contrast to the way it has been so enthusiastically pushed by Labour governments since 1997.

Since 2000 Labour governments have been seeking to provide greater independence for local NHS providers (Foundation Trusts) and a greater role for the private sector in providing non-emergency treatment. This has led to the introduction of a number of new regulatory bodies to monitor both public and private sector providers. The introduction of patient choice also means that in many instances patients will be able to choose where they go for treatment and one of the options could be a private hospital or independent sector treatment centre. The treatment will continue to be free to the patient whichever provider they choose. These reforms are at their earliest stages and the Labour government argues they will improve services to patients and improve efficiency in NHS providers. Some commentators argue that the changes could make it much more difficult for NHS hospitals to plan effectively and will distort the provision of healthcare particularly in areas where there are significant numbers of private sector providers looking to improve their capacity levels.

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