

Dear George and Ken,

Thank you for inviting me to observe your meeting last night. I was impressed by the numbers attending. I hope you don't mind but I have a few observations to make.

- 1 There was clearly an overwhelming majority of attendees who were concerned at the proposals for an ACO in North Tyneside, such as those plans are. There is very little detail and consequently what effect the proposals will have on general practice.
- 2 The rapid timeline was particularly worrying when combined with above.
- 3 I was slightly taken aback the willingness of some individuals to accept responsibility for the overspend of £17million. GPs did not have a choice about being a member of a CCG.
- 4 I gained the impression that the overspend was either due to initial underfunding of the CCG, incompetent commissioning by the CCG, or intransigent and grasping behaviour by some providers.
- 5 In view of the progressive underfunding of general practice over 6-7 years, in an environment of increasing workload, and increasing costs in general practice, the overspend is not due to excessive funding into practices. GPs should not hold themselves responsible for the current situation.
- 6 It follows that GPs should not agree to any "solution" that has the potential to undermine general practice.
- 7 I suspect that the integration implied and the make up of the ACO board will easily lead to the side-lining of GP providers as the large providers are well versed in flexing their muscle and achieving their own aims.
- 8 There was mention of the CCG being placed in "special measures" and the dire effects that would have on general practice. I fail to understand those warnings in the context of a nationally-guaranteed contract. Perhaps an external management team would be a good idea inasmuch that strong commissioners may be able to resolve some of these issues. I do, however, understand that this would be embarrassing for the current management team.

General practice in the UK provides excellent quality, is very cost effective, and is the envy of the world. The financial problems do not originate in general practice. GPs should be wary of anything which has

the potential to undermine their independence and the current ring-fencing of their budgets. We need more investment in general practice, not less.

Dr Roger N Ford
Secretary, Sunderland LMC
GPC member
Chair, Cumberland & NE LMCs