The start of this article is predictable! The need to make further savings and achieve our savings target is essential, as it will give us the necessary financial and organisational stability we need for the future. We also must not lose sight of the need to make sure we can provide high quality, efficient and effective care for patients and that we are their hospital of choice.

To achieve these important aims, the trust has set out a number of key themes and objectives to help guide the organisation and direct the work of all our staff. A launch of these objectives will take place at a very different kind of staff meeting on Tuesday 13 June at 12noon in the PGMC and a representative from each ward and department is expected to attend.

There are six core themes or objectives; putting the patient first, getting it right first time, better communication and involvement, learning together, making the most of our money and support for our community. I would like all staff to look at these themes carefully and to decide how you and your team can make these relevant to your everyday work and set your own personal objectives to support them. Please spend some time thinking about this as it is vital that we all work towards the same goal to secure the future of the RUH.

The importance of getting the basics of patient care right is clearly reflected in the findings of the latest annual inpatient survey. This showed that the vast majority of patients who responded to the questionnaire have trust and confidence in our clinical staff, feel that we are good at talking to our patients about their treatment and care, and that we treat our patients with dignity and respect.

Patient surveys are just one of many ways we encourage patients to tell us about the things they consider most important about the care we provide. Hearing good news about our work is a boost to us all. We also welcome such feedback as it helps us to review and improve our services to meet the needs of the patients who choose to have their treatment at the RUH.

Areas where we need to do more work include reducing the number of times we change hospital admission dates and improving the information we give patients about the medicines that they are given when they go home. We will be taking the findings to the RUH Patient Experience Group and will use this, along with feedback from our patient advice and liaison, and complaints services to decide how best to make improvements.

As well as listening to what our patients say the trust’s performance has also been highlighted in two external assessments; the annual CHKS Top 40 hospital study and the Healthcare Commission’s new ‘Annual Health Check’.

Firstly the RUH has again been judged as one of the top 40 performing hospitals from those who took part in a continued on page 2
Message from the Chief Executive
continued from page 1

national study, carried out by CHKS, the leading UK healthcare benchmarking company. This is the third year that the RUH has participated in the CHKS survey and the second year running it has made it into the top 40 (full story Pg 11).

Gaining this award for a second year running is a great achievement. At a time when health services are under great pressure it is all the more encouraging for our staff and patients to be recognised in this way and for our hard work and efforts to be highlighted nationally.

Secondly, we had some further good news around the trust’s overall performance for last year. The Healthcare Commission’s old star ratings system for NHS trusts has been replaced by a new Annual Health Check. Each NHS organisation has to make a declaration to the Commission with a self-assessment of its own performance across a number of key criteria. These cover areas including standards of safety; clinical and cost effectiveness; governance; patient focus; accessible and responsiveness of care; the care environment and amenities and public health.

As a trust we believe we are meeting all but a handful of the standards required by the Healthcare Commission and we have developed plans for the few areas where further effort is required (full story Pg 11).

Finally, returning to our significant financial challenge. As you will know the staff consultation around financial savings is still ongoing. I appreciate that the discussions around savings, particularly around possible changes in staff posts going on in all the divisions are unsettling for many people. We are doing everything we can at board and senior management level to support staff in identifying the required savings and I can assure you that we will make every effort to keep you all informed.

Mark Davies
Chief Executive

New Faces at Cancer Information & Support Centre

The RUH welcomes Juliet Gilchrist (pictured left) and Cheryl Chambers, (right) who recently joined the cancer information and support centre. They share the role of cancer information specialist and will be coordinating and promoting the services of the centre and developing new initiatives.

Juliet has worked with Macmillan Cancer Support whilst Cheryl was a cancer nurse specialist, working in Portsmouth.

Juliet says: “The centre offers information and support that complements the care of patients, friends and families provided by the clinical teams. We can also provide information on associated issues such as travel, finances, diet, complementary therapies, care at home and emotional support. We can access materials in different forms like audio tapes and videos, and in different languages. If we don’t know something, we generally know who does!

"The centre is also a quiet haven for both inpatients and outpatients, who sometimes just drop by for a cup of tea. Everyone is welcome."

Juliet and Cheryl will also be involved in various cancer related activities over the coming months. One of the first of these is an awareness campaign in June, as part of Men’s Cancer Awareness month.

Cheryl says: "Prostate cancer is the most common form of cancer in men. Testicular cancer is still quite rare, about 2,000 cases a year in the UK, but it is the most common form of cancer in men aged between 15 and 45. Raising awareness will help people to know what to look out for and to understand the importance of getting things checked out by a GP."

A forthcoming addition to the centre’s services will be a new part-time cancer benefits advisor. Available to both patients and carers, the post will be based at the local Citizens Advice Bureau, offering professional advice on financial support following a diagnosis of cancer.

