

Scale of Trust Bailouts Revealed

News Article



ITFF opens up on Trust bailouts

Not so long ago the Independent Trust Finance Facility went by a different name.

As the Foundation Trust Finance Facility it was the nominally arm's length part of the Department of Health that assessed requests for capital money from FTs, which were (nominally) independent of the DH, which also assessed similar requests from non-FTs.

Now everyone is in financial trouble and it makes little difference if you're an FT or not.

So the committee that once approved money for a new scanner or car park is now making the decision on whether a trust can have a £100m revenue bailout.

It's quite a different job, and the pleas it gets for cash are a bit more urgent.

This is the committee that has had a trust say it will have difficulty paying its utility bills without a bailout (you can see details of applications from more than 20 trusts in the story on hsj.co.uk).

As the extensive documentation produced by the ITFF (released after HSJ used Freedom of Information legislation) shows, its deliberations give a far better idea of what's going on at trust level than any other official

documentation (NHS Improvement still doesn't produce a trust level finance and performance summary, while the DH used to do one called The Quarter but that stopped a while ago).

The ITFF displays a refreshing level of candour in its papers and minutes – in contrast to the often opaque world of NHS finance.

New safety chief clashes with Hunt

When the person appointed to set up a new NHS body questions the whole basis on which it stands – before they've even started the job – then it might be time to rethink some things.

In a highly unusual move, the proposed chief investigator of the new NHS patient safety body said he believes its lack of independence means it could struggle to gain the "confidence and faith" of the public.

Keith Conradi, the current head of the Air Accident Investigation Branch, is set to head up the Healthcare Safety Investigation Branch, but told a committee of MPs on Tuesday that that he disagreed with the government's decision for NHS Improvement to host it.

HSJ revealed last month that Jeremy Hunt rejected the advice an expert group (which he convened) that said the branch should be given independence in law.

Mr Conradi said he was "pragmatic" about the government's decision, but intriguingly said HSIB would aim to review the situation once it was established.

The branch could review the situation all it likes, but ultimately the Department of Health would have to change its mind on the issue, as well as the law.

Ironically, these public assertions perhaps provide encouraging evidence of Mr Conradi's independence and confidence, but they nonetheless seem a little embarrassing for Mr Hunt.

Source: HSJ