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STAFF TELL OF NURSES LEAVING PROFESSION WITH OTHERS CRYING IN DESPERATION



■ Picket - NHS nurses striking outside Colchester Hospital

Views split on

nurses' two day

strike action

SUPPORTIVE Colchester residents rallied round picketing nurses as they took strike action - but some patients felt unsure about backing the NHS workers.

Katie Vargas headed to Colchester Hospital to show support to the striking nurses, saying she believes it is good for their morale to see they have the public's backing.

She said: "The health service is so important to all of us and they work incredibly hard - they are under enormous emotional pressure.

"I know people who work in the NHS and I have seen how exhausted and at the end of their tether they are.

"I think it is really important they get decent pay for the hard work they do and above all better working conditions as well.

"We have such a shortage of nurses and my family depends on the health service so we need a good NHS for everybody."

Another member of the public, a patient at Colchester Hospital who did not wish to be named, said he was torn over the action being taken by the nurses.

He said: "Some of the nurses are angels but I don't support them 100 per cent.

"They want more money but there are people with a lot less money than them.

"Without a doubt there is not enough staff and if you had asked me six months I would have said they can have whatever they want, but now I'm not so sure."

Protesting

hospital nurses

join picket line

BURNT-OUT nurses who say they have seen their colleagues crying in cupboards picketed outside Colchester Hospital at the start of a two-day strike over pay, staff shortages and patient safety.

NHS frontline workers at the hospital stood defiantly in solidarity while holding aloft placards in order to get their message across and chanted "Protect the patients, save the NHS".

The nurses, all members of the Royal College of Nursing, are fighting for a pay increase of 19 per cent but also fear low staffing numbers are endangering patients.

Nathan Gladman, 35, from Colchester, is a main outpatients healthcare assistant who has worked at Colchester Hospital for nearly 14 years.

He said: "I have never seen it come to this and so it is really sad we are here today but ultimately the Government is not listening.

"Nurses and staff are leaving

by **GEORGE KING**
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in huge numbers and when I worked on the wards sometimes it was two healthcare assistant and two nurses to 30 poorly patients.

"There were times where I would see student nurses crying in the cupboards and people would burn out - they are emotionally, physically and mentally exhausted.

"It is unsustainable and a really sad state of affairs now but this is the last resort.

"We want more staff to join and more staff to stay and the only way that is going to happen is if you pay people fairly and that will then improve conditions.

"We are so short-staffed as it is but it is getting dangerous now and affecting the public and people's loved ones and it is simply a disgrace."

Anna Swan, 64, whose children

also work in the NHS, has been nursing for more than four decades and has spent 37 years working at Colchester Hospital.

She said: "I am frightened for the NHS - it is crumbling around us. The pressures on it are enormous and the resources we have seem to be dwindling every day.

"The pressures of the job are just horrendous compared to what they were 30 years ago and we have become a victim of our own success.

"The patients are sicker and are having more advanced procedures but stay in for a shorter period of time which means the turnaround on the wards is much greater.

"We are doing all that with less staff than ever.

"This is more than about the money. I love the NHS and it matters so much to me. We rely on it and expect it to be there when we need it but I am fearful for the future."

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