Juliet and Cheryl have been making contact with key teams in the hospital to discuss how they might work together. If you want to find out more, please drop by or call 01225 824049. The centre is currently open Monday to Friday from 10am-4pm.

Deadline for news for the next edition:
w/c 3 July 2006.

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Photography: Courtesy of communications office, medical illustration and/or individual contributors

If you would like to share news of what’s going on in your department, please contact Anita.
The Royal United Hospital has been given a Food Hygiene Award with merit for the way it manages food safety for patients, staff and visitors. The trust received the second highest score in an assessment by the environmental health department at BANES and a certificate was presented to the RUH at a recent ceremony at the Guildhall.

Food hygiene regulations in England require caterers to have a documented food safety management system, which is based on HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points), a system that was first devised by NASA for astronauts back in the early 1970s.

Facilities manager Mike Newport says: "We are delighted to receive this award and to be recognised for the good work we do behind the scenes."

"The supervisors in the kitchen, restaurant and coffee bar play an important role in food safety management for the hospital. They continually monitor and record delivery, cooking and serving temperatures as well as the storage of foods at correct temperatures.

"All of our supervisors have to achieve intermediate food hygiene certification as a minimum standard and four of them have gone on to achieve an advanced food hygiene qualification."

"We have operated a food safety management system since 1992, when it was first registered with the British Standards Institute. We are developing the system year on year to continually improve our working policies and procedures."

The Great Western Ambulance Trust now has a new logo (above), following the merger of Avon, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire Ambulance Services in April.

This logo should be used when producing documents which mention the ambulance service or when producing joint patient information publications. To obtain the logo, please contact communications and PR manager, Debbie Pugh-Jones at Great Western Ambulance Service NHS Trust on 01249 454234.
Calling All Blood Donors

A blood donor session will take place on Wednesday 12 July between 9.30am to 11.45am and again between 2.00pm to 3.45pm, in the RUH sports and social club.

Please call Dave Sale on 01225 824560 between 12-6pm, to book an appointment. We look forward to seeing you.

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Victoria Ward Pilots Short Stay Unit Project

Victoria ward has become a dedicated short stay unit, in order to improve the care of older patients admitted as an emergency, with an expected length of stay of between one and four days.

From day one, the focus will be on safe and timely discharge. Patients who are medically fit to return home will be able to do so without unnecessary delays.

Consultant Dr Nick John has been working on the project that is based on similar schemes in Sheffield and Bristol. Nick is supported by Dr Emily Ahern and Dr Chakraborty who will provide daily medical cover.

The unit will continue to have 18 beds and will be managed by Philippa Nash and Dee Scruton who say: "Team work and developing effective links with multi-disciplinary and community teams are key to the implementation of this new ward."

The unit plans to take patients from the medical assessment unit, emergency department and some direct admissions, who broadly meet the admission criteria that have been agreed by the wider multi-disciplinary team, including input from social services and the primary care trusts.

Daily team meetings will provide the impetus to ensure that all patients on the unit get the care and support that they need, when they need it. These meetings will be attended by representatives from physiotherapy, occupational therapy, social services and the discharge liaison team as well as medical and nursing staff.

If the change proves as successful at the RUH as it was in Sheffield, the changes will be rolled out to other older peoples’ wards in the future.

Patient Gwen Thomas was happy to be photographed with some of the ward staff. She said: "Everyone is so kind and they are all so good to me. It’s been a very happy stay."

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Award Winning Bath Hospital Radio

Bath Hospital Radio has received recognition for its work at the National Hospital Radio Awards.

Volunteer Anita Jaynes won a top five place in the Female Presenter of the Year category, at a ceremony organised by the Hospital Broadcasting Association held in Blackpool in April.

Jayne was presented with her certificate at the ceremony which took place at the Hilton Hotel. The event was hosted by media consultant Paul Robinson and Carol Kirkwood from the BBC.

Bath Hospital Radio will be helping events along at the League of Friends hospital fete in June. As well as running a stall they will be broadcasting in between events and other musical guests.

Requests can be phoned through to the station on 01225 824151 or write to Bath Hospital Radio, Manor Lodge, Royal United Hospital, Combe Park, Bath, BA1 3NG.

Visit the Bath Hospital Radio website www.bhbs.org.uk for more information.

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Anita Jaynes

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RUH Promotes Greener Travel

Staff and visitors recently came along to a special promotion at the hospital, to learn about the latest alternatives for travelling to the RUH. They also benefited from special discounted offers on tickets, cycles, cycle accessories, training and safety.

Non-executive directors Richard Weatherhead and Jonathon Lloyd check out the bikes for size.

Time for a quick coffee

Director of facilities Stephen Holt said: “The RUH is keen to promote alternative ways of travelling and we’ve been working closely with our colleagues in the community to raise the profile of the cheaper and healthier options of transport available.”

