

NHS leader pledges support for struggling healthcare workers in Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire

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Sim Scavazza, the acting chair of Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and West Berkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) – has pledged to increase support for worn-out NHS workers in the region.

Speaking to Newcross Healthcare's Voices of Care podcast series, Ms Scavazza said the crises affecting the NHS workforce today were profound: "We've got record vacancy rates. We're finding it very difficult to retain staff. We're finding it difficult to recruit staff. During the pandemic we had a proportion of our staff that delayed their retirement, or they came back to work to help, so are gradually losing some of those. Our staff currently are struggling. They're burnt out. We understand the challenges and they are great and getting greater."

Ms Scavazza, who is also non-executive director at Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust, goes on to say that the situation is being exacerbated by ongoing industrial action across the NHS.

"Our staff tell us they're tired. We're desperate to try and help with wellbeing, priorities and activities and engagement, but it's still not enough. So, we definitely need to look at other ways to help our staff."

Expanding on ways in which health workers were currently being supported, she said: "We help with the cost of living. We direct our staff to seek financial help if they need it. We signpost where they need to go. We offer counselling sessions; we subsidise the canteens so that there's a really good hot meal. So, there's a lot of support and encouragement. So, the challenge for Trusts is making sure the staff know what's on offer and then making it easy for them to access. And then having the time to be able to do their courses or to go to lunchtime retreats and to make sure they've got proper spaces to have something to eat or a quiet room."

Questioned on the problems the NHS faces in recruiting and retaining healthcare staff, she said more needed to be done to make people aware of the variety of roles available across the sector: "If you talk to the general public, they think of the NHS and they think of nurses and doctors and midwives. They think the three main professions. I had a meeting the other day and I was introduced to the head of the healthcare scientists, and we've got over 50 of them and they all have a different discipline. And I learned how their work joins and enables the clinicians to do their work."

Ms Scavazza continued: "The general public don't know the sorts of jobs that are available. It's incumbent upon us as a system to make those jobs more available, to make them understand what's practicable. We've got healthcare assistant [roles] that perhaps could lead into nursing. We've got allied health professionals, pharmacists, osteopaths. Without that section of the workforce, we wouldn't be able to run. So, I think the NHS has to do a better job at unpicking some of the roles and educate the general public and just make it more attractive."

"The other thing that we're doing is looking at cross-pathways. Education and training is going to be a huge component. It always has been at the NHS, but it needs its profile raising, and we have to speed that up because we will lose staff if they don't feel they're fully equipped."

Hosted by healthcare expert Suhail Mirza, the podcast episode featuring Sim Scavazza is available now alongside previous episodes in the series on various platforms including [YouTube](#), Apple, Spotify and the [Newcross Healthcare](#) website.

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