

Labour demand Commons debate on controversial new Tory health plans

Labour has today called for a series of controversial changes to the NHS to be debated in the House of Commons, after it emerged that Ministers had planned to force through new regulations without debate in the New Year.

Labour has tabled an Early Day Motion in the House of Commons in the name of Labour Leader Jeremy Corbyn and Shadow Health Secretary Jonathan Ashworth, together with front bench colleagues, calling for greater transparency on the Government's new Accountable Care plans in the NHS.

Jonathan Ashworth has also written to Andrea Leadsom, Leader of the House of Commons, to call for the Government to provide Parliamentary time for MPs to debate and vote on the proposed changes on the floor of the House.

The letter states:

"Accountable Care Organisations are potentially the biggest change which will be made to our NHS for a decade. Yet the Government has been reluctant to put details of the new arrangements into the public domain. It's essential that the decision around whether to introduce ACOs into the NHS is taken in public, with a full debate and vote in Parliament.

"There are big, unanswered questions about how ACOs will be accountable to the public, what the levels of private sector involvement will be, and what the implications will be for NHS staff. The NHS is experiencing the largest financial squeeze in its history and there are concerns that Accountable Care Organisations could be used as a vehicle for greater rationing of treatment locally.

"The unacceptable secrecy in which these ACOs have been conceived and are being pushed forward is totally contrary to the NHS's duty to be open, transparent and accountable in its decision-making. The manner in which the Government are approaching ACOs, as with STPs before them, fails that test.

“There is a lack of clarity about Government’s intentions for ACOs, and in the absence of a strong lead from the Secretary of State there is again growing public mistrust. It is inconceivable in this context that the Government should make such wide changes behind closed doors, rather than on the floor of the House.”