



Craig Whittaker MP

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NHS and Accountable Care Organisations (EDM 660)

Thank you for contacting me about Accountable Care Organisations (ACOs) and Early Day Motion 660.

It is a Parliamentary convention that members of the Government do not sign Early Day Motions. As I am a Government whip, this convention applies to me.

Currently, people's different health and care needs are looked after by different health and care organisations. That can make it harder than it needs to be for individuals with multiple needs to get the best care. This is why the NHS wants to create structures such as Accountable Care Organisations which will make it easier to ensure that complex packages of care are better co-ordinated and more effectively delivered.

ACOs help health commissioners provide the most appropriate care for their local communities, with more care in and near patients' homes, leading to fewer trips to hospital. This will include integrated primary medical services, healthcare, and possibly social care services in their local areas. I believe it is right that commissioning decisions are taken as locally as possible, as long as the Government offers effective support, and ensures all commissioners achieve the high standards we expect of the NHS.

NHS England has permitted a small number of Clinical Commissioning Groups to commission ACOs for their populations, under NHS oversight, as a trial for future development. NHS England will consult on the draft ACO contract before any decision is made to issue it as a contract for wider use in the NHS. The Department of Health is working closely with the NHS to ensure this process is supported by all NHS organisations.

Suggestions that ACOs are being used to support privatisation, or cuts to NHS funding do no more than cause unnecessary alarm. The NHS will always be free at the point of use, and I believe these reforms will continue to improve the quality of NHS services and outcomes for patients.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP