Government won’t back down, but that’s fine – because neither will we

The Save the NHS Bursaries campaign is something we should all be proud of. It represents our feelings of anger and discontent towards the government for its constant assumptions that it can do whatever it likes, whenever it likes, without consequence.

The week of action followed on from the mass protest march in January, and goes to show what a massive impact can be made when people get together to make their voices heard. Perhaps the most controversial event was Walkout Wednesday, when students walked out of placement for one hour to show solidarity with junior doctors and raise awareness of the bursary campaign. This was overwhelmingly successful and showed the unity between students and their professional colleagues.

It is a shame that the government seems determined to ignore the voices of the people. Bypassing the Commons vote on the issue is not only extremely unjust but brings the concept of democracy into question. The government appears adamant that it won’t back down on the issue and that’s fine, because neither will we.

Helen Corry, second-year nursing student, King’s College London

CARE IS NOT ROCKET SCIENCE, IT IS ABOUT EMPLOYING THE RIGHT STAFF

I read with great interest the article on nursing theory and the delivery of compassionate care (Art & science, February 10). Having worked as a care assistant since the age of 17, I returned to university at 42 to study adult nursing. I thoroughly enjoyed all of my placements during training, but I recall chieques, which resulted in unfair rosters being drawn up and sloppy paperwork.

One nurse rendered a patient immobile with the mere tick of her pen, when in fact he was very much mobile with assistance. I nursed a man who had motor neurone disease. The staff tried to hurry me along, but I stood my ground and refused to leave him because he was panicking, feeling he could not swallow.

Clinical skills can be taught, but I do not believe a ‘caring nature’ can. To be compassionate is to have a deep awareness of, and sympathy for, another’s suffering and to empathise and help that person. I have always worked in care homes, and this is where my heart lies. Building that trusting relationship with residents and their families is priceless.

It is not rocket science or something that should be governed by audits; it is about having enough staff who have caring qualities and a good skill mix. Through having the correct equipment and an efficient and fair leader, using the 6Cs and receiving regular training, a positive difference will be seen in every area of care.

Marie J Rowe, Cheshire, by email

THESE DAYS WE DON’T HAVE THE LUXURY OF ‘SPARES’ TO GO ROUND

In response to Donato Tallo’s letter (February 10) regarding hospitals having a pool of nurses to draw on, this is exactly what happened 30 years ago when I started working at my current hospital.

As part of the pool, I reported to the ‘nursing officer’ for the surgical or medical unit and was sent to work on the ward that had the highest patient dependency. All staff started in the pool, and once a position became available they were allocated to a ward. I gained experience of all the wards and felt confident if moved from my permanent ward to help out. It also meant sickness could be covered.

These days, we can barely recruit enough staff to cover the wards at basic staffing levels, let alone have the luxury of ‘spares’. Where are these staff going to be found? Nursing has become so challenging and burnout is a massive issue.

Lynne Parker, by email