JANE BATES

We’re at risk of creating a lesser spotted nurse

Imagine you are watching the last nest of the lesser spotted woodpecker being wrecked by vandals. Then, when the world’s sole surviving chick is carried away by a hungry fox, you realise you are witnessing extinction at first hand. With nurses being the nearest that humans have to an endangered species, the fact that those still standing are being thrown under a bus by NHS management fills me with dread. Nurses are suffering unprecedented abuse from the public because of the disruption to NHS services since the pandemic. Six million folk are on waiting lists, so you can understand why patients are angry. But taking it out on nurses? People are biting the hands that feed them, and what makes it worse is that NHS management is letting front-line staff take the flak.

This violence, whether physical or verbal, has become such a problem it has been debated in the House of Lords; former chief inspector of social services Lord Laming slating the powers that be for allowing the situation to evolve.

Indifference will feed the staffing crisis

Hostility towards nurses is nothing new, as we all know. I was once cornered and screamed at by a patient because he had to wait to see the doctor. It was a vitriolic attack, but management offered me no support – with a shrug of the shoulders I was told to fill in a Datix form.

Such indifference now seems to be endemic in the NHS. Why have we not heard about this rising level of aggression in the national news? It’s not being taken seriously, that’s why. Dear Lord Laming grasps the seriousness of management turning a blind eye towards these assaults – and the consequences, as many nurses will refuse to endure this treatment much longer.

When staffing levels are so perilous, brushing it all under the carpet is nothing short of criminal.

Jane Bates is a retired nurse

READERS’ PANEL

With fuel and other costs rising, does doing your job leave you out of pocket?

Nursing has never been a lucrative career, however recent rises in national insurance and the cost of living have increased the pressure. Many nurses are already working unpaid overtime, yet feeling the pinch in their outgoings. The government needs to explore retention policies as a matter of urgency. Options include tax-efficient childcare costs, flexible hours, and support such as free parking, food and travel – seen earlier in the pandemic, but now discontinued.

Liz Charalambous is a university teaching associate in Nottingham

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Having qualified last year, earning a full-time wage remains something of a novelty for me. Despite that, I can’t help but baulk at how my pay doesn’t seem to stretch much further than jobs I once held in call centres. As bills creep up for all of us, I worry about what the future might hold for nursing. While I’m sure nurses will always try to make ends meet with a steady diet of overtime and unsocial hours, it seems a poor reward for years of study. How long before nurses are merely living to work?

Grant Byrne is a staff nurse in Glasgow

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Nurses shouldn’t be out of pocket for doing their jobs. Organisations should give staff free parking, meals and uniform laundering, as well as realistic mileage payments, and cover the ridiculously high NMC registration fees. The government isn’t interested in the nursing workforce crisis, but NHS leaders should be putting pressure on politicians, given that 10.3% of NHS nursing posts are vacant. If more nurses fall into debt, more will leave the NHS to survive, which will affect patient care.

Drew Payne is a community nurse in London

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Cost of living pressures affect all of us. Working from home, if that is an option, may reduce your commuting costs, but then you have to factor in heating and electricity. Other than a pay increase – which I doubt will offset the rising cost of living – one way I would try to recover these costs is to reduce some of the unpaid overtime I do. It doesn’t solve the cost of living crisis, or workforce shortages, but maybe prioritising ourselves a bit more in these stressful times is the only thing we can do.

Rachel Kent is a mental health nurse in London

For more on this issue, go to rcni.com/rising-costs

Readers’ panel members give their views in a personal capacity only