Reviewer's report

Title: Out-of-hours primary care. Implications of organisation on costs.

Version: 1 Date: 28 February 2006

Reviewer: Kate A O'Donnell

Reviewer's report:

General
This is an interesting paper, adding to a rather sparse literature on the costs associated with the provision of out-of-hours care and attempting to compare the costs associated with two different models of service provision.

Major Compulsory Revisions (that the author must respond to before a decision on publication can be reached)

1. The authors present clearly the costs per capita of each model, including total cost per head of population and costs broken down across different components of the service model. This shows that there was very little difference between the two models. However, what the authors do not report is the cost per contact with each organisational model, which would be of particular interest and make their work comparable with other reports. Overall costs per contact are very similar (39.65 Euros per contact with the integrated co-operative; 39.50 Euros per contact with the separated model.) It would also be useful to see the costs per telephone consultation, co-operative consultation and home visit, as the cost profile for each type of co-operative contact may be different across the two models.

2. It was not clear how shared costs (e.g. for accommodation, cleaning, overheads) had been split across the integrated co-operative and the ED. For example, if the integrated co-operative is using space that would otherwise be part of the ED, there may be merit in off-setting some of the co-operative costs back to the ED.

3. Although there is not a lot literature in this area, there has been some work. In particular, I would refer the authors to Brogan et al, British Medical Journal 1998 316:524-527 and to Scott et al. Scottish Medical Journal 2004; 49: 61-66.

Minor Essential Revisions (such as missing labels on figures, or the wrong use of a term, which the author can be trusted to correct)

p5, line 6 would read better if implicates is replaced by ensures.

p5, line 19, replace to prefer with preferring.

Sentence beginning The necessity of information is difficult to follow.

p7, lines 3 and 21, replace stimulated with expected.

Discretionary Revisions (which the author can choose to ignore)

Under section on costs, it would be helpful to state explicitly that this costing is conducted from the perspective of the health service and that costs to patient are not included.
**What next?:** Unable to decide on acceptance or rejection until the authors have responded to the major compulsory revisions

**Level of interest:** An article of importance in its field

**Quality of written English:** Acceptable

**Statistical review:** No

**Declaration of competing interests:**

I declare that I have no competing interests, however I am a co-author on the paper by Scott et al which is suggested above.