

Cost of living report 2023

Healthcare staff



Burnout in health and social care staff

The cost of living crisis and chronic staff shortages have pushed our health services to the brink.

Where do we go from here?

Between staff shortages, a lack of essential funding and the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, the UK healthcare sector is in serious trouble. According to [December 2022 NHS Vacancy Statistics](#), 133,446 jobs in England (9.7%) remain unfilled in the National Health Service alone – an increase of 29,637 (29%) since September 2021.

At the same time, public and private sector care staff are dealing with one of the worst cost of living crises in living memory. Inflation stood at 11.1% in early November, while energy bills were double what they'd been a year before. Meanwhile, soaring fuel costs and rising food prices put extra pressure on each paycheque.

In September and October 2022, Florence conducted two surveys to help understand how nurses, carers and support workers were coping. We received more than 2,000 responses, many of which were from care professionals who felt worried, angry and burned out.

In this report, we'll highlight the surveys' key findings and explore potential solutions to the staffing crisis.

“Covid-19 taught us all how fickle life can be. People who look after the elderly and maintain the health and care structure in the UK aren't well paid for what they do and the stress they put up with.”

Healthcare worker,
Florence survey 2022

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1. Rising burnout and exhaustion

In general, care professionals feel exhausted and overloaded. Many work more than their contracted hours every week, and some are so exhausted that they plan to leave the industry.

Nearly all workers surveyed said they'd seen an increase in mental health-related staff absences, while more than half had taken time off because of stress.

“I’m actively trying to find a role that doesn’t leave me feeling so hopeless and ashamed.”

Healthcare worker,
Florence survey 2022

63%

work more than their
contracted hours



82%

of respondents
have seen an
increase in mental
health-related
staff absences

Care workers report feeling
burned out at least once
a month, with **17%**
feeling overwhelmed every day.

53%
have taken time off to combat
stress or burnout.



2. Persistent understaffing

Understaffing [isn't a new problem](#) for the healthcare industry. Florence was founded in 2017 as a response to chronic staff shortages in the health and social care sector, and we've been working to address the issue since then.

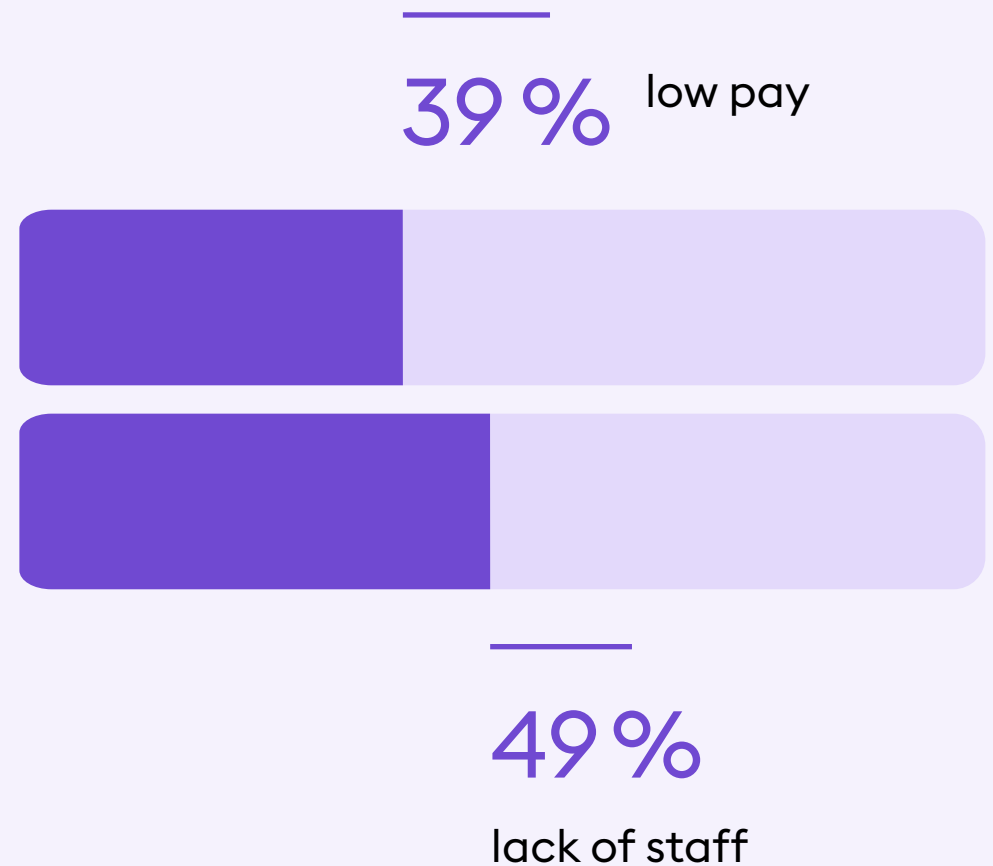
Nearly half the care professionals we surveyed found the staffing crisis extremely stressful, while more than three-quarters thought staff shortages were affecting patient quality of care.

