

MEDIA BRIEFING

Embargoed for 00.01hrs, 27/06/02

Child's Play – new mutual models for childcare

Community-based social enterprises offer the best hope of addressing the chronic shortage of childcare in the UK, according to a new report from Mutuo Daycare Trust and Social Enterprise London.

The Government has committed itself to extending the provision of quality childcare and early education services. It recognises that as the economy grows, childcare provision is vital in underpinning the regeneration of our most disadvantaged communities and ensuring parents can find work or access appropriate training.

But the Government's National Childcare Strategy, launched in 1998, is not delivering for all children and parents. The demand still far exceeds the supply, and many poorer families are being priced out of the market. There is still only one registered childcare place for every seven children under eight, and British parents are paying the highest childcare bills in Europe, typically at least £6,200 a year. In some rural areas, there are only 33 places with childminders per 1000 children.

Child's Play demonstrates that social enterprises are the most successful vehicles for the provision of childcare to both poor and prosperous communities, and that the development of new stakeholder models may hold the key to affordable, sustainable quality provision for all.

In the report:

- Daycare Trust (Stephen Burke, Director) provides an overview of the National Childcare Strategy, challenging Government to strengthen its enabling role (for example through the Working Families Tax Credit)

and to encourage the development of new social enterprises involving stakeholders from throughout the community. The Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiative (NNI) and the current Government review of childcare provide such an opportunity for this boom in social enterprise, and the creation of a national network of children's centres in every community.

- Social Enterprise London (Paloma Tarazona) and Oxford Swindon and Gloucester Co-operative Society (Neil Homer and Carol Lines) present case studies* showing how structures can be developed for sustainable mutual businesses which bring together staff, parents, employers, local authorities and agents to provide quality, responsive and value-for-money services, thus answering a number of criticisms of current provision.
- Cobbetts Solicitors (Kathryn Graham and Cliff Mills) describe how the community mutual legal structure can be applied to new childcare social enterprises by local authorities, Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships and other bodies.

Speaking at the launch of the report at the House of Commons on Thursday 27th June, Stephen Burke, Director of Daycare Trust, said: "This report is timely. There are great opportunities to develop new childcare services. Social enterprises have a key role to play in ensuring that all children and parents benefit."

- ENDS -

Notes for Editors

Child's Play – New mutual models for childcare, with a foreword by Catherine Ashton, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Early Years and School Standards is published by Mutuo.co.uk
Tel: 020 7367 4150 (Price £5)

Mutuo is an independent think tank and political consultancy promoting mutuality in business and public policy.

For more information or to arrange an interview with the authors contact:
Oliver Fry, Communications Manager Tel: 020 7367 4158 Email: o.fry@mutuo.co.uk

Daycare Trust is the national childcare charity. It promotes quality affordable childcare and advises parents, providers, employers, trade unions and policy makers on childcare issues. Stephen Burke has been Director since October 2000. Tel: 020 7840 3350

Social Enterprise London is the regional agency responsible for promoting social enterprise in London. Polama Tarazona is SEL's SRB 6 Project Manager Tel: 020 7704 7490

Cobbetts Solicitors is a leading law firm with long established connections to co-operative and mutual businesses. Cathryn Graham is a Partner in the Private Client Team Tel: 0161 833 3333

* Case studies presented in the report include partnerships between SEL and the New Deal for Communities in Plaistow and West Ham; Mark's Gate, Hammersmith and Fulham; Orkney House, Islington; and Early Years Childcare Centre, Sutton.

Oxford, Swindon and Gloucester Co-operative Society is the fourth largest consumer co-operative in the UK, with an annual turnover of £300m. It is developing a mutual childcare business built around a network of day nurseries extending from the Forest of Dean to Buckinghamshire.