Participants in the event at the hospital included BANES Council, who promoted the Odd Down Park and Ride bus service, First Bus who shared information on bus and train timetables as well as the availability of discounted tickets and the Wiltshire Hopper who advertised their mini bus system.

In addition, two local cycle shops, John Hare and Avon Valley, displayed and demonstrated a range of bikes and accessories, the charity Life Cycle recommended cycle training and safety and Avon Police, offered advice on personal safety.

Linen room machinist Christine Southard regularly uses the Park and Ride service. She said: “The park and ride gives me a direct route to work, before I had to travel into town on one bus and then back out to the hospital on another, it’s cheaper too.”

Maria Defrutos is a staff nurse in theatre recovery who cycles to work every day. Maria said: “I have been cycling to the hospital for over two years. It helps to keep me fit and it is good to have fresh air when I finish work. It is not so nice to cycle in the rain! It would be good to have more facilities to encourage more staff to cycle.”

Travel plan co-ordinator Janet Whitwam organised the event, ably assisted by Annie Comley and Pat Robinson. Janet says: “The event was a great success and was well supported by staff, patients and visitors. We were encouraged by the number of staff who showed interest in the bike display, especially the fold-away bikes and who rang after the event to enquire about the cycle scheme. Visitors took time to talk to BANES and the Wiltshire Hopper organiser and everyone talked to the Police who were promoting their new community force.”

The charity ‘life cycle’ gives advice on cycle training.

Showing off the folding bike to staff - it folds down to about the size of a large brief case!
The Department of Health has just published the results of the latest annual UK inpatient survey.

Overall for the RUH the survey results are very positive. In particular, they highlight the fact that patients have trust and confidence in our clinical staff, that we are good at talking to our patients about their treatment and care, and that we treat our patients with dignity and respect.

Brigid Musselwhite, director of planning and strategic development said: "Patient surveys are just one of many ways we encourage patients to tell us about the things they consider most important about the care we provide. Hearing good news about our work is a welcome boost for our hard working and committed staff. We welcome all feedback since it helps us to more carefully tailor our services to meet the needs of the patients who choose to have their treatment at the RUH."

One important area where the RUH performs consistently well in the survey is around how staff communicate with patients and involve them in their treatment and care, in particular when undergoing operations and procedures.

Dr Tim Craft has first hand experience of this in the intensive care unit. "I think the public assume that, in a highly pressured environment like intensive care where difficult clinical decisions have to be taken, it might be more difficult to really involve patients and their relatives and offer them choice, but our experience has been quite the opposite. We have conducted patient satisfaction surveys in ITU and worked very hard to ensure that we communicate effectively with patients and their relatives and can find ways of involving them in all aspects of their treatment."

One relative - who prefers not to be named - can personally vouch for this effort. Her husband has been a patient in ITU for some 40 days and unconscious for most of this time. She can’t speak too highly of the care and attention she has received from all the staff in ITU. "At every step the staff here have taken the time and trouble to explain in detail what the situation is and what they plan to do in terms of care for my husband. From the day we arrived they have been very honest with me and told me exactly how seriously ill he has been. They have also taken the time and trouble to explain why he has reacted to the various drugs or treatments they are using. This has been very reassuring for both me and the rest of the family.

"Each consultant has made us feel that we are the only person they are looking after, despite the fact that there are a further 11 or so other critically ill patients in the unit. Also the nurses seem to know every detail of what has happened during the last shift, so their handover must be very, very good. Their concern for me personally has been overwhelming, they are always asking if I slept alright, am I eating properly and so on. I really can’t praise them all enough, they have been marvellous."

Tim Craft added: "We are all aware of the pressures NHS hospitals are under at present but, reassuringly, the results of the survey show that everyone at the RUH keeps the care of our patients and their family at the centre of our attention."

"I would also like to take this opportunity to thank David Walker for all that he has done for the surgical division since the beginning of the divisional structure several years ago. I am delighted that David has agreed to remain as specialty lead for obs. and gynae. so that his clinical leadership experience will not be lost to the division and the trust.

"I am sure that you will join me in congratulating Chris on taking on this key clinical leadership role."
Good news indeed! Knowledge & Skills Framework outline writing is all but finished. Well done and thank you to all those involved. If you or any of your team is without an outline please contact Julie Blackman on ext.1153 for guidance.

What now with KSF? Well now it’s all about staff having appraisals. Appraisal has changed slightly and we now have the KSF outline to guide our development more effectively. ‘KSF Next Steps for Manager’ sessions are being run until June – look out for Training Update e-mails for the dates. These 1-hour sessions are full of information to help managers with appraisals.

Worried about evidence collection? Don’t be. Keep it very simple and use examples from every day work like paperwork you produce or practical work that your line manager sees you do.