“There’s a lot of work to do in most care homes, and we don’t have enough staff.”

Healthcare worker,
Florence survey 2022



What is the most stressful part of your job?



3. Soaring prices and stagnant wages

We're officially in the middle of the worst cost of living crisis in a generation. Earlier in 2022, the Bank of England predicted that [inflation would peak at 11%](#), but the consumer price index topped 11.1% in October. Some experts believe inflation might continue to rise until the middle of 2023 before returning to normal levels in 2024.

Survey participants found soaring food, fuel and energy prices especially worrying. Some care professionals said the cost of living crisis had tipped them into burnout, while 30% said they felt nervous about the future.

"I can't even afford toiletries, let alone a trip to the hairdresser or a meal out."

Healthcare worker,
Florence survey 2022

97%

of healthcare
professionals say
they're feeling
more burned out
because of the
cost of living crisis

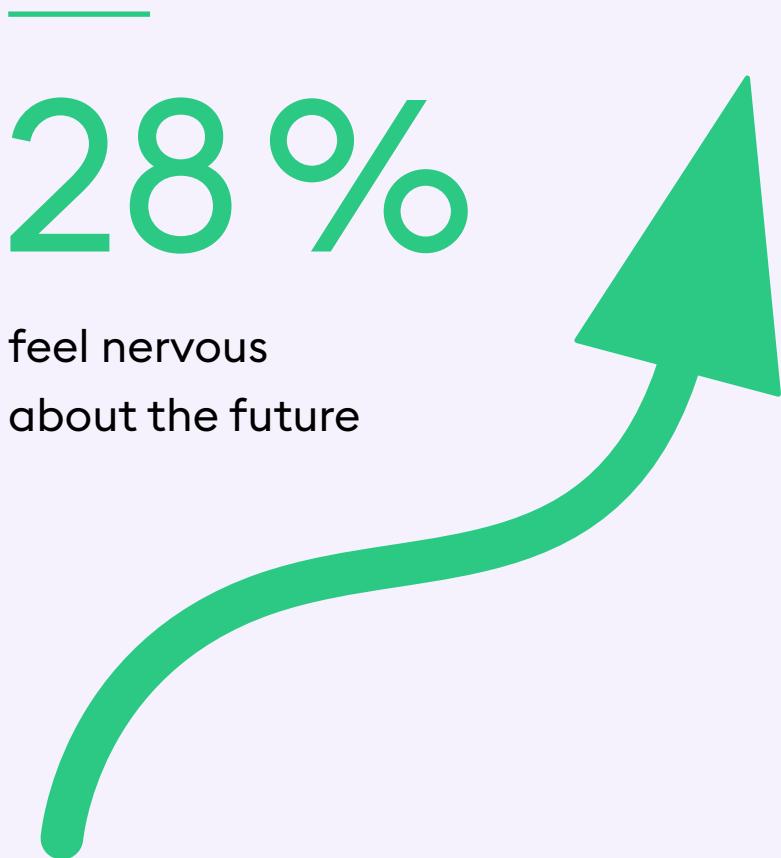
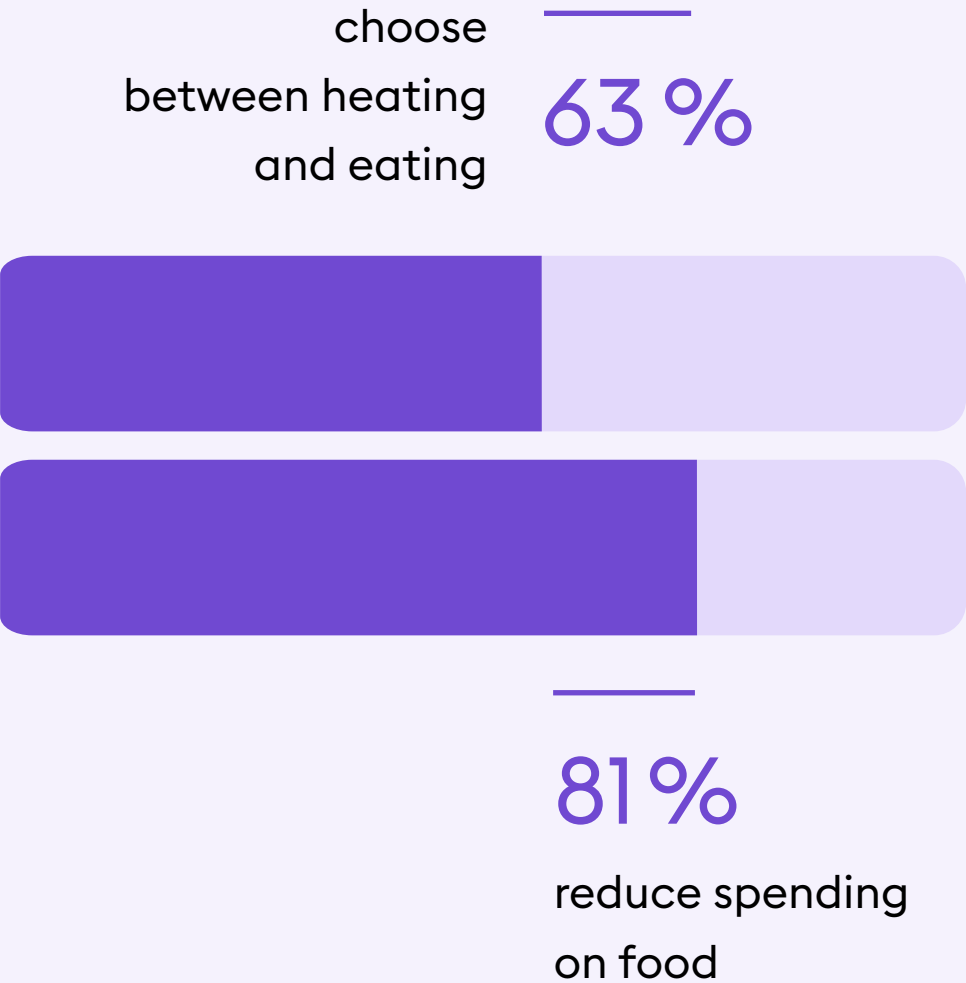


