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EMBARGOED UNTIL 00:01 MONDAY, MARCH 14 2005

NHS CONFEDERATION CHALLENGES POLITICIANS TO DEBATE THE REAL HEALTH ISSUES IN THE GENERAL ELECTION

The NHS Confederation, which represents the vast majority of organisations that make up the NHS, this week launches its manifesto and challenges political parties to debate about the real health issues that affect millions of voters.

All MPs will receive a copy of the manifesto while national newspaper adverts give a taster of the Confederation's prescription for a healthy NHS and invite members of the public to have their say online.

Dr Gill Morgan, Chief Executive of the NHS Confederation, says: "We want all the political parties to stop using NHS management, staff and patients as political footballs and to join us in a more honest debate about the real challenges facing the health service.

"And we want to draw attention to the fact that many of the biggest challenges facing the NHS are in primary, community and social care – where the vast majority of patients receive treatment and most of the money is spent."

The full manifesto, which includes three key election demands and potential solutions, is available at www.nhsconfed.org/imagine – the website also invites members of the public to participate in the debate by giving their views online.

The NHS Confederation manifesto calls for:

- A better deal for 17.5 million people living with long-term conditions in the UK.
- A separate investment fund for health improvement to ensure that improving public health is a top priority.
- Improved integration of primary, secondary and social care so that patients who are being cared for in different parts of the health service get a better service.

Dr Morgan says: "The 1.3 million people who work in the NHS know better than anyone what the real challenges facing the health service are.

"We represent more than 90% of NHS organisations throughout the UK, which are all members of the NHS Confederation, and that means we are uniquely placed to take the temperature of the health service in election year.

"We believe that our three manifesto demands reflect health issues that politicians should be tackling during the forthcoming General Election campaign."

The NHS Confederation is proposing concrete solutions to the challenge of providing the best possible care for 17.5 million people living in the UK with long-term conditions such as asthma, arthritis and mental illness.

They include:

- Ensure that everyone living with a long-term condition is offered a personalised Care Plan to put patients, not healthcare professionals, in the driving seat – announced as part of this week's National Service Framework for long-term neurological conditions, we want to see this extended to all conditions.

- Boost the role of the voluntary sector by providing extra resources for local, niche providers of services for people with long-term conditions.
- Extend Patient Choice beyond elective (planned) surgery so people with long-term conditions can choose their own programme of care.

David Pink, Chief Executive of the Long-term Medical Conditions Alliance (LMCA) – the umbrella charity working for better lives for people with long-term conditions – backs the NHS Confederation’s call for action to improve the lives of people with these conditions.

He stresses: “One third of the population lives with a long-term condition and this number is rising. All political parties need to recognise what this means for people as individuals and for society as a whole.

“We need a health debate that talks less about emergency care and more about what millions of people are living with day in, day out. Services for people with long-term conditions should help them regain control over their lives and live their lives to the full.”

ENDS

Notes to Editors

1. The NHS Confederation represents the organisations that make up the NHS. Its members include the majority of NHS trusts, foundation trusts, primary care trusts and health authorities in England; trusts and local health boards in Wales; NHS boards and special boards in Scotland; and health and social service trusts and boards in Northern Ireland.
2. For more information or for copies of the NHS Confederation election manifesto, please contact media relations manager Matt Akid on 020 7074 3306 or media officer Chris Atkinson on 020 7074 3304.
3. Out of hours, please contact the on-call press officer on 07880 500726.