For a handout on evidence collection, go to the appraisal webpage on the intranet and scroll to Evidence Collection. Any queries with evidence collection phone Julie Blackman on ext.1153.

Do you fancy being involved in the next KSF photo shoot? We are looking for aspiring actors! It doesn’t take very long, it’s good fun and it’s evidence for the Service Improvement dimension. Contact Rosie Bulford on ext.1140.

And finally, if you have any ideas on what else we can do to support you with appraisals let us know on ext.1153.
The Appeal also received a tremendous boost to its CT scanner campaign with a major donation of £150,000 from Trowbridge based Virgin Mobile.

Lisa Codgell-Brown from Virgin Mobile presented the cheque to Vanessa Kyte during the walk. Lisa said: "We are delighted to support such a worthy cause. We very much admire Vanessa’s determination and efforts in helping to raise money for the scanner and we are proud to make this contribution."

Head of fundraising Tim Hobbs says: "It had been Vanessa and Nicola’s dream to undertake this walk for the past three years and we would like to say a huge thank you to them and everyone who played their part in making the event a reality. We are delighted by the number of people who have engaged with the walk, pledging their time and effort to support the CT scanner campaign. They are helping to ensure that this vital piece of diagnostic equipment can be purchased, to benefit the treatment of so many people."

If you would like to make a donation or for further information on the Appeal’s CT scanner campaign, please contact The Forever Friends Appeal on 01225 825691.

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**March Miles**

Over 80 people from across the region put their ‘heart and soles’ in to raising funds for the Appeal’s CT scanner campaign, by taking part in an 85 mile fundraising walk around the RUH catchment area recently.

With money still pouring in from the event, ‘March Miles’ looks set to raise in the region of £20,000 for the Appeal’s CT scanner campaign.

The ‘March Miles’ event was kindly sponsored by Portman Building Society and the walk was championed by local cancer patient, Vanessa Kyte and her sister Nicola Noble. Throughout the week, the walkers were accompanied by two GWR FM Black Thunder vehicles and were thanked for their incredible efforts by various local dignitaries on the way. Passing motorists and pedestrians also contributed, throwing their donations in to the collection buckets available.

On the final day, over 40 walkers joined Vanessa for her walk back to Bath. They were greeted by a crowd of well-wishers and celebratory performances by Samba Sulis, the All Girlz Cheerleading Squad and local opera singer Tim Pitman. Bath Aqua Glass also made a special presentation to Vanessa and Nicola to commemorate their achievement.

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**Concert Collection**

Singer Clare Teal arranged a collection following her successful Easter concert at the Theatre Royal, which raised over £750. Clare is a vice president of The Forever Friends Appeal and a staunch supporter of the CT scanner campaign.

Clare said: "I am delighted to be able to help towards the CT scanner, with the same initials I feel an affinity with it. Having visited the radiology department and talked with the staff, I know how much a second scanner is needed and I am really pleased to be able to offer my support."
Essence of Care
On a mission to improve nutrition!

The Food and Nutrition Essence of Care Group recently organised an eyecatching awareness display to promote ‘Nutrition at the RUH’. Over 60 people visited the display which was manned by members of the essence of care group throughout the day.

We are very grateful to everyone who made the event such a success and would like to thank Tesco, Trowbridge for supplying us with fruit and vegetables.

Chair of the group and sister Sue Vost said: “The display provoked lots of discussion around food and nutrition within the hospital. We were able to provide useful information about healthy eating to the staff and visitors who came along to talk to us. People were also able to taste the new supplement drinks and deserts which help support a normal diet.

“Hot topics included the Food and Nutrition benchmark and the MUST nutrition tool. This is a set of assessment criteria used to determine the nutritional status of patients on admission. This links in with the pilot ‘blue tray’ project which focuses on patients with poor nutritional status.

“By using a blue tray, nursing and domestic staff are made aware that these patients have been identified as ‘at risk’ of poor nutritional input and therefore should be monitored closely. Perhaps they may need encouragement to sit and eat, or they may need to be fed. The trays are not removed until nurses are sure that the patients have eaten their fill and have recorded their nutritional intake.

“The next project we’ll be promoting is the introduction of protected meal times throughout the hospital. Protected meal times also help patients receive the best nutrition, by giving them time to eat their meal without interruption and in a conducive atmosphere.”

Public Consultation on RUH Pre-School Assessment and Therapy Centre

A review of the pre-school assessment and therapy (PAT) centre has been completed and a period of public consultation is underway.

The trust will be discussing with staff, parents/carers and the public the reasons why changes to the centre are needed and seeking their views on the ideas that are proposed.

The PAT centre was originally set up by the Spastic Society as a nursery in 1967 and it has traditionally provided a therapy service to children with physical disabilities whose needs could not be met in the community.

