

Donna Ockenden

Letter to The Sunday Times from RCN chief executive and general secretary Janet Davies and NMC chief executive and registrar Jackie Smith.

The joint letter, published by the *Sunday Times* on the 30th July 2017, said they were “registering their concern” about an opinion article that appeared in the newspaper on 23rd July 2017.

Liddle’s misdiagnosis

As the chief executives of the regulator and the professional body for the UK’s nursing staff we wish to register our concern at the comments made by Liddle. We expect columnists to air strong opinions and respect that freedom. However, we must take exception when damaging claims are made about nursing.

Liddle seems unaware, or unwilling to reflect, that nursing is a graduate profession. To suggest that, after three years of training, nurses are limited in the way he describes – “they will empty your bedpan and mess around with your drip” – is

misguided and disrespectful. Nurses can prescribe drugs, perform minor surgery and are responsible for delivering 80% of patient care. He also uses an unrecognisable figure of a salary of £40,000. After 10 years, nurses can expect to earn about £29,000 a year.

Nursing staff will remain at the fore of healthcare as it rises to the challenge of an ageing population with increasingly complex care needs. Their work must not be belittled.

Janet Davies, chief executive and general secretary, Royal College of Nursing; Jackie Smith, chief executive and registrar, Nursing and Midwifery Council