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NHS Borders 'busier than any of the busiest winters'

🕒 10 September 2021

Coronavirus



| Dr Lynn McCallum said health services were busier than during the busiest winter

The medical director of NHS Borders has urged the public to "be kind" to staff facing "unprecedented challenges".

Dr Lynn McCallum said they were currently busier than in the "busiest winter".

She added that there had also been an increase in abuse of staff recently - both face-to-face and on social media.

She said she recognised some delays for treatment were "far from ideal" but she urged people to show understanding.

Dr McCallum said the challenges being faced by health workers were greater than they had seen at any point in their careers.



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Dr McCallum said the emergency department was facing significant pressure

"Unfortunately, the last 18 months have had such a significant impact on staff that we are seeing significant problems both with vacancies and staff absence due to illness," she said.

"As a result it is proving very, very challenging to provide services across the organisation."

- **Doctors are 'exhausted' says BMA chief**

She said it translated to very low morale among workers.

"I think the staff have absolutely put their heart and soul into working and providing high quality healthcare over the last 18 months," said Dr McCallum.

"But the pressures continue relentlessly both in relation to Covid but also in relation to non-Covid illness."

She said she recognised a lot of people were still waiting for operations - **non-urgent surgery is currently suspended** - and said that was a source of

frustration for staff as well.



| The hospital is currently said to be operating at full capacity

However, Dr McCallum said that was no excuse for abusing workers.

"Sadly, we have seen a significant increase in poor behaviour from the public," she said.

"We have seen quite a lot of abuse to staff face-to-face - and even more on social media.

"I suppose what I would request of the public is please be kind.

"Please remember where all of these individuals have been for the last 18 months and how hard they have been working."

'Dread' of winter

She said health workers were looking towards winter "with some dread".

"As things stand currently we are busier than we have seen at any of the busiest winters in any of our working careers," she said.

Dr McCallum said the Borders General was operating at full capacity which was creating problems for the emergency department which could not be closed.

"What we are finding is that patients are unfortunately having to stay for prolonged periods of time in the emergency department which we know is far

from ideal for either them or our staff," she added.

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