

# Your NHS, Online: Insights from the Isle of Wight

## March 8<sup>th</sup> 2026

### Introduction

The Department of Health and Social Care has announced plans to create a new NHS online Trust (hospital), which would provide some NHS services digitally, such as online appointments, consultations, and support.

The aim is to make it easier for people to access care and manage their health online.

This will initially focus on the following specialities: Urology, Gastroenterology, Gynaecology and Ophthalmology and the aim is to reduce waiting times, with the equivalent of up to 8.5 million appointments and assessments being delivered in its first three years.

More information about NHS Online can be found [here](#).



### Briefly we have...

Run a survey from 27<sup>th</sup> Jan – 7<sup>th</sup> March 26

We asked people:

- What do you think about the Department of Health and Social Care's plans for a new NHS online trust?
- Would you be likely to use services provided by the new Trust?
- Do you have any concerns about the NHS online trust?

This report contains the results of the survey and will be shared with Healthwatch England, and NHS England and the Department of Health and Social Care as part of their consultation.

### Key findings from our survey:

- 51% of people said they would use the online hospital in the future.
- Concerns raised about quality of the service and **digital exclusion**.
- Overall, people felt online services should **supplement existing care** rather than replace it.

### Thank you

to the 43 people across the Isle of Wight who responded to our survey



# Survey results

## Q1: What do you think about the Department of Health and Social Care's plans for a new NHS online trust?

Summary: feedback on the proposed online NHS Trust was mixed. Some respondents welcomed the idea, particularly if it could improve access to specialists, reduce waiting times, and offer more flexible appointments.

However, many people raised concerns that online consultations cannot replace face-to-face appointments, as clinicians often rely on physical examination and visual cues to make accurate diagnoses. There were also worries about digital exclusion, particularly for older people or those without reliable access to technology.

Overall, respondents felt digital services could be helpful **if used alongside, rather than instead of, in-person care**, and highlighted the importance of ensuring the service is accessible to everyone.

## Comments:

"Interesting and welcome if it means being treated sooner."

"If this will speed up access to healthcare then I have no issue and will futureproof the NHS for the growing digital demographic."

"It looks like a great way of reducing the 'postcode lottery' of access to specialist care and hopefully helping waiting times."

"Perhaps more people would have access to top experts. Will the online route to experts then be perceived as 'first class care' and the alternative as 'second class.'"

"I am a little cautious about this, as so much can potentially be missed when a human being is not involved face to face."

"Whilst I do agree that remote consultations could make a useful contribution to the treatment of NHS patients I remain with concerns that if this becomes the norm, there could be a serious decline in the general quality of the service."

"Know nothing about it."

"Not appropriate for the ageing population on the Isle of Wight. An appt is not just about the conversation - its the visual cues - signs and symptoms, body language that matters."

"Do not like it. The government never delivers anything computer based well. Millions of pounds get spent on it before they realise it is not up to scratch."

\*Feedback has been anonymised to ensure confidentiality.

## Q2: Would you be likely to use services provided by the online NHS Trust in the future?



	Number	Percentage
Yes	21	50%
No	10	24%
Unsure	12	29%

Many respondents said they would consider using an online NHS Trust if it helped reduce travel, save time, and improve access to specialists. However, most felt it would only be suitable for certain appointments, such as follow-ups or discussions that do not require physical examination. Concerns were also raised about digital exclusion and the importance of maintaining face-to-face care.

### Comments:

"I work full time and if ever I need to be referred this would be a much more effective way of working for me and the consultants."

"The constant to-ing and fro-ing to GPs and consultants just to get an appointment or a test is an utter waste of time for all concerned. Much easier to use the phone or PC."

"Access to local Primary Care has been our problem in last 5 years. If primary care can be bypassed using this system then that will help. Primary Care may be more available if patient is handling their own onward referral thus reducing Primary Care's workload."

"It would depend on the condition and the confidence I felt in the online service."

