HEALTH VISITORS KNOW THE BENEFITS OF BREASTFEEDING

I find it astonishing that the article promoting health visiting (careers, May 4) should portray formula feeding as normal in its accompanying photograph. This undermines the individual woman’s choice to breastfeed. It also reinforces the societal norm of formula feeding.

Other than vaccination, breastfeeding is the single biggest benefit to children’s health that a health visitor can promote.

Across the spectrum of life, it also has the potential to improve mental health and good adult lifestyle choices.

Please read the Unicef article Call to Action for Breastfeeding in the UK, for further background information: tinyurl.com/hv671f2

Penelope Braybrooke, registered nurse – children, and UNICEF-trained breast feeding supporter

JOIN US ON STREETS TO DEMAND OUR SAY IN DECISIONS ON NHS REFORMS

The government knows we have an NHS staffing shortage – that is something we can all agree on. It is also their selling point for the removal of NHS bursaries. If we introduce a loan system, they say, it will give us an additional 10,000 training places for nurses, midwives and allied health professionals.

Health secretary Jeremy Hunt keeps flaunting this 10,000 figure, but without any meaningful supporting evidence. That is why Unison and the National Union of Students decided to undertake an analysis of the potential impact of bursary removal.

The unions commissioned London Economics research group to model what could happen. It found that students on courses allied to medicine would fall by at least 6.7%.

A loan is not an incentive to study health care. Debt is not as ‘exciting’ as some politicians may think. Why are they penalising a diverse and passionate group of people who just want to care?

When it comes to something as valuable as the NHS, as vital as patient safety, why are elected politicians not held to the same standards as us? We, on behalf of our patients and our colleagues, present, past and next generation, should be demanding that those making these decisions do so with a serious evidence base.

Nurses have a duty to call on ministers to listen to us, and involve us in decisions about reforms that threaten the future of the NHS workforce – a workforce that is already 50,000 short of front line staff.

That is why we are coming together on Saturday June 4 in London as one collective voice: NHS students, the students of the future, our colleagues and patients. We will be making noise and showing that this is not something they can go ahead with – not when it puts patients’ lives at risk.

Sami Hillyer, #BursaryOrBust campaigner, by email

FORMER DIRECTOR OF RCN WALES LIZ HEWETT BEGAN AT TY MAETH IN 1998

Great story in Nursing Standard about the book Nursing Matters, which delves into the 50th anniversary of the RCN headquarters in Wales, Ty Maeth (features, May 18). However, Liz Hewett began working at the RCN in Wales in 1998 – not in 1988 as stated in the article.

Tracy Lenzy, communications and media officer, RCN Wales

TWEETS OF THE WEEK

Conveniently bursary axed & AN introduced. Disempowering & uninspiring for UK nurses @chlobo

New AN role is a race to the bottom. Gov’t want what nurses can do on the cheap. Patients will pay the price @GGByrne

Will it mean less will want to train as RNs? Particularly with funding changing, it may be a more attractive option @Jodi_sparkles

Less than 0.3% of nurses replied & assume ‘heard’ but can’t conclude from that there is ‘real appetite’ @RivkahMiar

Sometimes you gotta shut up, swallow your pride and accept that you’re wrong. It’s not giving up, it’s called growing up @WatercolourJrny

I’m doing a bit of reading nursing history at the mo, & u know what? We are still in the 1900s @JuneinHE

That’s why I’d like our history to be part of nurse education, we’re not learning from our mistakes @MsNaughtyCheese

Rather we learnt from it than revel in it. Its portrayal as halcyon is faintly ridiculous @alisonleary1

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