

Dated:



1939-2024

The British Polio Fellowship  
CP House  
Otterspool Way  
Watford  
Hertfordshire  
WD25 8HR

Dear Doctor

On average there are six polio survivors registered as patients at your practice.\*

Some may not have polio listed on their medical records but are likely to have contracted the virus as a child during the epidemics of the 1940s and 1950s, or in the early 1960s before the NHS polio vaccination programme began to make an impact. A smaller number of younger people will have contracted polio abroad - significant strides may have been made, but polio is still not eradicated.

Polio is a highly infectious viral disease that harms the nervous system. Many survivors today are living with the Late Effects of Polio (LEOP) and are now beginning to experience new and/or deteriorating symptoms of Post-Polio Syndrome (PPS) such as, functional deterioration, fatigue, increased muscle pain, loss of muscular strength, shortness of breath and/or difficulty breathing at night.

Post-Polio Syndrome is a slow progressive condition, and early diagnosis is key to maintaining a decent quality of life.

The British Polio Fellowship (BPF), in partnership with consultants and health care specialists with expertise in LEOP and PPS, has led the development of an *Optimal Pathway for Polio Survivors*: <https://www.britishpolio.org.uk/optimal-clinical-pathway>

The pathway, approved/endorsed by the Royal College of General Practitioners (RCGP), Association of British Neurologists (ABN) and British Society of Physical and Rehabilitation Medicine (BSPRM) amongst others (page 2), outlines the steps a GP or community team should take to ensure a polio patient receives good treatment, care, and support (page 7).

A patient presenting with functional deterioration and a history of polio should be referred to a neurologist with PPS experience to exclude a differential diagnosis, or to a specialist PPS service for access to assessment, diagnosis, and care management by an experienced, full, multi-disciplinary team (MDT) (page 8).

The PPS service at The Lane Fox Unit, Guy's and St Thomas' Hospital, London for example, has specialist polio physiotherapists and occupational therapists. It also offers a highly rated five-day Post-Polio Self-Management training programme for PPS patients and/or will produce a personalised care plan, in line with an onward referral to community, secondary or regional MDT services for ongoing management.

T: 0800 043 1935

E: [info@britishpolio.org.uk](mailto:info@britishpolio.org.uk)

W: [www.britishpolio.org.uk](http://www.britishpolio.org.uk)

## Living with the late effects of polio and Post-Polio Syndrome (PPS)

The British Polio Fellowship is a registered charity in England and Wales (1108335) and in Scotland (SC038863)  
A company limited by guarantee and registered in England and Wales No. 5294321

The BPF appreciate these are challenging times for primary care, but our aim is to make efficiency savings for GPs by reducing the number of costly, inappropriate investigations and improve the effectiveness of care and outcomes for polio survivors (page 14).

If you need additional information on the Late Effects of Polio (LEOP) and Post-Polio Syndrome (PPS) please contact me at the British Polio Fellowship.

Yours Sincerely



**Kripen Dhrona, BPF Chief Executive Officer**

**Office: 0800 043 1935 | Email: [kripen@britishpolio.org.uk](mailto:kripen@britishpolio.org.uk)**

\* We estimate there are about 50,000 polio survivors in the UK today and 8,095 GP practices.

#### Data sources

- 2017 data for UK – falling: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/891854/number-of-general-practices-in-the-united-kingdom/>
- 2017 data 6,495 in England: <https://www.gponline.com/fifth-gp-practices-closed-merged-nhs-england-formed/article/1790429#:~:text=There%20are%20now%206%2C495%20GP,from%208%2C106%20in%20April%202013>
- 905 in Scotland: <https://www.bma.org.uk/bma-media-centre/bma-scotland-general-practice-cannot-sustain-the-pressures-of-this-full-blown-crisis-any-longer#:~:text=Between%202013%20and%202023%2C%20the,it%20did%20a%20decade%20ago>.
- 378 in Wales: <https://www.gov.wales/general-practice-workforce-30-september-2023-html>
- 317 in Northern Ireland: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/news/publication-fps-general-medical-services-northern-ireland-annual-statistics-202223#:~:text=There%20were%20317%20active%20GP,in%20the%20same%20time%20period>.

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