# Imperial College healthcare NHS Trust extends MRI hours with remote support technology to cut waiting times



An innovative pilot scheme by Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust in London suggests that extending the operation of MRI scanners into off-peak evening hours can significantly reduce patient waiting times and improve attendance rates without the need for additional on-site staff. The study, conducted in partnership with technology firm Philips, demonstrated that by running MRI services for 12 to 16 hours per day across five days a week, the trust was able to scan an extra 1,356 patients over a six-month period. This approach also saw a striking fall in missed appointments, or “did not attend” (DNA) rates, which dropped from the typical 5-7% to just 1.1%.

The trust reported that 90% of patients were now receiving their scans within three weeks of referral, marking a considerable improvement in diagnostic wait times. The success of the pilot was largely attributed to the use of Philips’ Radiology Operations Command Centre (ROCC) technology, which enables experienced radiographers to remotely support colleagues on site through live audio, video, and chat functions. This allowed senior specialists to guide junior staff operating the scanners from a distance, optimising workforce allocation without the need for additional personnel physically present with the machines.

By utilising ROCC, the trust was able to "double the number of radiology staff that we can train," according to Philip Gregory, an imaging practice educator at Imperial. The platform’s unique ability to view and manage multiple scanners across different sites during extended hours also allowed for safer and more efficient training sessions, enhancing staff development alongside expanded patient capacity. Evening scanning sessions were focused on simpler examinations, reserving more complex cases for daytime hours.

Mark Leftwich, managing director of Philips UK and Ireland, highlighted a growing national shortage of diagnostic radiographers, which has contributed to bottlenecks and longer waits for diagnoses within the NHS. He suggested that remote support technology and extended scanning hours could be transformative, potentially paving the way for future 24-hour scanner operations. However, he emphasised the need to prioritise digital infrastructure and workforce support to sustain improvements in care.

While the extension of scanning hours has clear benefits, challenges remain. Dr Stephen Harden, president of the Royal College of Radiologists, noted that increasing the volume of MRI scans also requires more radiologists to interpret the results—a critical bottleneck given the current shortage of nearly 2,000 radiologists in the UK. He stressed that without an increase in trained specialists, faster scanning might not translate to quicker diagnosis and treatment for patients. He urged the government to invest in training more radiologists to prevent delays in delivering scan results.

The pilot ran from January through July 2025 at Imperial’s Community Diagnostic Centre in Wembley, where remote MRI scanning was initiated using the ROCC platform. In its first month, the extended service saw 306 additional patients between 8 pm and midnight, accompanied by very low DNA rates and positive patient feedback regarding appointment availability and staff support. The trial demonstrated the potential for combining advanced digital tools with flexible staffing models to alleviate NHS diagnostic pressures in a cost-effective manner.

This innovative approach not only addresses capacity issues but also offers a pathway to improve workforce training and work-life balance, as staff can provide expert oversight remotely, reducing the need for physical presence during extended hours. If scaled, it could help the NHS meet rising demand for diagnostic imaging and shorten backlog-driven waiting times, while maintaining high standards of care.