The proposed new service will link more closely with modern thinking on how therapy services should be delivered to children with disabilities including offering places to children from 0 – 4 years. Current only children aged 2 – 4 attend the centre.

Public meetings will be held as follows:

- 10am to 12noon, Friday 9 June 2006 at the Council Chamber, Guildhall, Bath.
- 10am to 12noon, Friday 16 June 2006, large conference room, Bridge House, Trowbridge.
- 10am to 12noon, Monday 26 June 2006, Council Chamber, Mendip District Council, Shepton Mallet.

The full consultation document, which details the proposed changes to the service, can be read on the RUH website (www.ruh.nhs.uk). Copies of the document are also available from the RUH patient and public involvement manager Edwina Lloyd, Royal United Hospital, Combe Park, Bath, BA1 3NG, telephone 01225 821244 or 825516.

Any comments on the proposal should be forwarded in writing to the chief executive Mark Davies, or via email to PATCentreConsultation@ruh-bath.swest.nhs.uk or by telephoning Edwina Lloyd. The consultation period will end on Saturday 1 July 2006.
Staff Tributes

We asked staff to ‘celebrate’ their work or their colleagues and invited them to share their positive comments. Responses are still coming in. Take a look - you may even find you’ve got a mention yourself!

I have been working as secretary to Professor Horrocks, who has been away for several weeks. During that time there have been many important queries which needed an immediate response. Martin Dunscombe from medical records has been most helpful during this time. He is always cheerful and polite. He is professional, proactive and extremely willing to put in that extra bit of effort which is often needed in order to marry-up case notes with the query in hand. I have very much appreciated his assistance which has been invaluable to me and I wanted you to know what a valuable member of staff you have.

Kit Hughes, RUH bank secretary to Professor Horrocks

Vanessa Perry works in the records section of the Princess Anne Wing and collects the notes from several of the clinics for the gynaecology outpatient department. The nurses would like to say thank you to Vanessa for a job very well done. She reduces the amount of time they can spend chasing notes and letters, as Vanessa’s are always perfect! She does a great job.’

Rebecca Watts, Secretary to Mr Dunster & Mr Sharp

Staff nurse Jiang Ruiping was motivated to write a letter recently, praising her colleagues at the RUH.

She writes: I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to the RUH, the personnel department and Waterhouse Ward.

I came over to RUH in Oct 2001 and joined Waterhouse ward, which is a general surgery and vascular surgery ward, quite demanding and challenging. In the beginning I had some difficulties with the work routine but with the help of the staff, I got used to the work and learned a lot, especially from the vascular speciality which I had never worked in before.

Unfortunately, I had to go back to my country, China, in March 2002 and I had to resign from my job temporarily. With sister Susan Kennedy and acting director of nursing Deborah Gray’s help, arrangements were made with personnel manager Katy Coulam, to rejoin the RUH in Feb 2003.

During these years, I have had strong support from the senior staff and ward managers Susan Kennedy, Nicki Smith and Jo Flint; they not only help me with my job but also take care of my personnel needs, especially after I had a tough time to deal with in China. I feel at home even though I am from a foreign country.

There is a strong support team and good management in the Waterhouse ward, not only are the staff happy but the patients are too. That is why the ward always receives thank you letters from patients and relatives.

May I take this chance to express my heartfelt thanks to the Waterhouse ward and may god bless and prosper this ward in the future.

Yours truly,

Jiang Ruiping
The RUH has again been named as one of the 40 top-performing hospitals taking part in a recent national study carried out by CHKS - a healthcare performance company.

The RUH is one of only two hospitals in the Avon Gloucestershire & Wiltshire health community area to be rated so highly in the CHKS results; it is the third year that the trust has participated in the survey and the second year running that the hospital has made it into the top 40.

The annual CHKS study judges hospitals across three key areas: clinical effectiveness and outcomes, and efficiency and patient-carer experience. The report is compiled from data collected over 12 months ending December 2005 and represents the most up to date data available to the NHS.

Trusts in the top 40 experienced 11.7% fewer deaths on average than others - and all achieved shorter lengths of stay. CHKS reports that as a result 700,000 fewer bed days were needed - the equivalent of two less wards per trust compared to other UK trusts. The company says this year's top 40 also performed better than last year's, with 19% fewer day case overstays per trust, 16% fewer complications and 7% fewer deaths overall.

Welcoming the award director of planning and strategic development Brigid Musselwhite says: "Gaining this award for a second year running is a great tribute to our staff and demonstrates that we are working well towards our aim to do our best for our patients. At a time when health services are under great pressure it is all the more encouraging for our staff and patients that the trust is recognised in this way and that our hard work and efforts are highlighted nationally."

