



**For immediate release**

**29 January 2004**

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **HAPPY TIMES receives £5.7 million in new financing**

**29 January 2004** - London, UK – HTC Healthcare Group Plc (the “Company”), one of the largest day nursery operators in London which trades under the brand “Happy Times”, has completed a new financing package to continue its expansion programme. Quester, which has backed the Company since its buyout in 1999 has been joined by Electra Kingsway VCT in a £2.3 million equity funding round which together with debt facilities amounting to £3.4 million from Bank of Scotland provides a further £5.7 million in expansion capital and to refinance existing debt. Acanthus Advisers acted as financial adviser to the Company and arranged the funding.

The Company is also pleased to announce that Iain Shearer will assume the position of Chairman. He brings a wealth of experience to the business particularly within the real estate sector. He is currently Deputy Chairman of the ExCel conference and exhibition centre in London’s docklands having previously been Chief Executive.

Happy Times currently operates 3 nurseries, each over 4 times the national average size, with a total of over 450 places for children between the ages of 3 months and 5 years. As part of its expansion programme, the Company is developing a new freehold nursery in Filmer Road, Fulham. This nursery will have over 150 places and is due to open in late 2004.

Happy Times is unique in terms of the variety and quality of services offered to both children and their parents together with its innovative marketing and branding. Demand for private daycare nursery places continues to grow strongly in London.

Adam Shaw, Chief Executive, commented:

"This new funding will allow the further growth of Happy Times’ unique brand and childcare services. Our new nursery in Filmer Road will be state-of-the-art both in design and construction and will ensure that children receive the very best childcare and pre-school education available. The financing is one more step in developing the Happy Times business and we remain committed to its further expansion through an increasing number of new nursery openings. I am particularly pleased with Quester’s continued support and I welcome Electra as a new investor. I am also delighted to have Iain Shearer on board as our new Chairman and I look forward to working with him over the coming years. I am sure that the Company will benefit from his valuable business experience".

- Ends -

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## **About Happy Times**

Founded in 1997, by Adam Shaw and Elizabeth Cullen, Happy Times has grown to become the provider of high quality childcare and parentcare in London, with a growing reputation throughout the UK as being a leader in its field. The Company concentrates exclusively on operating 100+ place nurseries and is thus able to benefit from economies of scale and pricing power which are not available to its competitors. On average its nurseries generate significantly higher revenue per site and contribution per place than its competitors and allow significantly higher fees to be charged. The Company is planning to open a number of further nurseries in central London over the coming years.

[www.happytimes.co.uk](http://www.happytimes.co.uk)

## **About Quester**

Quester is one of the UK's leading independent venture capital groups specialising in the provision of finance and management support for growth companies at all stages of their life. Quester's focus is on early stage investments in information and communication technology, healthcare and life science companies. With its first rate track record, Quester has earned a reputation as one of the best UK based sources of venture capital. The Quester investment team manages approximately £300 million on behalf of major institutional investors, leading UK universities and five quoted venture capital trusts.

[www.quester.co.uk](http://www.quester.co.uk)

## **About Electra Quoted Management**

Electra Quoted Management is a wholly owned subsidiary of Electra Partners the private equity specialist. The origins of the company go back to the formation of Electra Investment Trust in 1976, with the group now managing assets in excess of £1.5bn as at 30<sup>th</sup> September 2003 principally invested in unquoted companies. Electra Quoted Management specialises in smaller unquoted investments and alternative fund management products. The investment in HTC Healthcare was made by Electra Kingsway VCT which specialises in smaller transactions in unquoted and Aim companies.

[www.electraquoted.com](http://www.electraquoted.com)

## **About Acanthus**

Acanthus is an independent corporate finance advisory firm based in London focused on private equity, providing fund placement and corporate advisory services.

Between them, the Partners and Principals of Acanthus have considerable experience of all aspects of fund placement and corporate advisory work built up over the past twenty years in various financial centres including London, Boston, Milan, Paris, Geneva and Hong Kong and have been involved in the execution of transactions with an aggregate value in excess of €8 billion.

[www.acanthusadvisers.com](http://www.acanthusadvisers.com)