### 📌 Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/nhs-mri-test-hospital-waiting-list-b2837502.html), [[2]](https://www.philips.co.uk/a-w/about/news/archive/standard/news/press/2025/philips-and-imperial-college-healthcare-nhs-trust-cut-patient-waiting-lists-with-late-night-mri-scanning-pilot.html), [[4]](https://www.digitalhealth.net/2025/09/imperial-nhs-mri-scanning-pilot-cuts-dna-rates-and-waiting-lists/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/nhs-mri-test-hospital-waiting-list-b2837502.html), [[4]](https://www.digitalhealth.net/2025/09/imperial-nhs-mri-scanning-pilot-cuts-dna-rates-and-waiting-lists/), [[6]](https://www.radmagazine.com/philips-and-imperial-college-healthcare-nhs-trust-cut-patient-waiting-lists-with-late-night-mri-scanning-pilot/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/nhs-mri-test-hospital-waiting-list-b2837502.html), [[4]](https://www.digitalhealth.net/2025/09/imperial-nhs-mri-scanning-pilot-cuts-dna-rates-and-waiting-lists/), [[5]](https://www.digitalhealth.net/2025/03/first-mris-conducted-remotely-in-imperial-pilot-to-reduce-wait-times/)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/nhs-mri-test-hospital-waiting-list-b2837502.html), [[6]](https://www.radmagazine.com/philips-and-imperial-college-healthcare-nhs-trust-cut-patient-waiting-lists-with-late-night-mri-scanning-pilot/)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/nhs-mri-test-hospital-waiting-list-b2837502.html)
* Paragraph 6 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/nhs-mri-test-hospital-waiting-list-b2837502.html), [[3]](https://www.imperial.nhs.uk/about-us/news/first-mris-conducted-remotely-at-the-trust-as-part-of-extended-opening-pilot), [[7]](https://htn.co.uk/2025/02/28/imperial-college-healthcare-trials-remote-mri-approach/)
* Paragraph 7 – [[1]](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/nhs-mri-test-hospital-waiting-list-b2837502.html), [[3]](https://www.imperial.nhs.uk/about-us/news/first-mris-conducted-remotely-at-the-trust-as-part-of-extended-opening-pilot), [[6]](https://www.radmagazine.com/philips-and-imperial-college-healthcare-nhs-trust-cut-patient-waiting-lists-with-late-night-mri-scanning-pilot/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/health/nhs-mri-test-hospital-waiting-list-b2837502.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.philips.co.uk/a-w/about/news/archive/standard/news/press/2025/philips-and-imperial-college-healthcare-nhs-trust-cut-patient-waiting-lists-with-late-night-mri-scanning-pilot.html> - Philips and Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust have launched a pilot project to reduce patient waiting lists by conducting MRI scans during late-night hours. The initiative, running from January to July 2025, extended scanning services to 16 hours per day, five days a week, enabling an additional 1,356 patients to be seen over six months. This approach also reduced the 'Did Not Attend' (DNA) rate from the typical 5-7% to just 1.1%. The success of the pilot highlights the potential of out-of-hours scanning to enhance patient care and address workforce challenges in the NHS.
3. <https://www.imperial.nhs.uk/about-us/news/first-mris-conducted-remotely-at-the-trust-as-part-of-extended-opening-pilot> - Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust has initiated a pilot to extend MRI scanning hours, offering appointments up to midnight to reduce waiting times and improve early diagnosis rates. The pilot employs remote scanning technology, allowing radiographers to operate MRI scanners through the Radiology Operations Command Centre (ROCC) platform. In its first month, the extended service saw 306 additional patients between 8 PM and midnight, with low 'Did Not Attend' rates and positive patient feedback regarding appointment availability and staff kindness.
4. <https://www.digitalhealth.net/2025/09/imperial-nhs-mri-scanning-pilot-cuts-dna-rates-and-waiting-lists/> - A pilot at Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust exploring out-of-hours MRI scanning helped to cut 'Did Not Attend' (DNA) rates from 5-7% to 1.1%. The trust ran a pilot from January 2025 to July 2025, using Philips Radiology Operations Command Centre technology to enable radiographers to support on-site teams remotely. By the end of the pilot, extending the service at one of the trust’s Community Diagnostic Centres from 12 to 16 hours per day, five days per week, resulted in a further 1,356 patients being seen in the evenings.
5. <https://www.digitalhealth.net/2025/03/first-mris-conducted-remotely-in-imperial-pilot-to-reduce-wait-times/> - The first remote MRI scans have been conducted as part of a pilot by Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust intended to reduce waiting times and increase patient choice. The team at Wembley Community Diagnostic Centre launched the pilot on 22 January 2025 and it will continue until the end of July 2025. Patients are being offered the option to have scans using the latest remote scanning technology, which allows the radiographer to operate the MRI remotely through the Radiology Operations Command Centre (ROCC) platform.
6. <https://www.radmagazine.com/philips-and-imperial-college-healthcare-nhs-trust-cut-patient-waiting-lists-with-late-night-mri-scanning-pilot/> - Philips and Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust have embarked on a groundbreaking new pilot that could see thousands more NHS patients diagnosed each year by enabling out-of-hours MRI exams to be overseen remotely. Beginning in January 2025, the new pilot uses Philips Radiology Operations Command Center technology deployed at Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust to maximise capacity by enabling experienced radiographers to support on-site teams from a remote location, enhancing patient care.
7. <https://htn.co.uk/2025/02/28/imperial-college-healthcare-trials-remote-mri-approach/> - Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust is trialling an approach to reduce patient waiting times and promote the ability for staff to work more flexibly around times that suit patients, with extended opening hours to midnight reportedly allowing the trust to see '306 extra patients' in its first month. By using remote scanning technology, the imaging pilot allows radiographers to operate the MRI scanner remotely through the Radiology Operations Command Centre (ROCC) platform, with hopes that this model could also be applied across other services for waitlist reductions and improvements in patient choice.