79%

say that the
cost of living crisis
has had a negative
or significantly
negative impact on
their mental health



How has the crisis impacted you?



A woman with blonde hair, wearing a bright yellow long-sleeved shirt and blue jeans, stands in a kitchen. She is looking down at a blue smartphone held in her hands. In front of her, on the kitchen counter, are several items: a white plastic bottle of milk, a bag of carrots, a basket of tomatoes and apples, and a bag of bananas. The background shows a kitchen sink, a blue spray bottle, and a vase with pink flowers. A semi-transparent white box with purple text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

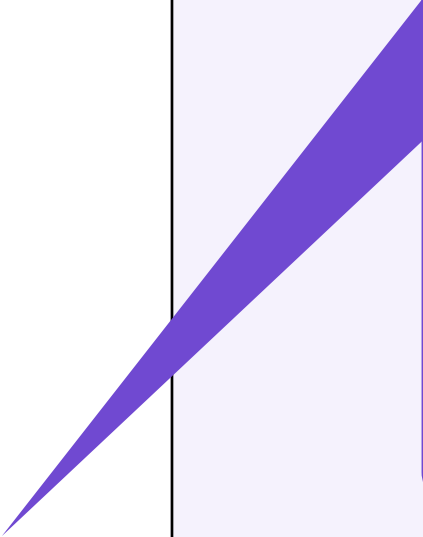
45%

say that they or their
colleagues have started
using food banks.

4. Crisis impacts on patient health

As well as being concerned about how *they'll* get through the winter, care professionals are worried about cost of living crisis impacts on patients and care home residents. Nearly 90% of respondents predicted that mental health problems would get worse, with anxiety and depression top of the list of deteriorating conditions.