The RUH believes it is continuing to perform well and offer excellent care for its patients after a detailed self-assessment of its activities. The trust has advised the Healthcare Commission that it is meeting all but a handful of standards under a new system that monitors health service performance known as the ‘Annual Health Check.’

The Healthcare Commission is the national body responsible for monitoring the performance of NHS hospital and primary care trusts. This is the first year that the commission is using the ‘Annual Health Check’ to monitor performance; it replaces the old NHS ‘Star Rating’ system.

All NHS hospital and primary care trusts in England are now required to undertake a self-assessment of their performance. The RUH has now submitted its final declarations of its performance.

The core standards require an assessment against standards of safety; clinical and cost effectiveness; governance; patient focus; accessible and responsiveness of care; the care environment and amenities and public health.

As well as declaring compliance against the majority of the core standards, the RUH has developed plans for the few areas where further work is required. This includes giving staff protected time to attend mandatory training during working hours. It also includes analysing local population healthcare needs and planning health promotion events and activities.

The RUH Patient and Public Involvement Forum commented on the trust’s performance against the core standards - in particular on ‘exceptionally kind, reassuring and professional staff in the breast unit. They also said it was ‘excellent’ that patients could attend a ‘one stop’ clinic where they would receive information about their condition before they leave the department. The forum also commented on the hospital’s welcoming main entrance and the League of Friends guides who help patients and visitors find their way around the hospital.

Chief executive Mark Davies says: "Hospital staff work extremely hard to deliver the best possible care and treatment to our patients and we continually work towards improving our services. The Healthcare Commission’s Annual Health Check is an important tool for us to use to make sure we are getting it right. Our self assessment provides evidence to support both achievement and improvements in our performance in the quality of our work."
Return to Practice Success

Staff nurse Elizabeth Hutchinson, or Lily as she is known, recently returned to nursing at the RUH, following the successful completion of the ‘Return to Practice’ course.

Lily and her fellow ‘return to practice’ nurses, who started in October last year, have been celebrating their success, following 112 hours of clinical practice and passing all the necessary assignments. Lily was keen to share her experience with Grapevine readers.

"Staff and friends and families have asked why we wanted to return to nursing. Our answers ranged from simply missing nursing, to wanting to return to a job that we love and where we can make a difference to patients’ lives.

"The average time away from nursing in my group was 10 years, although one candidate had been away for 20 years! We were made to feel very welcome by return to practice co-ordinator Linda Chapman. Linda was very professional and supported us fully throughout a busy and demanding programme. I won’t deny that completing the course was very intensive and a real hard graft, especially when it came to producing so many pieces of written analysis and an essay about aspects of nursing related issues.

"The course was interesting and highlighted the need for good research techniques, constructive, critical thought and the importance of evidence-based practice. I feel more confident and assured in my practice and look forward to my role as staff nurse on the respiratory ward and in supporting future return to practice nurses.

"I would like to extend my personal thanks to the many people at the RUH who helped me to achieve my learning objectives and helped me recover my confidence to return to nursing. Particular thanks to my mentors and staff on Philip Yeoman ward. I am amazed at how all the staff remained so professional, despite being extremely busy. No-one hesitated to give generously of their time and expertise.

"Our families have been very supportive and tolerant too and are proud of our achievements. They have had to get used to our shift work and looking after themselves, as well as helping us find the time to study.

"I know my sentiments are shared by the rest of the group. We have supported each other and become good friends."

Return to practice co-coordinator Linda Chapman says: "Lily, like the others in her group, was very determined and hardworking in achieving the many competencies and skills that are required. They developed a strong support for one another, which is really important and they worked closely with their mentors during their clinical placements. They really deserve their success."

The Return to Practice course is a statutory obligation for those wishing to return to nursing after a break in service. The course supports nurses to achieve the many competencies and skills that are required to enable them to return to safe, competent practice with confidence.

If anyone would like to know more about returning to work as a registered nurse please contact return to practice coordinator Linda Chapman by email or call ext. 4246.
Did you know that health records - an important element in the care of patients - has a review group dedicated to ensuring they meet the highest possible standards?

Documents within health records must meet standards set out by the trust (themselves based on national guidelines) and it is the responsibility of the Document Review Group to ensure that these standards are met.

Each month the group meets to consider proposals for new documents, which would be contained within health records. Proposals are judged against a template (which is available on the Intranet) and, if they meet the required standard, are approved for use throughout the hospital.

The template governs (among others) the key details which must be recorded, the formatting and positioning of text and where in the folder the document should be filed. The aim is for a clear, consistent folder with information which is easy to find.

The group comprises acting medical records manager Mark Hawkins, acting deputy medical records manager Jo Brixey, deputy purchasing manager Martyn Howard Evans, matron in ITU Sharon Preston, senior nurse practice development Anne Plaskitt and information governance manager Glyn Young.

