



Personal Outcomes Stories during COVID: Learning from practice

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How have you been able to keep a focus on what matters to people during COVID?



I've been a healthcare support worker (HCSW) in forensic services at Cornhill hospital for 15 years. I started in this post ten months ago as associate practice educator in mental health and learning disabilities. There are now four of us in similar roles across NHS Grampian. We have had to adapt to working in a very different way in response to COVID

With COVID we have been on a recruitment drive for HCSWs since March and our role has been to deliver essential training for new and existing HCSWs. This provides people going to work in the wards, often for the first time, with an essential grounding and preparation for the work they are doing and they tell us they feel more confident and prepared for the role.

What have you had to do differently and what made this possible?

This training didn't exist in anything like this format before. We moved quickly to do this as a team based in Aberdeen Royal Infirmary. We had to observe social distancing so reduced the numbers going through training at any one time. We provide four skills stations where we demonstrate a range of skills, with each learning opportunity lasting about 45 minutes. We cover nutrition and hydration, bedmaking/laundry segregation, catheter care and personal care.

We are aware that there is little opportunity for active participation through these skills demonstrations and we also include quizzes and scenarios to get people more actively contributing. The four of us have moved to work as a team and that has proved essential.

What have you noticed that has been better?

Teaching small groups seems to work better. People are less afraid of saying the wrong thing and are more confident about speaking up. We are getting such a mix of people

coming through and people learn from each other too. It's good to get senior medical students, school leavers and former care home workers all together for example.

The new HCSWs include 4th and 5th year medical students. They tell us that they don't get that much opportunity for interacting with patients normally and they value the opportunity to get a more grounded experience on the ward where they can have conversations with patients and get to know what other staff do. We thought that they would know all these skills, but they don't know about the day to day running of a ward or the tools that are used. We've had to overcome our own assumptions and so have they!

How did this make you feel?

This work has boosted my confidence, especially about teaching. I worked with June who is a dietician to develop the nutrition and hydration lesson plan. I never thought I'd be teaching 4th and 5th year medical students from the university.

We've all been brought together closely as a team. It's been very enjoyable and I feel we are doing something worthwhile, particularly at this time.

What have you learned through this?

The main thing is the importance of team working and the benefits of collaborating as educators. I wouldn't want to lose that collective effort and I think it will continue. I have really appreciated how supportive we are of each other. This has been hard for all of us, regardless. This is about your work and your life and also about work life balance. You can't take anything for granted any more.

Anything else you want to tell us?

I would like to do some follow up work with some of our trainees. I would like to find out how well prepared they were for working in the wards and I hope we do get the time to do that.