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**ANNUAL RATINGS MUST GIVE PATIENTS ACCURATE PICTURE OF NHS PERFORMANCE SAYS THE NHS CONFEDERATION**

The new system for rating the NHS must reflect the complexity of managing the modern health service, the NHS Confederation urged as the Healthcare Commission announces its consultation on the annual ratings for the NHS.

Nigel Edwards, director of policy at the NHS Confederation, said "The new system must be more reflective of hospitals' performance than the star ratings, where NHS organisations could go from one extreme of the rankings to the other in a single year. Hospitals must no longer be branded failures for under-performance against a single criteria, which could boil down to the waiting times for a handful of patients or minor changes to their financial status."

"There is much in these proposals which looks encouraging. We are glad that the burden of inspections on the NHS will be reduced, and that the assessment process has been changed to place more emphasis on patients' experience of their treatment. There will be work to do on the detail of these proposals"

Nigel concluded: "If we are to get maximum benefit from these annual assessments, this new system must be sensitive enough to reflect the complexities of running modern NHS organisations, yet simple enough for patients to understand what the final ratings mean."