**Rewind**

Nurse shortages, the government’s shackling climbdown and life in the fast lane

**Chaining prisoners < Golden hellos <**

The Royal College of Midwives’ high profile campaign on chaining women prisoners in the early stages of labour succeeded in embarrassing the government into backing down on shackling this group of prisoners when they go to hospital. But the chains stay on for prisoners of both sexes visiting hospital for other reasons. The shackling of women prisoners during pre-natal visits remains discretionary.

The £2,000 golden hellos offered by an Essex trust show the inconsistency of nurse workforce planning, with this trust prepared to offer a cash sum to attract nurses into all areas of work. But a lack of accurate information was highlighted by James Buchan, reader in the department of management at Queen Mary College Edinburgh. ‘It is not just a question of numbers but of whether there are enough people with the right skills available,’ he argued.

**Prescribing disappointment**

**Faddy fasts**

Failure to challenge unsound practices was highlighted by research published in Nursing Standard (January 24). The research found that patients are often fasted longer than the minimum waiting time for fluids – times ranging from between three and three quarters to 29 hours.

Anne Chapman, project nurse at Glasgow Royal Infirmary, says: ‘Pre-operative fasting appears to be governed by a blanket policy dictated by time and convenience.’ Patients were often ignorant about the purpose and nature of their fast.

**Nurse prescribing**

The government continued to hold back on the UK-wide implementation of nurse prescribing, drawing a disappointed response from nursing organisations who had hoped the scheme would be quickly extended. But the health department argued that wide variations between pilot sites merited further investigation before wider implementation could be agreed.