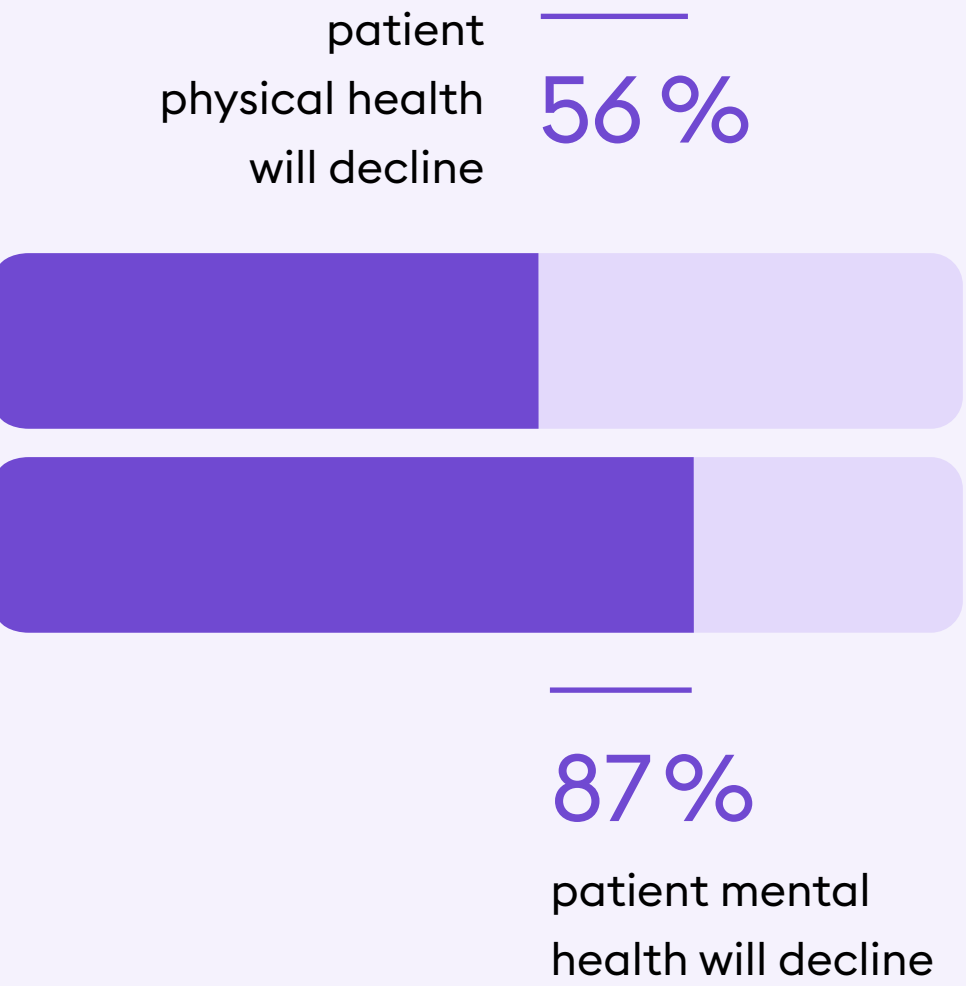
More than half the care professionals we polled thought that patient health would go downhill and people would no longer be able to afford prescriptions. Participants also thought more families would slide into poverty and that domestic violence would worsen.



