NAUGHTY NURSE CAKE WILL STOP ME SHOPPING AT ASDA
Asda’s naughty nurse novelty cake (news November 1) highlights the gulf between the reality and public perception of our profession.
Nurses are not all female, available and sex objects. However, if the spokesperson for Asda thought it was ‘just a bit of fun’, the concepts of seeing women as objects and trivialising nursing are probably beyond him. Perhaps he understands this: it may be ‘just a cake’ but it will stop me shopping at Asda.
Carol Henderson, Avonbridge

LET’S TOAST THE TREASURY FOR THEIR DEDICATION TO PATIENTS
How comforting it is to have the involvement of the Treasury in nursing finally confirmed (news November 8).
Governments come and go, but the Treasury mandarins remain vital to 24-hour direct patient care. Think of all the times we have found our Treasury colleagues already on the scene when we have been called to a medical emergency at the weekend or late at night.
I am sure I speak for most nurses when I propose a toast to the Treasury for their unstinting dedication to round-the-clock patient care.
Stephen Weeks, Flockton Moor, Yorkshire

I ALWAYS WANTED TO NURSE BUT DEBT HAS FORCED ME TO QUIT
I have always wanted to be a nurse and I now know to my detriment that I should have trained as soon as I left school. But life got in the way and I did not become a nursing student until October last year.
Because of the way the system works I was not entitled to any financial assistance and, as a result, I have ended up heavily in debt (letters October 18). I am sure I will have to leave the course, and this is devastating for me. On every placement staff have said what a good nurse I would make.
Things need to change to keep students like me who are willing to work hard to build a future for themselves and their families. However, I am not prepared to sink further into debt.
Debbie Kearney, Lancashire

MANY FINE NURSES COULD NOT COPE WITH GRADUATE STUDY
The idea of an all-graduate nursing profession is discriminatory (news November 8). There are many fine nurses working in the field who could not cope with graduate level study, but who make excellent nurses.
To turn nursing into an all-graduate entry would be a retrograde step, and many people who would otherwise have entered the profession will be put off.
Nursing is not all about paperwork, but compassion and care, neither of which can be measured. Let us get back to good old-fashioned nursing and stop chasing bits of paper.
Isla Taylor, Edinburgh

STUDENTS SHOULD BE INCLUDED IN FLU VACCINATION PROGRAMME
I wish to protest about the discrimination against nursing students with regard to flu vaccination.
The decision to exclude us from vaccination was made on the basis of our ‘not being front line staff’. This would apply if training was entirely classroom-based, but it is not the case. Nursing students work alongside front line staff during their practice placements for up to 12 weeks each semester.
I am on an eight-week community placement at the moment. I have my own caseload, which means I visit, on average, six patients a day in their homes – so cross-infection with flu is a real possibility.
The patients I visit are mainly older people, who are frail and have existing general health problems.
Not being vaccinated against flu means I am not only putting myself at risk but also my colleagues and, most importantly, my patients.
Caroline Kader, Aylesbury

Obituary
Gill Hek
Prison nursing researcher

It is with sadness that I report Gill Hek RGN, CertEd (FE), died suddenly on November 4. Her contribution to prison nursing research was significant and of national importance – it will be a lasting reminder of her dedication to others in need.
Gill was reader in nursing research with a background in community nursing, an area in which she had undertaken a number of research projects. She had a particular interest in motivating and encouraging other nurses, and it was clear she was passionate about her specialty.
Gill had many publications to her credit and was a member of the National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence, serving on their clinical guidelines advisory group for nursing and supportive care.
In her workplace she was the faculty lead for research governance and chair of the faculty ethics sub-committee. She was awarded a major grant by the Department of Health to lead a project examining primary care nursing in prisons. Having not worked with this group of nurses before, Gill was adept at pinpointing the many issues that face prison nurses and the people they care for.
Above all of Gill’s professional skills, she was special to those working at the RCN. She joined the RCN prison nurses forum just two years ago and we are proud to have worked with her and of what she achieved on behalf of nursing. She was very well respected among her peers and a true champion within our profession.
We will miss her sorely and offer our deepest sympathies to her husband and family.

Ann Norman is RCN adviser for prison nursing and learning disability nursing