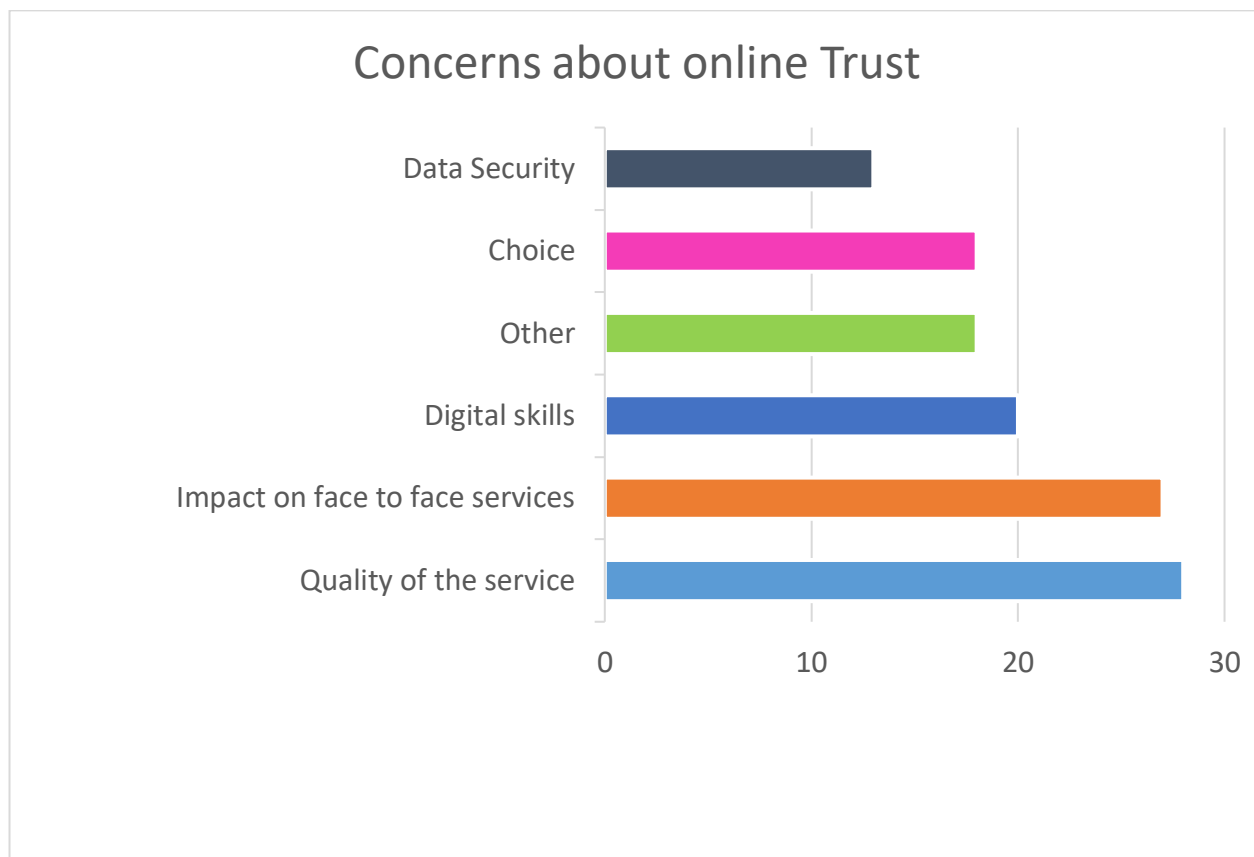
"There is too much reliance on remote "hands off, so called" care these days. There are many people that will not be able to, either access and/or use such a service. These groups of people are being left behind to rot on the scrap heap without the same access to healthcare that the computer literate have access to."

"The existing online service is a joke. How will it be improved?"

"I like to see a doctor face to face who has all my medical records in front of him/her."

"There are issues around training - will doctors of the future be trained for this specific purpose? If so, they will have no skills for communicating, examination or clinical acumen. I find this very worrying."

Q3: Do you have any concerns about the NHS online Trust? Please tick all that apply.



### Other comments:

“No concerns at all.”

“Where will all the extra Consultant hours come from?

Will the Consultants be trained to work in this totally alien way? If so, by whom?

Will they be registered to an appropriate Royal College?

Will the Consultants have regular appraisals and if so by whom?”

“The service needs to connect with patients records otherwise not only will everything be disjointed but NHS won't know what advice to give without any medical history notes.”

“Staffing, too many managers/tiers, lack of internal communication.”

“I do believe that in order to make a good clinical assessment it is necessary to be in a position to see and clinically examine a patient. In spite of modern diagnostic investigations the art of clinical examination remains very important.”

“The information talks of reduction of variation and inequalities. As an islander I can understand the impact of geography on care.. Is there a danger that geographic inequality and variation might be replaced by digital exclusion, variation and inequality. Some patients may need one to one support to benefit from online care. Not all are digitally competent. Thought must be given to how this can be achieved because needing to choose whether to use experts online or the alternative may result in a different form of equality of care.”

## Q4: Respondents were invited to share any additional comments.

### Summary:

People saw potential benefits in saving time, improving access, and reducing NHS pressure, especially for travel or follow-up appointments. However, they stressed that face-to-face care must remain available, qualified clinicians should lead consultations, and digital services must be accessible and well-supported. Online care should complement, not replace, in-person appointments.

“I hope this goes well and that any teething problems are quickly resolved.”

“I think one gap that doesn't get enough attention is the scattergun health "education" that comes out to the public. I think the creation of informed and empowered patients is very important.”

“I would want to know that the online service was being both triaged and followed up by fully qualified doctors. My concern is that it might be tempting to staff it with 'cheaper' options (e.g. Physician Associates, paramedics or nurses).”

“There is mention of “spreading out demand”. If more “experts” spend more time responding digitally will there be less time for them to respond other than digitally? Should there be concern about the welfare of healthcare professionals within this? Could it impact on their work/ life balance? How far will patient choice stretch- evenings, weekends?”


“The service is already totally inadequate/misguided/inefficient. Trying to increase online services would simply apply current failings.”

“There has been no proper publicity about this. No one knows how it would really impact their care. Very importantly no one has mentioned cost. It must have enormous set up costs and would take a long time to implement. In the meantime no one will address the current appalling state of the service.”

“I am not convinced that a remote or telephone consultation is going to take less time than a face to face consultation and if the objective is to speed the throughput where are all the additional Consultants going to come from? Are they going to be accredited by the appropriate Medical Royal Colleges or other "clinicians"? It is important that the training and calibre of the Consultants is maintained and that the system is not just dumbed down in order to get through the numbers.”

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