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Media Release

RUH in South West top four improvers

The Royal United Hospital Bath NHS Trust successfully improved its financial performance in 2008/09, according to a new report from the Audit Commission, published today (1 October).

The RUH has moved from Level 2 in the Auditors' Local Evaluation (ALE) in 2007/08 to Level 3 in 2008/09 to be "consistently above minimum requirements; representing a high level of performance".

And after performing well in the ALE scores, now the Audit Commission has highlighted some notable practices by the RUH on its website for other trusts to learn from.

The Trust was found to be 'excellent', and scored the top level 4, in three areas; high standards of conduct, risk management and financial management.

Maintaining high standards of business conduct by Trust Board members and staff is vital for achieving financial accountability, and the Trust scored 'excellent' for this practice. Key steps over the year included improving the Trust Board's arrangements for corporate governance, implementing a Code of Conduct, Code of Accountability and Code of Expectations and developing a set of RESPECT behaviours for all staff in the Trust to follow.

2008/09's National Staff Survey highlighted the success of these RESPECT behaviours. Under the category 'the people I work with treat me with respect' 81% of RUH staff agreed, against a benchmarked 76% for other Trusts.

The Trust also made steps forward in its Risk Management arrangements, by providing more simple ways to identify areas of risk.

From a financial management perspective, in 2008/09 the Trust worked hard to strengthen the role of senior managers and clinicians in the overall finances of the RUH, increasing their responsibility and understanding of how activity within their specialty and division impacts on both income and expenditure. Clinicians are now more involved in budget management and accountability and responsibility has improved at specialty and divisional level.

In these financially uncertain times it is even more important that hospitals can offer value for money and the RUH is committed to continued improvement in financial management.

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Notes to Editors

Each year, the Audit Commission assesses how well NHS trusts manage their resources and deliver value for money. ALE stems from auditors' statutory duty to satisfy themselves that NHS trusts have put in place proper arrangements for obtaining value for money in their use of resources. Auditors assess, evaluate and score arrangements and performance in five themes: financial reporting; financial management; financial standing; internal control; and value for money.

The scores for each of the five themes are used to calculate an overall score that forms the 'quality of financial management' part of the Care Quality Commission's annual health check for NHS trusts. The quality of financial management score sits alongside the quality of services assessments in the annual health check.