

Night of the finance stars

The HFMA Awards continue to go from strength to strength and were presented this year at a glittering celebration of the best in healthcare finance

MORE THAN 700 guests were packed into the ceremony, which was held in central London during December's annual conference, to cheer the nine winners of the most comprehensive awards programme for healthcare financial management and governance.

Finance Director of the Year

Jane Tomkinson, director of finance and performance and deputy chief executive at Countess of Chester NHS Foundation Trust, scooped the Finance Director of the Year award. The award acknowledged her role in the trust's strong financial performance since gaining foundation status and her championing of staff development and contributions to the finance function.

'This is a fantastic accolade. It's not about me personally; it's about the finance team at the Countess,' she said. 'It's wonderful for the foundation trust and a recognition that we are continually striving to be the best.'

Accounts Team of the Year

Accounts Team of the Year went to *North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust* for its successful migration to a consolidated ledger and the completion of all accounts following the merger of four ambulance trusts.

Diane Hardwick finance director said: 'I



Jane Tomkinson, Countess of Cheshire NHSFT



North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust

am absolutely over the moon for the team. They have shown levels of professionalism and loyalty that is humbling.'

The trust completed the extraordinary feat of preparing and auditing 13 sets of accounts over 13 months, including closing accounts for the last three months of its four predecessor bodies' existence.

'Two of my team finished the three-month accounts and went on maternity leave. One had twins and the other a little boy, and both came back to finish the final accounts.'

Financial Management Award

PCT winner

Bromley Primary Care Trust won the Financial Management Award in recognition of an initiative that included an £11.8m cost improvement programme in 2006/07. Following a review of its finance department, the PCT restructured to shift its focus from transaction processing to strategic financial planning. Transaction processing was outsourced to NHS Shared Business Services and some of the savings used to bring in more experienced finance staff, who helped deliver the cost improvement programme.

Finance director Marie Farrell said: 'This is a great achievement not just for the finance department but for the whole of the organisation. We are now looking to consolidate on our performance and focus on the quality of patient care.'

FT/trust winner

Efficiency and better patient care went hand



Bromley Primary Care Trust

in hand when *Devon Partnership NHS Trust* redesigned its adult and older adults' mental health ward configurations and staffing, together with its community mental health services. The finance team led the process, working closely with clinicians. A major funding gap at the beginning of 2006/07 prompted a recovery plan that was put together using analysis of individual services' position against national reference costs. In the first year, savings of more than £3m were achieved and in the current year (at month five) savings are forecast to be in excess of £8m.



Devon Partnership NHS Trust



Redbridge Primary Care Trust

Governance Award

Redbridge Primary Care Trust won the Governance Award for its work on integrating governance into its mainstream business planning process. Following the Department of Health's Fit for Purpose initiative in 2006, the PCT introduced governance tools and processes to support each stage of business planning, including an accountability framework to engage all staff.

Conor Burke, the PCT's director of organisational development and support services, saluted the trust's staff. 'This brings together the financial activity and quality aspects of performance into one governance framework so we can see that we are offering value for money and an effective service,' he said.

NHS Charity Reporting Award

Plain English and user-friendly design were the keys to *Birmingham Children's Hospital Charities'* success at the HFMA awards.

The Charities' annual report combined accessibility with all the required information on how the charities use the funds they raise. The report also tried to put patients' minds at ease by answering questions using images and captions.

BCH Charities' chief executive Stuart Reynolds said: 'I am delighted and very honoured. It's a welcome recognition of the work we have done to try to demystify charity reporting. We produce a document that people want to pick up.'



Birmingham Children's Hospital Charities



Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHSFT



Christie Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

Clinical Engagement Award

Christie Hospital NHS Foundation Trust won this award for its development of a process to assess the impact of new technologies and drugs. A drugs and therapeutics committee, including clinicians, pharmacists, general managers and finance representatives, was set up whose assessments inform the local planning round. It is vital for the specialist cancer trust as its £30m annual drugs budget represents almost a quarter of its budget.

'Clinical engagement is key to effective financial management,' said Joanne Fitzpatrick, deputy director of finance. 'This is vital for the implementation of NICE guidance at a specialist cancer hospital. The clinician's view of the patients affected and the treatment pathway are essential to estimate the cost.'

Jon Havelock Award

Sherwood Forest Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust won the Jon Havelock Award for its 'finance for non-finance managers' training programme, aimed at budget-holders.

The training covers three areas – basics of finance, key issues and new topics, which included an examination of the likely impact

of foundation trust status. All non-finance managers must attend the one-day training by the end of 2007/08.

Patrick McDermott, project accountant at the trust, said the award would give the course a further boost. 'We're trying to move to service line management and to engage our clinicians. This gives us added impetus to talk to them about financial management.'

Foundation Trust of the Year

This award went to *South Staffordshire and Shropshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust*. Judges were impressed by the trust's integration of psychiatric and learning disabilities services previously run by local PCTs, bringing in 1,200 staff under TUPE rules and transferring £43m of fixed assets.

Jayne Deaville, director of finance and performance, said: 'This is a recognition of all the hard work the organisation has put into making services better for patients.'

She paid tribute to the other shortlisted trusts – Heart of England and Queen Victoria Hospital. 'This has been achieved against stiff competition elsewhere in the NHS.'

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South Staffordshire and Shropshire Healthcare NHSFT