

# NHS using 34-year-old equipment

Chris Smyth Health Editor

Patients are at risk because they are routinely being treated or diagnosed using equipment that is decades old, including scanners that are past their use-by date, Labour has claimed.

Diagnosis of cancer and other conditions is harder because hospitals have skimmed on replacing vital machines, the party says. An x-ray machine from 1984 is being used at a hospital in Leeds, in Oxford staff are using a 1992 ultrasound scanner and an MRI scanner at the Royal Free in London should have been replaced in 2007, according to data from freedom of information requests.

Responses from 93 NHS trusts found that 892 x-ray machines were more than ten years old, including 139 that are beyond their replacement dates. There are 295 ultrasound machines still going after more than a decade, including 134 past replacement age.

Jon Ashworth, shadow health secretary, said: "Tory cuts to capital budgets mean we have among the lowest numbers of CT scanners and MRI scanners per head in the world."

Theresa May has promised extra money for the health service, but Mr Ashworth said: "It will be a key test of any new funding settlement for the NHS in the coming weeks that it makes up for years of Tory cuts to capital budgets which have left hospitals unable to replace essential equipment and have put patients in danger."

Phillippa Hentsch, of NHS Providers, said that money to maintain and develop equipment "has been used to prop up day-to-day NHS spending".

The Department of Health said that the government had "announced £3.9 billion of new capital investment".

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