



HEALTHCHECK RATINGS Audit Commission focuses on 37 that failed in three key areas

Trusts fall at finance hurdle

Helen Mooney
helen.mooney@emap.com

The Audit Commission has voiced concern about 37 organisations deemed to be failing in three key financial areas. It compiled findings from local auditors for 2005-06 and scored all non-foundation organisations in the category of 'use of resources', which makes up half of the healthcheck ratings.

Performance was examined in five sub-categories: financial management, control, value for money, standing and reporting, with organisations given from one and four points, which were converted into the Healthcare Commission's own four-point rating.

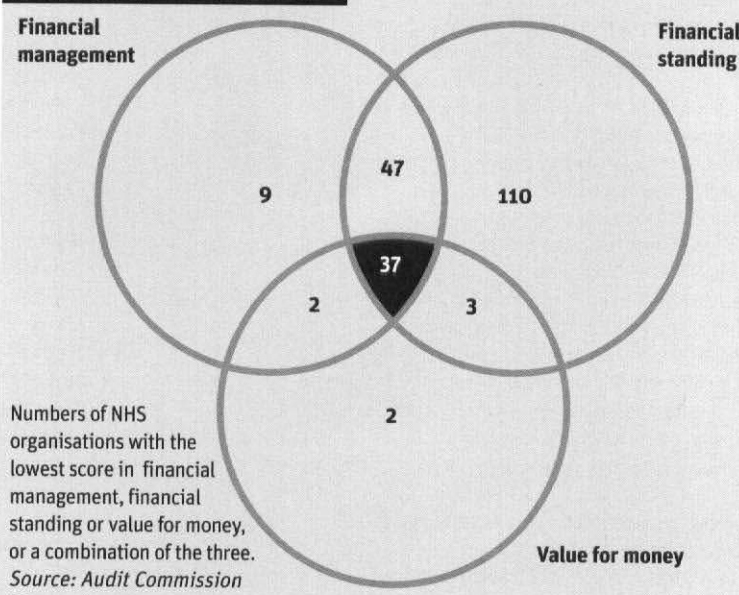
The commission expressed 'particular concern' about the 37 organisations which failed on financial management, value for money and financial standing. It also highlighted six trusts judged to have an 'inadequate performance' across all five areas (see table).

Foundation trusts were assigned points under a parallel scheme, which saw the five-point risk rating given to them by Monitor, the result of assessment across four criteria - achievement of plan, underlying performance, financial efficiency, and liquidity - converted into the four-point scale. Monitor's risk rating of 1 or 2 equated to excellent under the Healthcare Commission's system.

Overall, 19 organisations - all now foundation trusts - were given the top rating, 17 from assessments by Monitor, and two from assessment for the Audit Commission before they gained foundation status.

Audit Commission head of health Andy McKeon described as 'disappointing' the small number of organisations in the top category. 'A

HOW TRUSTS PERFORMED



The organisations 'of particular concern'

Airedale trust	North Stoke PCT
Avon Ambulance Service trust	Northern Devon Healthcare trust
Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership trust	Queen Mary's Sidcup trust
Barking, Havering and Redbridge Hospitals trust	Scarborough and N E Yorks Health Care trust*
Barnet and Chase Farm Hospitals trust	Selby and York PCT
Brighton & Sussex Uni Hospitals trust*	Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital trust
Cheshire West PCT	St Albans and Harpenden PCT
Dacorum PCT	Surrey and Sussex Healthcare trust*
Daventry and 5 Northants PCT	Sussex Downs and Weald PCT
East and North Hertfordshire trust	Trafford Healthcare trust
Eastbourne Downs PCT	University Hospitals of North Staffordshire trust
Hertsmere PCT	Watford and Three Rivers PCT
Hillingdon PCT*	West Hertfordshire Hospitals trust
Hinchingbrooke Health Care trust*	West Wiltshire PCT
Hounslow PCT	W Yorks Metropolitan Amb Service trust
Hull and East Yorkshire Hospitals trust	Whipps Cross University Hospital trust*
Ipswich Hospital trust	
Kennet and North Wiltshire PCT	
Kensington and Chelsea PCT	
Kingston PCT	
North Somerset PCT	

* Scoring one in all five areas: financial management, financial standing, value for money, internal control and financial reporting

small minority of organisation need to make significant progress across the board,' he said.

He urged organisations which scored poorly to improve their performance and to call on each other for help. 'Part of the reason we have produced this is so that trusts can see where best practice is and ask what the organisations that are succeeding are doing,' he said.

Mr McKeon said strategic health authorities had the 'primary responsibility' for 'rolling out best practice across their patches. 'If not a buddy system they [SHAs] need to identify successful areas and draw on that for others,' Mr McKeon said.

The Department of Health has published audited figures showing the state of NHS finances across the country. They show a £35m increase on the £512m unaudited figure published in June.

The largest discrepancy between audited and unaudited figures comes in NHS East of England, where the total deficit recorded was £235m, compared with the £214m estimate.

The bulk - £12.2m - came from Mid Essex Hospital Services trust, which went from a predicted £1m surplus to an £11.2m deficit in the six weeks between provisional figures and finalised accounts. A spokesperson for the trust blamed accounting procedures which meant that the sale of St John's Hospital in Chelmsford for £8m plus some smaller NHS estate sales could not be included in the 2005-06 figures.

The other major contributor was Ipswich Hospital trust, which turned in a deficit of £16.7m, £4.8m above forecast. The trust had been going through a financial turnaround exercise which had resulted in its deteriorating position (news, page 8, 5 October).

NHS APPOINTMENTS COMMISSION

Wells to exit after six years

The chair of the NHS Appointments Commission is to step down at the end of his second term.

Sir William Wells will leave the commission at the end of March 2007, six years after being appointed as the organisation's first chair.

The commission's rules do not impose any limits on the number of terms a chair can serve, but the job has to be opened up to national competition after an incumbent has served two terms.

NHS Appointments Commission

chief executive Roger Moore said that Sir William, who has clocked up more than 40 years experience on NHS boards, had decided that it was time to move on.

After his departure from the Appointments Commission, Sir William will take up the chairmanship of ADL, a Leeds-based provider of long-term healthcare.

The company owns and manages nine care homes in Yorkshire, the West Midlands and the South West.

PUBLIC HEALTH

Flint urges shops to weigh in

Businesses, shops and employers must be drawn into efforts to improve public health, the government said this week.

Public health minister Caroline Flint said the NHS alone could not tackle obesity and differences in health. Employers could do more to promote healthy lifestyles, while supermarkets could help families make better choices about food.

'Supermarkets can play a role with health food promotions or showing how to prepare exotic fruit

or veg and getting kids to try it in store,' said Ms Flint.

The approach is outlined in, *Health Challenge England*, a new document that outlines how the Department of Health will take forward its *Choosing Health* agenda. It includes plans to launch a drive on obesity next year using 'social marketing' techniques that harness the power of business. Ms Flint launched the most detailed picture of the nation's health to date, with key health statistics at community level.