

Burnout is a widespread reality in today's NHS

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An editorial published by *The BMJ* today raises important concerns about the health and wellbeing of the NHS workforce after a parliamentary report found "burnout is a widespread reality in today's NHS."

Commenting on the report, Suzie Bailey of the King's Fund says: "Excessive workloads need to be dealt with at every level of the health and [care system](#)."

She suggests that ineffective [workforce](#) planning is partly to blame, citing evidence given to the House of Commons Health and Social Care Committee by Professor Michael West of The King's Fund, who characterised current NHS workforce plans as "a smart looking car minus the engine."

Bailey points to the 2020 NHS staff survey showing that 44% of staff reported feeling unwell owing to work related stress—the highest level since 2016—and reported high levels of bullying, harassment, and discrimination experienced by ethnic minority staff.

"Improving [staff](#) health and wellbeing is therefore far from being a "nice to have," it is a moral, social, and economic priority," she writes. "The focus must be on tackling the root causes of stress, not on interventions that seek only to manage or mitigate it."

It is encouraging that the committee's recommendations emphasised the

importance of compassionate leadership in improving [workplace culture](#), she says, and has called for Health Education England to publish independent annual workforce projections.

But she questions plans to place new workforce responsibilities on integrated care systems (local partnerships designed to help join up health and care services).

Will the health and social care committee's report improve outcomes, she asks?

In part, it will depend on whether multiple leaders across the [health](#) and care system can maintain the current momentum behind workforce and workplace transformation, she explains.

She notes that progress is already being made, but says effective workforce planning and purposeful culture change "will require sustained [political leadership](#) as well as long term investment at a level commensurate with the urgent need for improvement."

More information: Suzie Bailey, Parliamentary report on workforce burnout and resilience, *BMJ* (2021). [DOI: 10.1136/bmj.n1603](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n1603)

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