

## NEWS RELEASE

Embargoed for 00.01hrs, Tuesday 27 Jan 2004

### Community mutuals to deliver out-of-hours NHS services

The Government has welcomed plans to extend the democratisation of the NHS into Primary Care, giving patients, GPs and administrative staff membership of new bodies for the delivery of out-of-hours services.

With the introduction of the new GMS GP contract, on April 1 2004, the legal responsibility to maintain out-of-hours cover will be transferred away from General Practices to Primary Care Trusts <sup>(1)</sup>. The Department of Health believes that PCTs should be able to deliver out-of-hours services through new structures based on GP co-operatives, but involving a wider range of stakeholders in the interests of the community.

Speaking at the launch of the Mutuo pamphlet *Care on Call: a mutual approach to out-of-hours primary care services* <sup>(2)</sup> at the Department of Health, Minister of State for Health John Hutton MP said today: "The introduction of Foundation Hospitals has been a huge step forward, making the first momentous break from direct state control and opting for community ownership based on modern principles of mutuality. There is the chance now to do the same in a key part of the provision of primary care services, and to retain the best of what has been learned from GP co-operatives"

Mutuo's Director, Peter Hunt, said: "We have argued that the principles of community ownership should be extended across the NHS, and welcome the Government's intention to broaden its reforms to include Primary Care – where relationships between health professionals and the community are often strongest - as well as hospitals."

Government Ministers believe that:

- A key challenge for the provision of public services is to connect them with the people – the users, employees, patients and the wider community. Mutual ownership structures can help to deliver this.
- There are many advantages in establishing mutual structures, such as the promotion of a citizenship culture and the encouragement of long term thinking in the community.
- Mutual structures work. They enable appropriate levels of involvement to be enjoyed by all stakeholders while giving public sector professionals the freedom to manage time and resources effectively.

Through Mutuo, DoH officials are consulting with GP co-operatives and other leading mutual organisations as well as Cobbetts Solicitors <sup>(3)</sup>, who are developing a new legal framework, to ensure that stakeholders are properly represented in the new mutual NHS structures.

**- ENDS -**

**Notes for editors**

(1). According to the provisions of the contract, GPs will no longer be obliged to provide out-of-hours care from December 2004

(2). *Care on Call*, by Peter Hunt, Cliff Mills of Cobbetts Solicitors and Rt. Hon. John Hutton MP is available from Mutuo, 77 Weston Street, London SE1 3SD, Tel: 020 7367 4152 email [e.harrison@mutuo.co.uk](mailto:e.harrison@mutuo.co.uk)

(3). Cobbetts is the leading UK law firm in the co-operative and mutual sector. It is playing a prominent role in the development of new concepts in the ownership and delivery of public services. Visit [www.cobbetts.co.uk](http://www.cobbetts.co.uk)

**Mutuo** is a think tank dedicated to the promotion of Mutual solutions to economic and social needs. Mutuo operates as a publisher and researcher for the mutual sector, communicating the value of mutuality to UK policymakers and opinion formers. Mutuo is extending the boundaries of mutual enterprise by developing new mutual ownership structures that can be applied to a wide range of public services including housing, health, pre-school childcare, and sport. Visit [www.mutuo.co.uk](http://www.mutuo.co.uk)

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