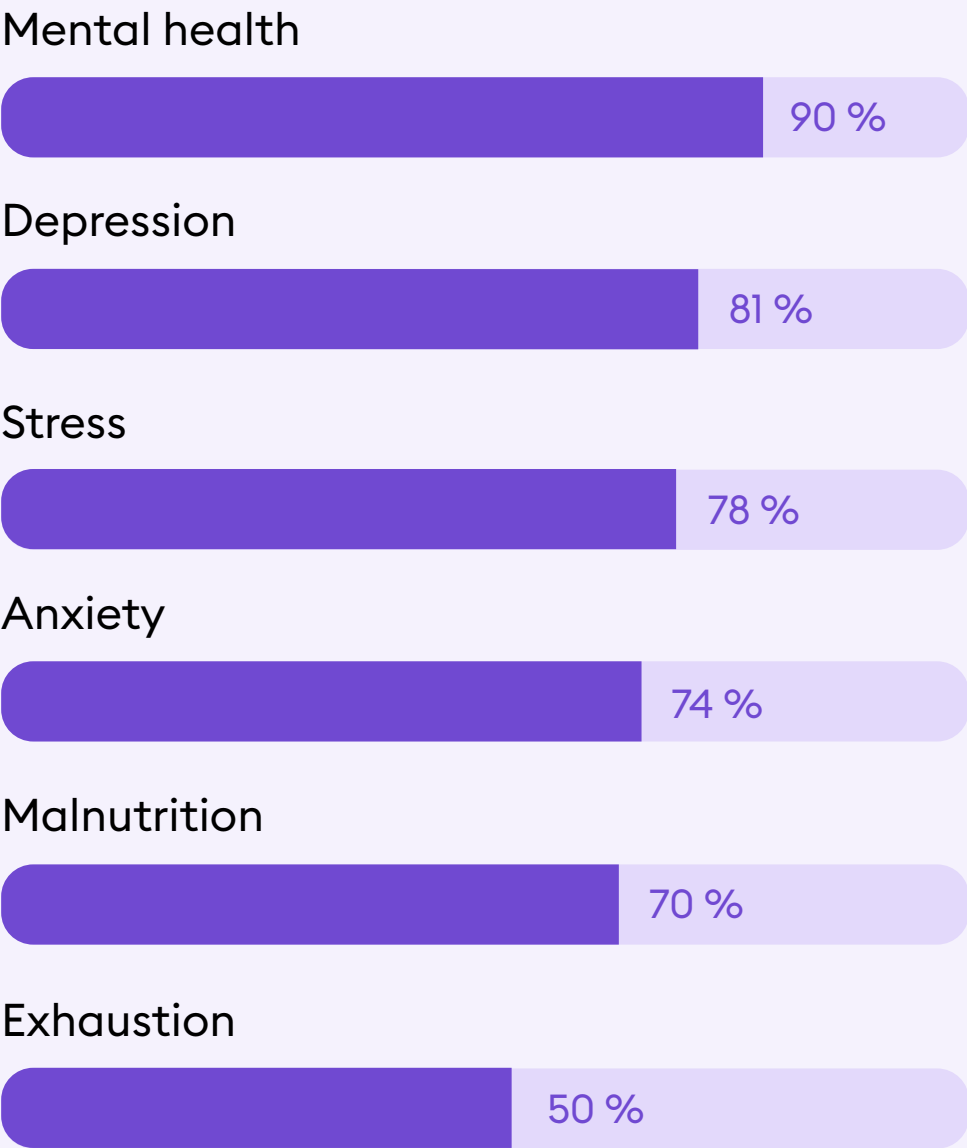
“I think anxiety diagnoses will rise, and people will have more panic attacks.”

Healthcare worker,
Florence survey 2022

How will the crisis impact patient health?



Which conditions do you think will be diagnosed more often?



Who will suffer most because of the cost of living crisis?