Speaking about the group, Glyn said: "Our aim is to ensure that our medical records contribute towards the best patient care by allowing only the documents which meet our high standards to be used in the trust’s health records."

If you would like more information please contact any member of the document review group. Or you can look on the Intranet under medical records department, then medical records documentation, to find the health records management documentation template.

In July, a group of 20 RUH doctors and nurses are off to Kenya, having volunteered to work with a charity called the Kenyan Orphan Project (KOP).

The Kenyan Orphan Project was formed by a group of medical students in 2002 and aims to fight disease, poverty, social exclusions and injustice among local communities in western Kenya.

The group travelling from the RUH has expertise in paediatrics, surgery and emergency medicine. Staff nurse on the children’s ward Tracy Curant says: "I am one of three nurses on the children’s ward volunteering for this year’s trip, along with staff nurse Jo Hill and matron Bev Boyd.

"Over here, healthcare for children is taken for granted and it is easy to forget how lucky we are. We are going to a place where children die from illnesses that are so easily treated in the UK and sometimes only require simple intervention. This trip is a fantastic opportunity to help communities using our skills and knowledge, but also to learn from them."

"So far the Kenyan Orphan Project has established a hospital, a health clinic, a primary and secondary school and a community feeding centre.

"This summer we’ll be helping to set up and participate in mobile clinics, which will provide medical and nursing care to children and families that would not usually have access to medical advice and treatment.

"We’re giving up our time to take part in the project, but we each have to raise £700 to cover the costs of medicines, equipment and other resources that will be taken on the trip.

"I think we will all bring something special back from this trip and know that we have helped make a difference and raised awareness about the ongoing work in Kenya."

If you are interested in sponsoring this trip, or if you want to find out more email dan_magnus@hotmail.com or visit the project website www.kenyanorphanproject.org
The Nationwide Building Society Martial Arts Club recently raised a magnificent £2,448 during a JeePai Kungfu sparring marathon, which they donated to Bath Cancer Research at the RUH.

Alice Rees, who is a member of the martial arts club, chose Bath Cancer Research as the club’s annual charity because of their work in tailoring chemotherapy to the individual. Alice was treated at the RUH after being diagnosed with Hodgkin’s Lymphoma cancer and, happily, is in remission.

Director of the unit Dr Andrew Bosanquet said: “This is a tremendous effort by the Nationwide Martial Arts Club, they are to be congratulated on such a successful spar. It is also a great encouragement to all of us at Bath Cancer Research.”

Following the cheque presentation, unit manager Haydn Wilkins said: “This is a much-needed boost for our research, as we depend heavily at present on local charitable donations and receive no government or NHS money.”

A small team of expert scientists work at Bath Cancer Research, which is located on the RUH site. The group has developed a laboratory test to aid the choice of chemotherapy treatment for patients. Using the group’s drug sensitivity test, doctors can choose the most effective treatment for an individual patient to give the best hope of remission or cure.

This work is part of an international clinical trial on Chronic Lymphocytic Leukaemia. It is hoped that results from this will provide further evidence that drug sensitivity testing can improve the health and survival of Leukaemia patients.

For further information on the Bath Cancer Research Unit see http://caltri.org or contact Haydn Wilkins on 01225-824124 or haydn.wilkins@ruh-bath.nhs.uk

Bath is getting ready to take the first important step towards a local Virtual Pathology Laboratory System (VPLS). This marks the start of the pathology modernisation process across the Bath and Wiltshire Community.

The current pathology system, Telepath, which was installed in 1992, is aging and as at June this year is completely replaced by Ultra, a new software system from General Electric Healthcare Technologies.

The RUH was the first of the three local acute trusts to implement the new ‘Ultra’ Pathology system when three of the disciplines of pathology went live in June 2005. United Bristol Healthcare Trust came on stream in April 2006 whilst North Bristol Trust will follow later this year.

‘Ultra’, is a single up-to-date, fully functional laboratory information system for all laboratory disciplines. It is integrated with Microsoft Word for reporting.

The new system will link to the national Care Record Service as part of NPfIT. It will also allow efficient and quick data extraction, including electronic links to external systems such as Southmead Hospital’s proton renal system, the PCSAs screening systems and to Cancer Registry. In the future it also offers the possibility of integration to GEHCT’s Picture Archiving and Communications solution (PACS), which will be an integral part of NPfIT.

The solution is designed to streamline the operations of clinical laboratories by ensuring quick and accurate patient information at the local and regional level.

Linkages to GP’s surgeries via an electronic requesting system will follow later this year which will speed up results and reduce errors.
In order to raise their profile, keep updated and discuss various aspects of their role, five night nurse practitioners recently attended a workshop, which gave them all a rare opportunity to get together during daylight hours!

As well as providing valuable clinical support and expertise to nursing and junior medical staff who work during the night, the night nurse practitioners, or NNPs, also have an educational role to play in teaching less experienced staff.

