



COVID-19 & NHS WORKFORCE BURNOUT – TIME TO RECOVER, REFLECT, & REBUILD

EXPERTISE & SERVICES: [Providers](#)

AUTHOR:

Owen
Thomas

WORKFORCE PRESSURE ON A SCALE NEVER EXPERIENCED BEFORE

You will have no doubt read the headlines:

“Level of staff burnout ‘real concern’ for NHS trust leaders”

– *Nursing Times*, 6th October 2020¹

“Trust leaders fear workforce burnout as pandemic takes its toll”

– *NHS Providers*, 21st January 2021²

“Workforce crisis threatens future of NHS, leading medics warn”

– *The Scotsman*, 15th March 2021³

NHS staff are at crisis point as a result of the pandemic and the national institution that we feel so proud of is facing the single biggest challenge in its history. Although this strain is most commonly attributed to front line workers (e.g. nurses, doctors, social care workers), staff in non-patient facing roles have also been working tirelessly to ensure supplies are maintained, hospitals are clean, and appointments are managed.

RECOVER, REFLECT, & REBUILD

NHS staff have a shared experience that only they can fully appreciate and understand. As the UK seeks to emerge from the past year, a focus for NHS leaders must be to provide the necessary time and space for colleagues to recover and reflect. Returning to ‘business as usual’ without acknowledging the incredible sacrifice and supporting the healing process would not only be a missed opportunity, but likely risk the NHS losing some of its greatest people. ([This BBC article](#)⁴ shows just how real that risk is.)

But how can NHS leaders give staff the time to rest and recover when waiting lists are as long as they’ve ever been? At Vynamic, we believe a more compassionate, inclusive, and sustainable workplace culture can be created through working in a more integrated way. And significantly, we believe the answers for working in a more integrated way can be found in the personal and professional experiences of healthcare staff over the past 12 months.

So, what does this mean?

Through providing the time for personal recovery and reflection, NHS leaders can also capture the key learnings that will support organisations as they rebuild.

TURNING COLLABORATIVE WORKING INTO INTEGRATED WORKING

The pandemic has fostered collaborative working on a scale never seen before in the NHS. In most cases, this was not the result of a clearly documented governance process with explicit written agreement from each stakeholder organisation. It was because of the collective purpose, endeavor, and resilience of the teams that work across the NHS. To put it more simply; healthcare staff realised that if they didn’t work together, more patients would die.

The shared experience of these teams presents the NHS with a once in a generation opportunity to build greater collaboration and further develop the ways of working required to deliver integrated care.

FUTURE WAYS OF WORKING DESIGNED FOR NHS STAFF, BY NHS STAFF

At Vynamic, we believe that a period of rest and reflection presents a unique opportunity to engage staff and gather feedback on what has worked, what hasn't, and ultimately, what should stick as integrated care systems begin to formalise. We believe integrated care systems should put staff experiences at the very core of their organisational structures and ways of working.

It's widely agreed that the most successful change is designed by those who are most affected, as they are aligned and engaged from the very start. This is so often overlooked however, owing to capacity, funding, or other organisational and political barriers.

Our view is simple: **Empower your people to design future ways of working.**

The difficult piece is being brave enough to pause, knowing how to best engage your teams and what the outputs should look like. This is where we can help; Vynamic has supported healthcare systems around the world in designing ways of working and implementing cultural change that last.

We also know that one size does not fit all; see our recent [‘COVID-19 Vaccine Roll-Out and Return to Workplaces’ insight](#) for an example of how we consider the unique context when working alongside our clients.

For more information on how we work with health systems, please contact Owen Thomas – Director, London (Owen.Thomas@vynamic.com).

Interested in learning more?
info@vynamic.com | 888-VYNAMIC

END NOTES

¹Ford, Megan. "Level of staff burnout 'real concern' for NHS trust leaders". Nursing Times. 06 Oct 2021 <https://www.nursingtimes.net/news/workforce/level-of-staff-burnout-real-concern-for-nhs-trust-leaders-06-10-2020/>

²"Trust leaders fear workforce burnout as pandemic takes its toll". NHS Providers. 21 Jan 2021. 05 Apr 2021. <https://nhsproviders.org/news-blogs/news/trust-leaders-fear-workforce-burnout-as-pandemic-takes-its-toll>

³Maishman, Elsa. "'Workforce crisis' threatens future of NHS, leading medics warn". The Scotsman. 15 Mar 2021. <https://www.scotsman.com/health/workforce-crisis-threatens-future-of-nhs-leading-medics-warn-3165564>

⁴Derbyshire, Victoria. "Dawn Bilbrough: Food plea nurse considers quitting after Covid". BBC News. 21 Mar 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-56472115>