Those on low income

94%

The elderly

75%

People with pre-existing conditions

64%

Children

44%



5. High pressure and falling standards

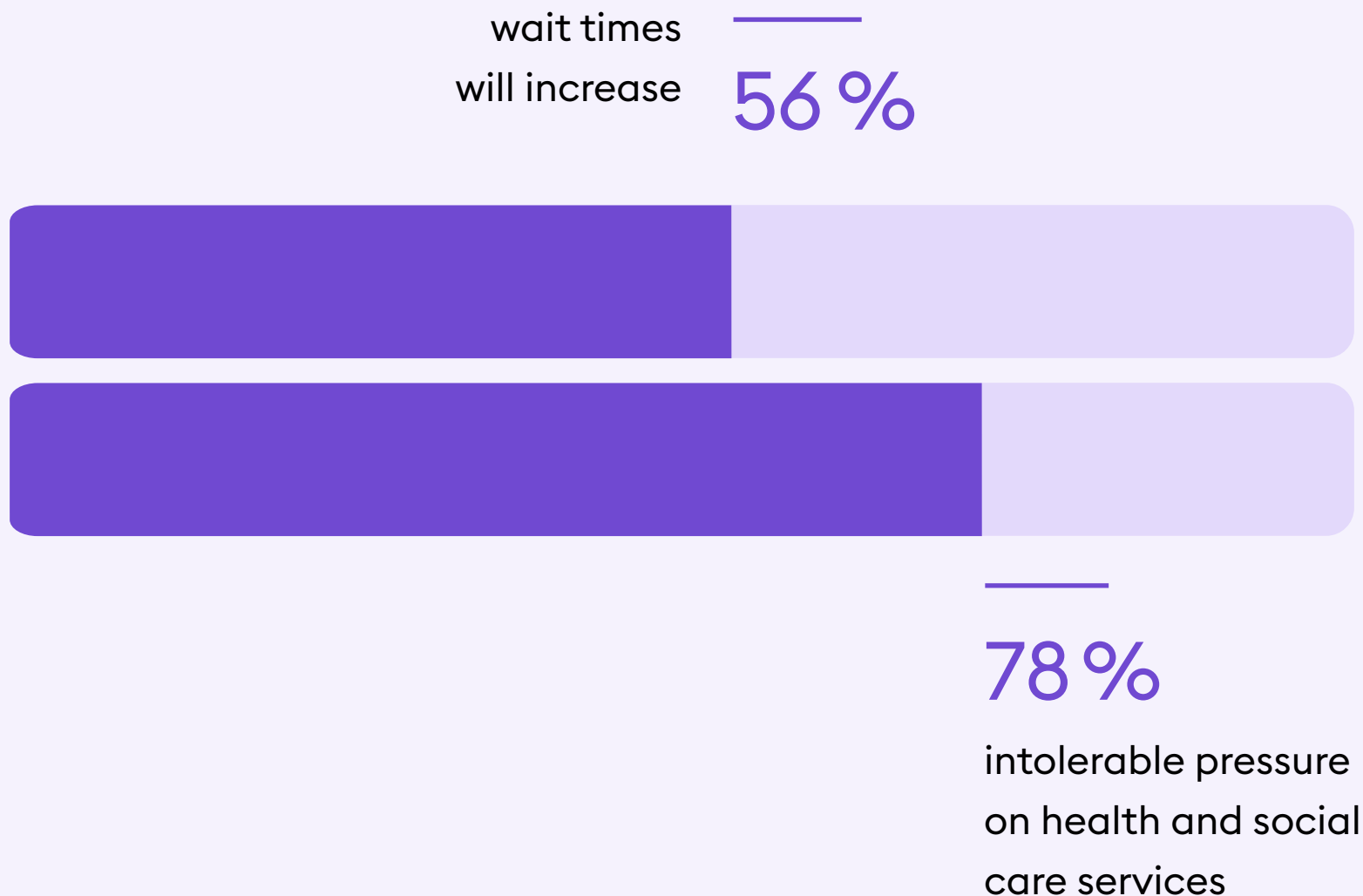
The care professionals we polled were frustrated by falling standards across healthcare services. They also thought the healthcare sector would face “intolerable pressure” as a direct result of the cost of living crisis.

Colder homes and a lack of nutritious food would lead to an uptick in preventable illnesses; then, patients would miss vital appointments because they couldn’t afford transport costs. As a result, some treatable conditions would become chronic and minor ailments would become emergencies.

“We are witnessing a serious drop in standards across services, but nobody seems interested or willing to do anything about it.”

Healthcare worker,
Florence survey 2022

How will the crisis impact the health service?



43%

think wait times will
double, or more than
double.



6. Strike action and leaving the industry

A full 27% of the nurses, care workers and support workers we surveyed told us they were considering leaving the industry in search of better pay and less stress. Others said they supported a strike but felt concerned about patient care in the event of industrial action.

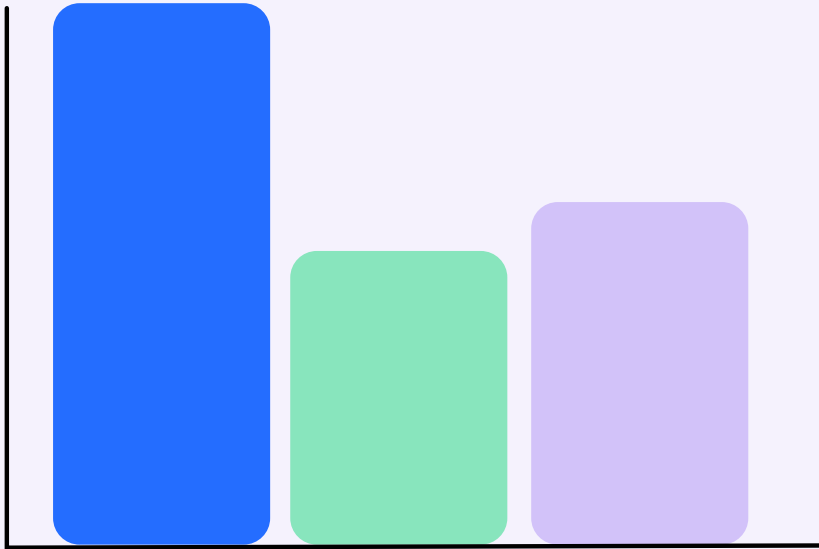
Some respondents thought strikes would lead to recognition and increased pay; others weren't convinced that industrial action would produce results. However, nearly all participants agreed on the need for meaningful change.

