# Labour's new NHS strategy aims to revolutionise patient care through remote consultations and expanded community diagnostics



A new approach in NHS patient care is being championed by Labour leader Keir Starmer, who supports integrating remote consultations with expanded community diagnostic services to streamline and accelerate patient pathways. Starmer emphasises how certain patients with appropriate conditions could avoid the traditional circuitous route between GPs, hospitals, and diagnostic tests, instead receiving quicker assessments remotely from their homes or workplaces. This model would allow patients to receive timely advice, be directed promptly to a community diagnostic centre, or even start treatment faster, thus enhancing convenience and efficiency.

Remote consulting has been embraced by NHS England as a way to improve accessibility and reduce waiting times, particularly benefiting patients who find attending in person challenging. It offers time savings and can reduce travel costs, providing a more flexible healthcare experience. However, NHS England also acknowledges potential pitfalls such as the risk of delayed diagnosis and the digital divide that can exclude some patient groups. To address these challenges, NHS practices are encouraged to engage with local communities to develop remote consulting services that work for all patients.

Community Diagnostic Centres (CDCs) play a key role in this evolving healthcare landscape. These centres, often located in community hubs such as shopping centres, offer a range of diagnostic services including CT scans, blood tests, ultrasounds, and X-rays. The government has been expanding CDCs, including extending their operating hours to 12 hours a day, seven days a week, to increase access and reduce NHS waiting lists. Since July 2024, over 7.2 million tests and scans have been completed at CDCs, with many centres now open in evenings and weekends to accommodate patients’ busy schedules.

The expansion of CDC operating hours allows tens of thousands more patients to obtain vital tests outside traditional NHS working hours, enhancing convenience and supporting timely care. This initiative is designed to integrate seamlessly with remote consultations, enabling patients to receive expert advice virtually and book diagnostic tests locally without unnecessary delays. Furthermore, an NHS-to-be-launched digital platform known as NHS Online aims to bolster this model by connecting patients directly to specialists via virtual consultations and facilitating easier booking of diagnostic services through the NHS App.

This integrated approach, combining remote consultations, community diagnostics, and digital platforms, promises faster, more convenient, and patient-centred NHS care. It offers potential benefits for both patients and healthcare staff, with virtual consultations reducing travel time, stress, and allowing professionals more flexible working conditions. However, careful implementation and community engagement remain essential to ensure that these innovations meet the needs of all patient groups and do not exacerbate health inequalities.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.standard.co.uk/news/tech/nhs-keir-starmer-wes-streeting-government-labour-b1250403.html)
* Paragraph 2 – [[2]](https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/remote-consulting/), [[4]](https://www.cheshireandmerseyside.nhs.uk/your-health/our-programmes/video-remote-consultations/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[3]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/what-are-community-diagnostic-centres), [[5]](https://www.nationalhealthexecutive.com/articles/community-diagnostic-centres-further-boost-nhs-access-and-speed-diagnosis), [[6]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/thousands-more-checks-tests-and-scans-available-out-of-hours)
* Paragraph 4 – [[6]](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/thousands-more-checks-tests-and-scans-available-out-of-hours), [[7]](https://www.healthcare-management.uk/nhs-online-hospital-patients-control)
* Paragraph 5 – [[2]](https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/remote-consulting/), [[4]](https://www.cheshireandmerseyside.nhs.uk/your-health/our-programmes/video-remote-consultations/), [[7]](https://www.healthcare-management.uk/nhs-online-hospital-patients-control)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.standard.co.uk/news/tech/nhs-keir-starmer-wes-streeting-government-labour-b1250403.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-read/remote-consulting/> - This NHS England article discusses the benefits and potential pitfalls of remote consulting in primary care. It highlights how remote consultations can save patients time, improve access for certain groups, and reduce waiting times. However, it also addresses challenges such as the risk of delayed diagnoses and digital exclusion for some patients. The article emphasizes the importance of practices engaging with their local communities to implement remote consulting effectively.
3. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/what-are-community-diagnostic-centres> - The UK government's official page explains the role of Community Diagnostic Centres (CDCs) in providing faster and more convenient access to diagnostic tests, checks, and scans. Located in community settings like shopping centres, CDCs offer services such as CT scans, blood tests, ultrasounds, and X-rays. The government is increasing opening hours to 12 hours a day, seven days a week, to further enhance accessibility and reduce NHS waiting lists.
4. <https://www.cheshireandmerseyside.nhs.uk/your-health/our-programmes/video-remote-consultations/> - This page from NHS Cheshire and Merseyside outlines the benefits of video and remote consultations. It highlights how virtual consultations can save patients time and money by reducing the need for travel, leading to quicker access to care. The article also notes that video consultations offer benefits for healthcare professionals, including reduced travel time and stress, and more flexible working arrangements.
5. <https://www.nationalhealthexecutive.com/articles/community-diagnostic-centres-further-boost-nhs-access-and-speed-diagnosis> - An article from the National Health Executive detailing the expansion of Community Diagnostic Centres (CDCs) to improve NHS access and speed up diagnoses. It reports that over 7.2 million tests and scans have been delivered through CDCs since July 2024, with many centres now operating in the evenings and on weekends. This expansion aims to make diagnostic services more accessible and convenient for patients.
6. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/thousands-more-checks-tests-and-scans-available-out-of-hours> - A UK government press release announcing that 100 Community Diagnostic Centres (CDCs) across the country now offer out-of-hours services, operating 12 hours a day, seven days a week. This initiative allows tens of thousands of patients to access vital tests, scans, and checks around their busy working lives, aiming to reduce NHS waiting times and provide more convenient care.
7. <https://www.healthcare-management.uk/nhs-online-hospital-patients-control> - An article discussing the NHS's plan to establish an 'online hospital' called NHS Online, which will digitally connect patients to expert clinicians across England. The service aims to provide faster access to specialists through virtual consultations, allowing patients to book scans at community diagnostic centres closer to home via the NHS App, enhancing convenience and reducing waiting times.