



# 'Online hospital' to open in 2027, says PM

By [James Illman](#) | 30 September 2025

**NHS "online hospital" service will deliver millions of appointments, PM expected to say**

**Service to digitally connect patients and clinicians via the NHS app to launch in 2027**

**Experts caution fundamental questions around funding, staffing and patient data**

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**Plans for a new NHS 'online hospital' service to deliver millions of appointments each year by "digitally connecting patients to specialist clinicians" are set to be unveiled by the prime minister today.**

The new service, [plans for which were exclusively revealed by HSJ in June](#) and then further trailed in the government's *10-Year Health Plan*, will be branded "NHS Online" and accessible through the NHS app.

It is scheduled to go live in 2027 and will deliver "up to 8.5 million extra GP and consultant-led elective services in its first three years", Sir Keir Starmer is expected to pledge in his speech to the Labour party conference in Liverpool.

NHS England said the increased capacity will help cut demand and reduce waiting times, saying the announcement was "a huge step forward for the NHS".

But experts said that while NHS Online would be “an interesting initiative and helpful for some”, detail was “largely lacking at this stage” and there were “difficult questions” to address about how it would be staffed, funded, and how patients would be passed between digital and physical services.

A Number 10 statement said: “Patients will always have the choice between NHS Online and their local hospital. Those who opt in to the service will also access and track prescriptions, be referred for scans and tests, and receive clinical advice on managing their condition – all from the comfort of their own home.



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- What percentage of NHS patient interactions will be digital within the next five years?
- How will NHS remotely monitor patients to proactively manage their health?
- What is the NHS goal for all hospitals using electronic patient records?
- What is the current state of UK healthcare sector technology infrastructure?
- What is the NHS long-term vision for hospital outpatient services by 2035?

ask your own question...

“If someone needs a physical test or a procedure these will be booked on the App at convenient locations close to their home or work – whether at a nearby hospital, surgical hub or community diagnostic centre.”

*HSJ* revealed in June that government was considering including “virtual hospitals” – based on patients directly contacting consultants on an Uber-style platform – in its *10YHP*.

*The 10YHP* in July said: “We will ensure the NHS can provide GP and consultant-led elective services virtually through the NHS app - available to everyone, regardless of where they live - where safe to do so and always subject to patient choice. We will not allow privately provided digital healthcare to be the only option and we will increase the availability of virtual services for NHS patients.”

Neither government or NHSE have said how NHS Online will be run, for example by a new NHS trust or arm's length body, nor how it will be staffed.

NHSE said: "Initially the focus will be on a small number of planned treatment areas with the longest waits... Doctors will have new levels of flexibility, managing their time in a way that works better for them and their patients. NHS England and DHSC will work with clinical staff and their union representatives on how best to deliver [it]..."

"The service will build and scale tried-and-tested innovations already in place across the country such as AI and remote monitoring."

It cited three examples of these: University Hospital Southampton's virtual follow-up pathway for patients with low-risk inflammatory bowel disease flare-ups; Moorfields Eye Hospital's a single point of access for virtual triage across multiple providers which means all referrals come into a single shared system; Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals Trust's partnership with Medefer which "has enabled virtual triage of 99 per cent of referrals within 48 hours".

Sir Keir is expected to say "a new world is coming... In decades to come, I want people to look back on this moment as the moment we renewed the NHS for a new world."

Nuffield Trust director of research and policy Becks Fisher said: "It's an interesting experiment to test a full new system for digital care. Giving patients a free choice means the NHS will not shut out those who want care in person."

"However, at this stage detail is largely lacking. And there are some difficult questions looming about implementation. Where will the doctors and nurses for this service be taken from? And how will they pass patients who need care from digital to physical services?"

"This service will only be safe and suitable for certain patients. How will we make sure it is kept to them?"

NHS Providers chief executive Daniel Elkeles said the online hospital "could be a very significant development" but that it was "sensible they are taking the time to plan this properly because there are a lot of factors to consider".

He added: "These include the handling of patient data and the need to avoid digital exclusion of people who can't access the service."

"It's important there's new funding and it will be an NHS organisation with NHS staff. This is a

bold, exciting initiative, but the benefits should not come at the cost of destabilising vital services patients will continue to rely on.”

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Source

*Labour party conference announcement*

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