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Press Release

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NORTHWEST BME BUSINESSES TARGET HEALTH SECTOR

LIVERPOOL, JUNE 2, 2010: The North West's Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) business community will come together at the prestigious Park Inn Hotel, Victoria, Manchester on Monday June 28th 2010 to attend a groundbreaking health sector procurement awareness event.

The event is the first collaborative event between the African Caribbean Business Support (ACBS) and Medilink North West Ltd and jointly funded by Business Link Northwest, the Northwest Development Agency (NWDA) and the North West Collaborative Commercial Agency (NW CCA) who is the collaborative purchasing agency for NHS Trusts in the North West of England.

The key aim of this inaugural event is to inform the North West BME business community of the numerous opportunities available within the health sector, particularly the NHS. An annual expenditure of £30 billion, over half of which is from the NHS, constitutes a huge health sector

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market. It spans a diverse array of products and services from food to waste services to transport. This huge spend presents opportunities for a wide range of businesses who could supply to the sector but research has shown that there is a poor take-up from BME businesses, notwithstanding their overwhelming interest in the health sector.

There are a number of reasons for the lack of engagement from BME businesses, some of them actual and others perceived barriers. These include:

- The rules and legislation are just too much to deal with for an organisation of our size
- We're too small to supply that size of contract
- We're not the 'usual supplier', so the NHS procurement professionals won't look at us

The Manchester event will demystify the health sector's procurement policies and set the stage for sustainable engagement with the sector. The event's organisers have lined up a range of expert organisations for this task but importantly, there are plans for further engagement with interested businesses post-event to allow for mentoring of those businesses in preparation for supplying to the sector.

Garth Dallas, ACBS Chair, said: "I am extremely pleased that we have been able to organise this collaborative event with Medilinks and the NWCCA as it is very important that we empower our African Caribbean business members and other BME businesses by providing access to leading industry standards and developing partnerships with key organisations that understand the benefits of sustainable procurement policies. It's a win win situation."

"The event is open to all BME businesses and individuals who are interested in supplying to the health sector, regardless of the size of their business."

Marilyn Comrie, inspirational founder and CEO of LeaderGen, who was influential in setting up ACBS and author of a significant research paper into the obstacles for African and Caribbean business growth said: "The African Caribbean business community do not traditionally engage with the one-size fits all approach of mainstream business support. One of the main reasons is the prevailing perception that these services fail to take into account some of the culturally specific needs and challenges that are characteristics of African Caribbean businesses. Hand holding and confidence building is a key requirement of the engagement work that is needed to persuade the target businesses to buy-in and cooperate. They represent a rich vein of talents and skills that the health sector and the NHS will benefit tremendously from."

For further information contact ACBS by emailing info@africancaribbeanbusiness.com, telephoning 0151 707 6550 or visiting www.africancaribbeanbusiness.com

Note to Editors:

- The event is open to **all** BME businesses and individuals in the North West of England, particularly African Caribbean businesses who have traditionally shown keen interest in the health sector.
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