20 miles each way to college, so few will actually claim. We are not contracted to a particular hospital, our university trains students for 11 different trusts and any of us could be sent anywhere in the county. Being supernumerary is a rare occurrence for all students - staffing levels being what they are. To add insult to injury those of us receiving an NHS bursary cannot apply for student grants or loans. Having said all this, let's not argue about who's worse off. Surely all nursing students need to stick together. We all suffer financial hardship throughout our training. Let's agree that the reason recruitment is so low is that all nursing students are not paid a decent amount, so we can't focus on our training and have to work part time to make ends meet.

Dawn Maith
Gloucestershire

I do have faith in nurses' professional judgement

The article 'Bristol Inquiry told statements given as evidence the debate on the role of need for more nurse training and have to work part time to make ends meet.

Margaret Maisey
Former Director of Nursing
United Bristol Healthcare NHS Trust

Support is available when you need it most

I am writing in response to the article 'Defence mechanisms' (Opinion April 12). I was moved by the sense of isolation and guilt the writer expressed. It mirrored my own feelings of more than 20 years ago. During the time leading up to an inquest I had to attend, rumours, uninform ed comment and gossip added to my guilt and isolation. I felt suicidal at times, but a loving husband and family kept me going. The other important person at that time was my RCN solicitor. He was considerate, caring and conscientious in getting all my personal details and statement right. As an RCN steward I endeavour to support and represent nurses in all aspects of their work. They need advice and help for a whole host of reasons. There is still a lot of bullying, harassment and hierarchy to get to grips with. Why should they suffer alone? I can't wave a magic wand, collude or condone, but what I can do is work with nurses and others to resolve a situation. Thank you to the writer of the article for enabling me to tell my story.

Kath Drayson
Harrow

I was left feeling as if I had been the victim

'Defence mechanisms' (Opinion April 12) made me reflect on a similar incident. I was instructed to attend an internal disciplinary hearing of a nurse I had suspended. At the disciplinary I too felt an 'irrational sense of vindication' and left feeling that I had been the victim.

Sara McDonald
Bournemouth