

**WRITTEN SUBMISSION TO B&NES CHILDREN, ADULTS, HEALTH AND WELLBEING POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL Monday 20 April 2026 | Nicola James, Former Public Governor, RUH Bath NHS Foundation Trust, Sept 2022 to July 2024**

*I was elected as a public governor for Bath at the RUH in 2022 and served until July 2024. I attended the meetings, read every paper. What I'm about to put on this panel's record should concern every councillor in this room.*

*In September 2023 the RUH Public Board paper stated explicitly that the trust's strategy was to grow the staff bank. Direct quote: "We're looking to support Managers to develop exit plans for high cost agency workers by recruiting to vacancies, moving agency workers onto our Bank." I heard that case made repeatedly. Experienced workers who knew the wards and the patients. Worth protecting, we were told. By March 2026 the trust had completely reversed that strategy, abolishing the staff bank entirely and handing it to a private equity company. No public explanation. No long term cost modelling. No transparency about what changed. The projected saving of £3.3 to £5.4 million comes entirely from cutting employer pension contributions from 23.7% to 6%.*

*That's not an efficiency saving. It's a cost deliberately shifted onto workers to plug a deficit. The trust's own consultation document named Pulse/Acacium as preferred bidder before the union consultation period had even closed on 4 March 2026. This panel should ask the trust to explain how a preferred bidder was identified before consultation concluded and what weight, if any, was given to union feedback.*

*This panel has a statutory right under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 to be consulted on substantial variations in local NHS services before decisions are made. Removing hundreds of workers from NHS employment across three trusts, formally opposed by recognised trade unions, is exactly such a variation.*

*My understanding is this panel was not consulted. Its statutory rights were entirely bypassed. The executives making this decision will not be accountable for its consequences. When the Acacium contract comes up for renewal, when there's no in-house bank to fall back on and costs escalate, those executives will have moved on. The workers who lost their pension contributions will still be living with the consequences.*

*The taxpayers who fund this will still be paying the price. As will patients. This is not responsible financial stewardship. This is deficit management by sleight of hand. And this panel has both the right and the duty to call it out. I'm asking this panel to call an emergency session before August - requiring BSW trust executives to attend and answer for this decision before it becomes irreversible. To write formally to the*

*Secretary of State. And to formally note that its statutory consultation rights were not observed.*