Florence Nightingale would have taken on the political fight, and so should we

I agree with Mike Travis’ comments (letters April 20) about the role and responsibilities of the trade union movement, and those of the RCN in caring for and fighting politically on behalf of nurses at all levels.

Becoming involved politically is a vital part of being a member of a democratic society. Not only should our unions be speaking out and lobbying on issues such as the cuts in benefits to people with disabilities as Zeba Arif points out (letters, March 30), but also fighting for nurses to be paid according to the work they do.

So if, for example, nurses are running GP practices (editorial April 20) or doing the same work as doctors, then they should receive the same remuneration and pension rights as doctors.

Florence Nightingale did not pass through the door of the House of Commons, but never shied away from becoming politically involved. The government of the day consulted her before any health legislation was passed and she was a friend to all nurses from the junior to the most senior. It is in part thanks to her that we became the respected profession we are today.

If nurses are not represented better at the political and public levels, there is a danger that numbers will drop further and potential recruits will be tempted to enter more lucrative and better supported occupations like medicine.

Michael Owen, retired nurse

A GOLDEN AGE OF PIONEERING NURSE RESEARCH IS IMAGINED

James P Smith’s polemic (letters May 4) railing against the dominance of academic researchers at the recent RCN Research Conference is puzzling since it is Britain’s premier academic research conference.

It is tempting to hark back to an imagined golden age of pioneering nurse researchers, but today’s university professors have to operate within the constraints of a higher education sector dominated by the pressure to obtain research funding, performance in the Research Excellence Framework, and position in the national and international university league tables.

The demands on nurse researchers are identical to those made in all other academic disciplines, and this is surely appropriate as public and charitable funds are involved. Over many years, Roger Watson and other scholars have charted nursing’s slow progression from the bottom of the league tables of disciplines to a position of relative success.

In a fiercely competitive environment in which no discipline is granted special privileges, nurse researchers surely deserve the support of the profession as a whole.

John Adams, by email

CHILD ABUSE ARTICLE WOULD HAVE BENEFITED FROM PRACTICAL ADVICE

The article ‘Help in raising concerns about child abuse’ (features April 27) focuses on escalation processes at the expense of providing practical advice about how professionals should respond in the event of a child disclosing an allegation of abuse.

In many instances, children will speak to a nurse or an allied professional as someone with whom they feel comfortable. It is therefore important to emphasise the following:

■ Ask open questions.
■ Let the child know this information cannot remain confidential.
■ Assure the child that whatever has happened is not their fault.
■ Ensure that the conversation is accurately recorded.
■ Follow your organisation’s child protection procedures in reporting the incident.

Geoff Corre, safeguarding consultant, by email