over, it’s time to start thinking about the exceptional colleagues we would like to nominate for the RCNi Nurse Awards 2017.

Recognition for a job well done is a great opportunity to acknowledge the person, boost their team and the profession, and bring into the limelight the excellent work that is done daily.

Caroline Shuldham, chair RCNi editorial advisory board

REALITY OF PAY RISE GIVES LITTLE SCOPE FOR CELEBRATION
Following our recent 1% pay rise, I opened my payslip with excitement, only to be sorely disappointed.

I am a band 6 nurse with 36 years in the NHS. After tax and increases in pension contributions and national insurance, I am £4 a month better off. My band 7 colleague has the princely sum of £1 a month, and our band 4 secretary is now £15 a month better off. A band 2 ward clerk has an amazing £5 extra to spend.

After a discussion about what we should spend all this extra money on, the ward clerk decided to treat herself to a nice coffee. This was an option I could afford, but only once a month, and the secretary and band 7 nurse cannot even afford a bottle of water.

No wonder so many NHS staff are disillusioned and voting with their feet.

Lynne Parker, by email

CHANGES TO THE NURSING ASSOCIATE ROLE ARE NO PANACEA
I find it surprising the number of nurses applauding the proposed changes to the nursing associate role. As well as being hailed as a return to the ‘good old days’, it is being seen as a stepping stone for healthcare assistants to make the leap to registered nurse, or a way in for the less academically inclined.

It is odd that after years of damaging reorganisation and pitiful wage increases, nurses are so willing to take the government at face value. Are we in any doubt that it and NHS employers won’t use nursing associates to further water down the skill mix in the NHS?

It is naive to think these plans won’t hurt nurses. Why pay for a graduate nurse when you can train and recruit a nursing associate for less? And how can nurses fight for better pay and conditions when we have got a bargain equivalent standing alongside?

The fact that all this is happening while bursaries are being scrapped in England is hard to swallow for hard-working nursing students. Graduate nurses are used to being undervalued, but I suspect many, like myself, will fear for the future of the profession.

Grant Byrne, by email

GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO ADDRESS NEEDS OF DYING AT HOME PATIENTS
Last week was Dying Matters Awareness Week, a campaign to encourage people to talk about their end of life wishes.

As a community nurse, palliative care is often a major part of my job. But whenever I hear talk of people dying at home, my heart sinks; the NHS is simply not geared up to supporting people to do this at present. The bulk of end of life care at home is still carried out by district nurses, yet there are many barriers to us doing this effectively. Community services are not seamless, 24/7 services and community nurses are not always available, especially at night.

Palliative care nurses only provide an on-call service at evenings and weekends and only a handful of chemists stock injectable palliative care medications. Budgets are stretched and many out-of-hours doctors have little experience in palliative care.

To compound things, many hospital staff are not aware of the limitations of community services and discharge palliative patients with little or no preparation.

What Jeremy Hunt needs to do is commit extra resources and staff to meet this need but he’s probably too busy playing on his phone.

Drew Payne, community staff nurse, Whittington Health in London

TWEETS OF THE WEEK
On #InternationalNursesDay
I salute your tireless professionalism, compassion & dedication to patients. You deserve better than Jeremy Hunt
@HarrysLaststand

Let’s defend the nursing profession against Tory plans to scrap student nurse bursaries
#InternationalNursesDay
@jeremy.corbyn

@MHPJournal – fantastic conference today dudes! Loads of really relevant and genuinely useful stuff. See you next year
@chlobobobo

Reducing inpatient beds requires investment in community services. It can save money but you can’t save all at once
#MHProud16
@philipmjhn

On #IND16 thanks to all the nurses who cared for my dad so well @NorthBristolNHS for 6 weeks until his death earlier this year #thankanurse
@JaneMCummings

Happy International Nurses Day to all amazing nurses who are sharing their knowledge & skill teaching me to be a great nurse
#thankanurse
@BethLouise_96

Thank you to all those wonderful nurses who have mentored me over the past 40 years – you’ve made me the nurse I am today
@CherylTBarton

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