“Pay is kept artificially low in the NHS, which causes endless hardship, suffering and indignity.”

Healthcare worker,
Florence survey 2022

28%

plan to leave
the healthcare
industry



19%

are leaving because
they're frustrated with
the healthcare system

22%

are leaving because
they're stressed and
burned out

What do you think about NHS and social care sector strikes?

needed
to create
change

52%

essential but won't
achieve action

32%

58%

needed to
increase pay

68%

essential for making
our voices heard

7. Finding solutions

Most of the care professionals we polled were running on empty. Nearly half said that more staff would help them overcome burnout, while 39% wanted support from their managers. Another 31% favoured shorter shifts, while 21% needed more time off to recuperate.

We found almost unanimous support for increased pay, with more than 80% calling for a wage rise in line with inflation. Care professionals also thought that the government should increase both the NHS and the social care budget, and that there needed to be a better focus on recruitment and training.

“We want better working conditions and better pay.”

Healthcare worker,
Florence survey 2022

What would help you deal with burnout?

More staff

45 %

More support from management

39 %

Reduced workload

31 %

How can the government support health and social care?

create a
coherent
long-time
plan

increased
training
grants

recruitment
and hiring

52%

46%

30%

69%

94%

27%

22%

increase
funding for
critical
services

increase
pay

encouragement
into sector

total
system
overhaul



81%

think a pay rise in line
with inflation is the
fairest response to the
cost of living crisis.

8. Creating change

It's clear from the survey results that healthcare workers are overstretched and overwhelmed. Wages haven't risen in line with inflation for years, and they just don't go far enough to cover rising food, fuel and energy costs. Simply put, the cost of living crisis has pushed some healthcare workers into poverty.

Something has to change. We believe that the short-term solution is an immediate wage increase to help care professionals survive the cost of living crisis. In the long term, the government must vastly increase social care and NHS funding, and invest in training to help encourage more people into the industry.

"There are more nurses leaving the industry than joining. Meanwhile, demand for nurses is increasing," says Florence chief nurse Fiona Millington. "The NHS is plugging vacancies with resources from other areas, but it's become a constant cycle of crisis management, with no long term solutions to the problem."

CEO and Florence co-founder Dr. Charles Armitage agrees. "If you've got fewer people on-shift to look after people, quality of care decreases because staff are overstretched," he says. "When care professionals try to do too many things, they make mistakes and they're not able to spend as much time with people and provide vital patient-centred care."

Charles and Fiona agree that pay is a huge issue – especially in the NHS – and that low wages in the healthcare industry are contributing to the cost of living crisis.

“Nurses and carers are making difficult decisions, ‘Do I have something to eat that’s hot? Do I spend money on gas to heat this up?’” says Fiona, “The cost of living has risen at an alarming rate, but salaries are not increasing to match that cost of living.”

Charles feels the same. “It is completely unacceptable that frontline nurses and healthcare staff have to choose between food and fuel,” he says. “The cost of living crisis is having an unprecedented impact, especially on low-income households, and everybody should have the right to basic necessities like food, fuel and housing.”

Both Charles and Fiona support a robust pay rise for NHS and social care professionals and believe that the government must develop a solid long-term solution to the health and social care staffing crisis.

“For too long, the UK’s under-funded, over-stretched system has pushed more NHS and social care professionals to leave than to stay,” says Charles. “We need to look after our frontline healthcare workers, not drive them out. That’s the bottom line.”

9. How Florence can help

Florence was created to help tackle the staffing shortage in the health and social care sector in a sustainable way. Our easy-to-use scheduling tool and affordable services help NHS trusts and private healthcare facilities fill shifts while reducing agency spend up to 20%.

With Florence, you'll save time as well as money. You can create a rota in minutes, automatically schedule permanent staff and cover remaining shifts with trusted Florence nurses, carers and support workers.

A full 98% of our clients find Florence really easy to use. Even better, we're also a CPD-certified training provider. Use Florence Academy to arrange essential training for permanent staff and Florence workers: it's that simple.

We're on your side.
Find out more and
[book a demo](#) today.