UPDATE ON CONSULTANT CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS

There has been good progress in negotiations on a new consultant contract, following publication of the Government’s proposals in February 2001 and the CCSC’s proposals in October 2000. The detailed proposals under discussion cover:

- job planning linked to appraisal
- the consultant working week
- on-call and emergency duties
- pay progression
- the relationship between NHS and private work
- a new disciplinary framework for England and Wales
- changes to the current Distinction Award scheme

The Government’s proposal for the new contract are designed to reward and incentivise consultants making the biggest contribution to service delivery and improving health services. We also intend to introduce a managed and structured system of job planning, that will make better use of consultant time and give proper recognition for the intensity of different working patterns.

In the Government’s proposals, the key elements of the new contract will include:

- replacing the current system of ‘fixed’ and ‘flexible’ sessions with a system in which all NHS work (except unpredictable emergency work) is timetabled and typically carried out on site with no non-NHS work during this time
- a new framework for setting and reviewing job plans
- a more robust, consistent framework for recognising on-call work and out-of-hours work
- a new, longer pay scale with progression through new pay thresholds based on meeting commitments and job plans.
- Radical changes to the current Distinction Awards
- An initial period of up to seven years working exclusively for the NHS and then a new set of contractual rules governing the relationship between private and NHS work

We are committed to a successful conclusion to the negotiations and hope to be in a position to announce further progress shortly.