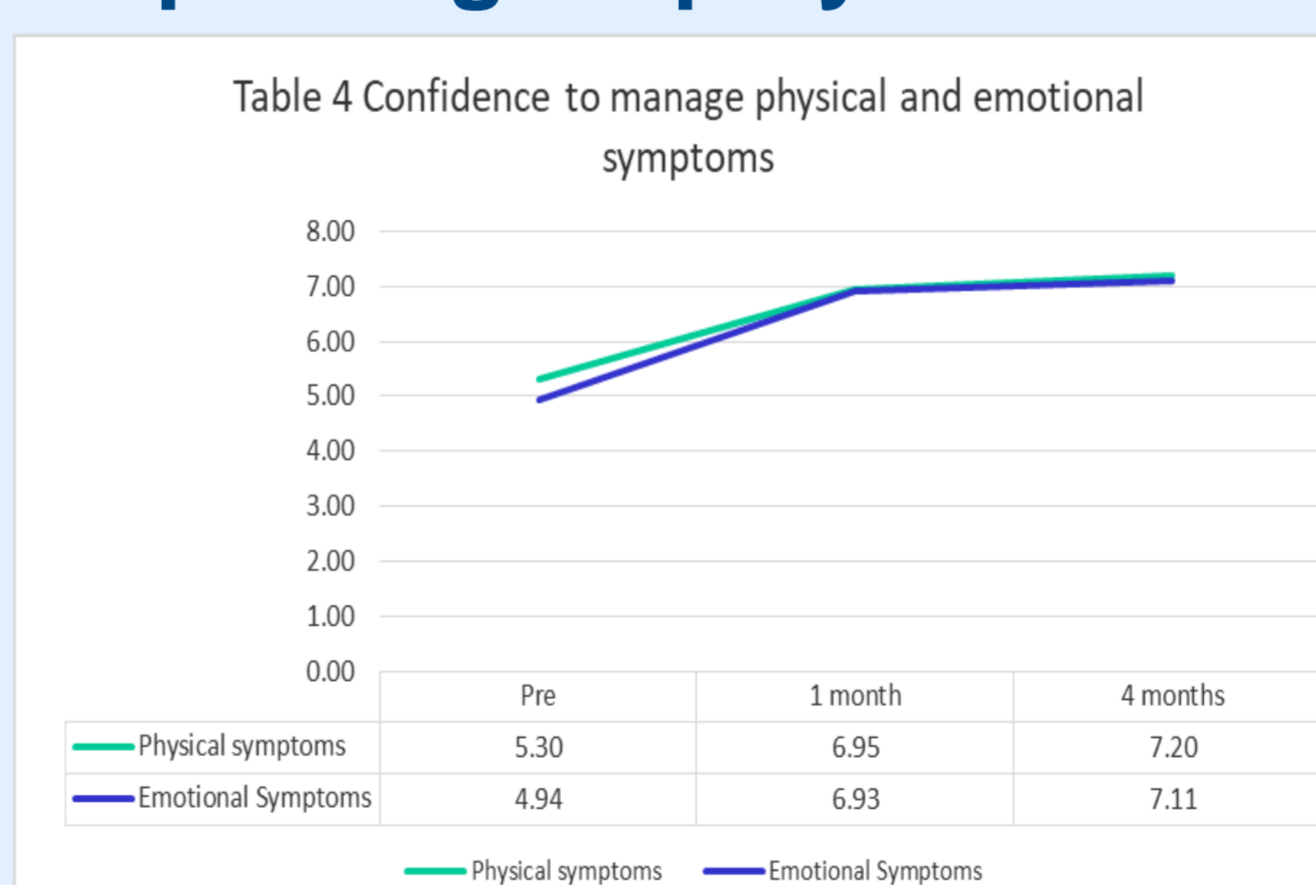
Outcome measures

were completed for all staff at referral, one and four months post discharge.

The European 5 dimensions Quality of life (EQ5D)and EQ-VAS were completed.



Self management was an important aspect of the group and individual sessions, facilitating the efficacy of staff members ability to manage their symptoms(Table 4). Improving employment status was a key aim (Table 5)



Conclusion

The service provided input for 454 staff. A range of treatment modalities were utilised. There was an improvement in their health status and confidence in their ability to manage their symptoms. The number of staff in work improved over time.

Legacy work was important as staff continue to experience long covid work absence. A comprehensive self management book and recorded video presentations on the group topics was produced for future use, along with an extensive list of resources. The team were active in sharing their experience in developing and delivering the service.

Acknowledgements: the team would like to thank our occupational health colleagues, our professional leads and the staff members who trusted the team, and the input offered in this new and emerging area.