

Thomas Price, deputy charge nurse – Working on the Beaumont Ward through Covid-19

Beaumont ward is one of the Trust's designated Covid-19 isolation wards. It serves patients from the mental health wards in LPT. Before Covid-19, we were a mixed sex ward for acute mental health patients between the ages of 18-65. We have recently had patients from the elderly services transferred to us, which has been challenging at times but very rewarding. Any patient that has suspected or confirmed Covid-19 comes to Beaumont. If they are suspected, they are swabbed and stay here until they receive their results. If the patient is negative they are transferred to another ward. If they are positive they have a period of isolation here.



The day to day routine of the ward has changed massively. Patients are now asked to self-isolate in their bedrooms. We have set up a 'rounds' system, this is to limit exposure to staff of Covid-19 due to viral load etc. This involves going into patient's rooms every few hours to do physical observations, give them meals and medication and check that they are okay. This sometimes can mean that time is limited with the patients but we try and support them as best as we can. If we have more than six or seven patients, the 'round' can take up around two hours (with cleaning the equipment and donning and doffing PPE).

Patients with mental health issues not being able to see our faces due to face masks and safety spectacles must be very difficult. This is why as a team we have strived to make every interaction with our patients count. We have also been showing patients our ID badges or pictures of ourselves without PPE on so they know the face behind the mask.

The patients have been very understanding of the new way of working and have been very grateful to the staff. One patient came out of his room every Thursday at 8pm to show his appreciation and clap for the staff. We also liaise a lot with patient's families who understandably are concerned for their relative's welfare especially if they have Covid-19.

The Covid-19 situation has affected nearly every aspect of how I work currently. We have to get changed in the ward's family room which can be accessed from outside of the ward. Once you enter the ward you are not allowed to leave the ward until the end of your shift. We are now all used to this but in the beginning it was very strange.

We have group supervision every day to talk about how this is affecting us. I think all the staff on Beaumont Ward has faced up to this challenge with great courage, but it has caused anxiety at times. Facing a potentially deadly virus on a daily basis has been a big shock but we really are like a family on Beaumont, we have all rallied

around to support each other.

I'm very humbled by all of the staff getting up every day to come to work in this situation. There have been staff who have made big sacrifices in their personal lives to continue working here, like having members of their family move out of their homes due to the risk of bringing Covid-19 home. I believe through this we have grown closer as a team, staff have spoken to each other more, been more open about how they feel about things and what is going on in their personal lives.

Once this is over, our team here on Beaumont Ward will have grown stronger and more cohesive for it and ultimately we will be able to provide better care for our patients.