



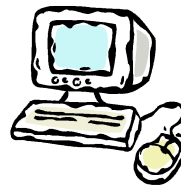
Free Choice For All Launch of New Hospital Services Scheme

A Free Choice initiative, which will see patients being able to choose which hospital they want to be treated at, was launched on April 1, 2008. The Free Choice initiative means that most patients referred by their GP to see a specialist, will be able to opt for any hospital in the country which meets NHS standards.

It's hoped this new service will not only improve patients in the decision making process about their care, but also encourage hospitals and other service providers to improve their services to better meet the needs and expectations of patients and GP's.

Making a choice has been made easy for patients. They can access clear, accurate and independent information from a number of sources. Patients will be able to ask their GP who will guide them, or one of the practice staff at their local GP surgery to help provide them with information about the options available locally or elsewhere in England.

There is also a place on the nhs choice website where you can compare patients comments and overall ratings about individual hospitals along side the Healthcare Commissions overall rating. You can choose up to 5 hospitals at a time and compare there performances, and to help you further there are also A – Z listings of treatment offered by the hospitals.



www.nhs.uk

If you don't have access to the internet you can speak to an adviser (once their GP has suggested a referral to see a specialist) by calling **08456 088 888** free of charge. You might want also to visit the local library which will also have information available to help you choose. Some libraries will also have staff that have been trained to help people access the information they need.