The workshop they attended included a mock clinical situation based on ALERT training. ALERT stands for acute life-threatening events recognition and treatment which teaches the skills required to assess acutely ill patients.

Through role play the NNPs honed their existing skills, improved their team working and communication abilities and built on their understand and appreciation of the roles of other clinical staff.

They learned how to use the new blood glucose meters that have replaced outdated equipment in preparation for training the night staff. They also undertook training on Millennium, the new computer system which will replace TDS, received guidance on managing staff and information on HR policies.

Two of the NNPs Louise Vincent and Elizabeth George commented: "This was a brilliant team building day as we all tend to work in isolation. We were able to share information, learn about new policies and discuss critical incidents. It was a perfect opportunity to reflect on practice as a team."

Head of nursing (corporate) Sharon Preston says: "The staff really valued the opportunity to update their skills and share their knowledge and expertise in a workshop setting. The day was a great success and we hope to organise another one for them later in the year."

The trust is exploring opportunities to provide new improved leisure facilities that will more closely meet the needs of a greater number of staff in an environment that can be enjoyed at any time of day. The sports and social club committee has been notified that the RUH will not be renewing the lease on the existing club's premises when it expires in March 2007. This is an exciting opportunity for all staff to have their say about the facilities they would like to see provided by a new leisure club.

Whilst there will be some limitations to the extent of the facilities the trust can provide, it is important that your views form the basis of any plans. Do you want a well equipped gym and regular exercise classes? A cover for the swimming pool so that it can be used all year round? Do you want to relax with a cup of coffee and read the paper during your lunch break? Or have a drink with friends after work?

Staff can email comments to 'RUH Leisure' or place them in the comments box either on the main reception desk or in the sports and social club. All comments should be submitted before 30 June 2006. A working group will then consider all constructive suggestions and will put together a proposal outlining plans for the new leisure club. Staff will also have the opportunity to comment further on the proposal. Anyone wishing to join the working group should indicate this when putting forward suggestions. Please note, the group will only be able to recruit a limited number of staff but will aim to have representation at all levels across the organisation.
Financial requests
As usual we had a wide variety of requests for financial assistance at our last meeting. These ranged from children’s balloons and badges in the emergency department – a helpful diversion but also a ‘pat on the back for being a star’ - to a garden which is badly needed in the fracture clinic. This project has been on hold for at least two years and will be appreciated by the many patients and relatives who wait in this very busy department.

We do appreciate the present financial restrictions within the hospital but we regret we cannot undertake basic cleaning or provide toiletries, other than emergency toiletry packs, which are given out to each ward on a regular basis for the patients.

Volunteers
Many of our volunteers have been with us for up to 20 years and it is easy to understand how difficult it is to choose a volunteer to attend the Buckingham Palace Garden Party! Mrs Dorothy Woods has been with us for 15 years and travels in from Trowbridge each week to give refreshments on her favourite ward. We were delighted that she received the invitation and feel sure she will have a wonderful time – especially as she is in the same age group as the Queen!

We know there are more and more patients and relatives coming to the hospital each year but we have every confidence in the care and dedication given by the staff.

Thank you all and we shall continue to be here – our 50th year in 2007 – to give our support with our finances and a helping hand.

With best wishes
Tessa Berridge, Chairman

The Royal Invitation
Mrs Dorothy Woods, a Friends volunteer at the RUH, will be rubbing shoulders with royalty at the Queen's Royal Garden Party in July this year.

Dorothy is 89 years young and has been volunteering at the hospital for 17 years. She received an invitation to the Royal Garden Party after being nominated, along with several other deserving volunteers, by the Friends chairman Tessa Berridge.

When asked how she felt about going to the garden party, Mrs Woods said: "I was thrilled. I feel it's an extra treat being a Londoner born, it brings back happy memories."

Always a busy person, Dorothy shows no signs of resting-up and is still record secretary for the Civil Service Retirement Fellowship as well as a volunteer at the RUH.

She says: "I have always been responsible for somebody, always busy. My husband Les died very young, I brought my two daughters up, worked full-time and my parents also lived with me. Once the children were grown and living their own lives and after my parents died, I was on my own and completely lost. So I became a volunteer in 1989 because I wanted to keep active and it makes me feel as if I am doing something useful.

"I can strongly recommend becoming a volunteer, as it not only helps the staff but makes one count their blessings, being fit and able to serve the patients who are not so fortunate as oneself."

Chairman of the hospital Friends Tessa Berridge says: "When I was asked in 1987 to form volunteer teams to assist with patient drinks and flowers on the wards, Dorothy was one of the early ones to come forward.

"Always cheerful and always caring – she is a marvellous example of the true spirit of a volunteer and we are very proud of her - and the many like her."