Leading nurse whistleblower Helene Donnelly has urged the profession to support fellow workers to ensure “much-needed” nurses and carers do not leave their posts.

Addressing the Nursing Times Awards last night, Ms Donnelly said nurses should help each other to deal with the “ever-increasing pressure” staff members are experiencing.

She said there was a feeling among the profession that nurses were not valued and their goodwill was being exploited.
"Well this must change," said Ms Donnelly, who whistleblew about the care failings she witnessed at Mid Staffordshire Foundation Trust and gave evidence to the Francis Inquiry.

"I’m immensely proud of the nursing profession and the NHS,” she said. "We’ve collectively taken a huge battering in recent times…. If we support, empower and enable each other to deliver the best possible care we can at all levels throughout the profession and wider, we will achieve this change."

She added: “I know that many of us feel so undervalued and so exhausted by ever-increasing pressure they feel they have no option but to leave the profession.

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Helene Donnelly

"We must not lose the much-needed, experienced carers and nurses simply because they feel they cannot go on due to a lack of help,” she told the audience at the Grosvenor Hotel in London.

Ms Donnelly spoke about her current role as an ambassador for cultural change at Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Partnership Trust, where she now works.

The role means she reports directly to the chief executive about concerns raised by staff, as previously reported by Nursing Times.

She said in the first 12 months she had been contacted more than 100 times by workers. This was in comparison to the three phone calls that were made to the trust’s whistleblowing helpline in the year previously.

Ms Donnelly said this proved staff wanted to be able to raise concerns in person rather than through an anonymous phonecall.

She added that recent conversations with health secretary Jeremy Hunt and prime minister David Cameron about her ambassador role and its adoption across the NHS had been a "positive step forward”, but she was yet to see some action.
Ms Donnelly is also a national advisor on raising concerns within the NHS after she became one of those that blew the whistle about care failings at Mid Staffordshire, which eventually led to a public enquiry by Robert Francis QC.

Mid Staffordshire Foundation Trust itself will **cease to exist at the weekend**.

From November, the trust’s Stafford Hospital – which was at the centre of the care failings scandal – will be run by University Hospitals of North Staffordshire NHS Trust and Cannock Chase Hospital will be run by the Royal Wolverhampton Hospitals Trust.

The newly expanded University Hospital of North Staffordshire NHS Trust will be called University Hospitals of North Midlands NHS Trust. Stafford Hospital is to be renamed County Hospital.