

Private hospitals howl in protest that they may not be ...

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The NHS privatisation, now going on, introduces the concept of 'any willing provider' being able to bid for NHS work and get it, irrespective of quality.

But as the [FT notes it may](#) not be quite the free for all that the private hospitals hoped for:

The choice offered to patients in Andrew Lansley's new NHS will be constrained, the health department has confirmed, despite the ability to choose being seen as one of the key drivers to improve patients' experience and the quality of the service.

Under [the health secretary's plans](#), "any willing provider", whether public, private or voluntary, will be able to supply NHS care at NHS prices once they have been licensed.

But that will not mean patients can choose any provider in all circumstances, according to the department.

For services where integration and continuity of care is important to secure the best clinical outcomes — such as for patients with multiple conditions, or for end of life care — GP consortia will be able to put the service out to competitive tender and offer it to one provider or prime contractor, the department says.

Don't get me wrong - this [does not for a moment reduce the risks in this process](#) - but it does mean that private hospitals don't get a blank cheque to do what they like. And it does mean that integration may be considered when referring.

Think about the alternative - for example when considering end of life care. Unless just one provider were allowed a person in the terminal stages of cancer would be being shipped from pillar to post to have different treatments. The prospect is absurd. But have no doubt - it's what the private providers want, as [another article in the FT shows](#). They, of course, dress this up as the 'ability to choose', Do you know - that's not what people want? What they want is first rate integrated care.

And only the NHS can provide that.