Nerissa Vaughan, Chief Executive, Great Western Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, said:

“Along with many Trusts across the country, we are experiencing financial challenges and are expecting to end the year with a £2.9 million deficit. There are a number of reasons for this, all relating to an extremely high and ever growing demand for our services.

“This year we are working hard to manage a 15 per cent increase in unplanned activity compared to last year, this means we are now treating around 300 more unplanned patients each month. At the same time, we are also spending money on agency staff, which is expensive, but necessary, to ensure we have the right number of staff, in the right places. However, due to a national shortage, recruiting nurses in particular is a real challenge.

“We have plans in place to reduce our deficit, but the remainder of the year will be a challenge. We know it'll be a tough winter and I want to thank our staff who work tirelessly to maintain high quality services for patients.

“It is important to stress that Monitor have no concerns about our patient services or the quality of care we provide to our patients. In fact despite these challenges, we have maintained strong performance, good services and high quality patient care. Even with 600 more people attending our emergency department between July and September compared with the same period last year, we managed to treat 96.7% of patients within four hours of arrival. During this time, we also significantly reduced the number of patients who have been waiting over 18 weeks for their operation. We have also seen an improvement in our mortality rates over the last six months, meaning that more patients are surviving their illness than would be expected, reflecting high quality treatment and care. None of this would be possible without our fantastic staff.

“At this difficult time Monitor will work with us and our partners across the local healthcare system to understand why we are now expecting a deficit and consider any actions which may help. This fresh look will be particularly helpful to ensure our plans as a healthcare system are strong and together we can make any necessary improvements.”