When I left, my salary was just over £6 per hour.

I worked for a nursing home agency at C grade. Previously, I was a living wage.

I am an EN employed by an agency at C grade. Previously, I worked for a nursing home with D grade responsibilities. When I left, my salary was just over £6 per hour.

Panorama (BBC1 March 23) did nothing to dispel the myths and fears that surround Ashworth, Broadmoor and Rampton special hospitals. Neither Ashworth nor Broadmoor had an opportunity to put their case on the programme, maybe because they disagreed with what the programme was trying to establish.

The programme highlighted the problem of illicit drugs, alcohol and pornography in the hospitals. However, these are a problem in any secure establishment and are endemic within society. We can reduce the supply, but it is impossible to eradicate, though of course we keep trying.

It is true that the special hospitals have problems, but these are already being addressed. The staff at Ashworth Hospital are hard working, dedicated professionals striving to deliver the best patient care possible. With the right support these professionals can show that special hospitals continue to have an important role.

The continued inappropriate detention of some patients in the special hospitals is a result of bed shortages elsewhere, or lack of funding for patient relocation to establishments more appropriate for the continued treatment of the individual.

With regard to the current DoH review, the Ashworth RCN Branch had been promised by Ray Rowden, while director of the High Security Psychiatric Services Commissioning Board, that he would consult with our members to enable those working in Ashworth to contribute to the recommendations. This was not done. The comments made by Mr Rowden in the programme, regarding Ashworth Hospital imploding within 18 months to two years were, to say the least, inflammatory. They give cause for concern and possibly fear to many of our patients, their relatives, the public and of course the staff working at the hospital.

Panorama failed to enable the public to understand the needs of patients cared for in the special hospitals and all of the issues surrounding the future of these hospitals.

Teresa Murphy, Branch Chair; Len Jones, Secretary
Convener of RCN Ashworth

Recently, I applied for a position as a bank nurse at my local hospital group. I was unsuccessful because I had asked for a salary of £5.25 an hour and they only employed ENs at D grade for £5.45 an hour. I do not consider £5.45 an hour to be a living wage.

I have also been ringing the personnel department at the local hospital group for part-time D grade positions, but none are available at present.

I said that I would be willing to accept a top salary C grade, but was informed that they only occasionally employ C grades.

So, if ENs are rarely employed at D grade, but there are no C grade jobs, where does that leave us? I enjoy being an EN — it is the powers that be who make it so difficult. There is a national shortage of nurses. Yet many hospitals waste valuable resources employing agency nurses rather than offering their own nurses decent salaries and opportunities.

Name and address supplied

Over 50 does not mean over the hill

I read the article about the ageing workforce (News Analysis March 10) with interest. However, in the same issue, a prison advertised for an RN to fill the post of healthcare officer. Among the requirements was a specified age — 20 to 49.5.

I have to ask why? A nurse who is over 50 is likely to have had a long experience of nursing and have developed life skills that would equip them to deal with people.

Surely this would make them particularly suitable for prison work.

With regard to physical ability, I note that the advert welcomes applications from disabled people. It does not exclude women or suggest a minimum height. So why exclude people in their 50s?