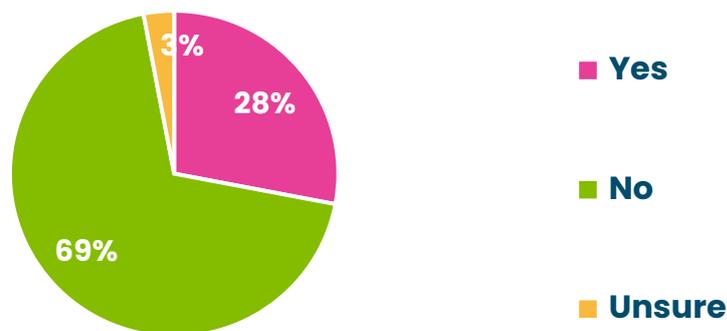


Your views on the creation of a new NHS Online Trust (a virtual hospital)

In February 2026 Healthwatch Brighton and Hove ran a survey to gather the views of residents about NHS Online, a new virtual hospital that is being set up by the NHS. 159 people responded to the survey. 62% of respondents were female, 31% male and the average age of respondents was 64. We heard:

1. There are low levels of awareness about NHS Online and divided responses on potential use. Awareness of NHS Online in Brighton and Hove was low, with only 28% of respondents having heard of it:

Before today, had you heard about the creation of the new NHS Online Trust? (n~138)



We received a mixed response to the question **'If needed, how likely is it that you would ask to be referred to the NHS Online Trust for your care needs?'**. 32% of respondents were 'very likely or likely' to ask to be referred, 30% were 'unlikely or very unlikely' and 20% were 'unsure at the moment'.

Of those that said they would be very likely or likely to want to be referred to the NHS Online (n~44) the key reasons given why they would want a referral were:

- To be seen more quickly (93% or 41 people)
- Convenience of appointments (82% or 36 people)
- To reduce/ remove travel time to appointments (62% or 27 people)
- To have all my health records in one place (62% or 27 people)

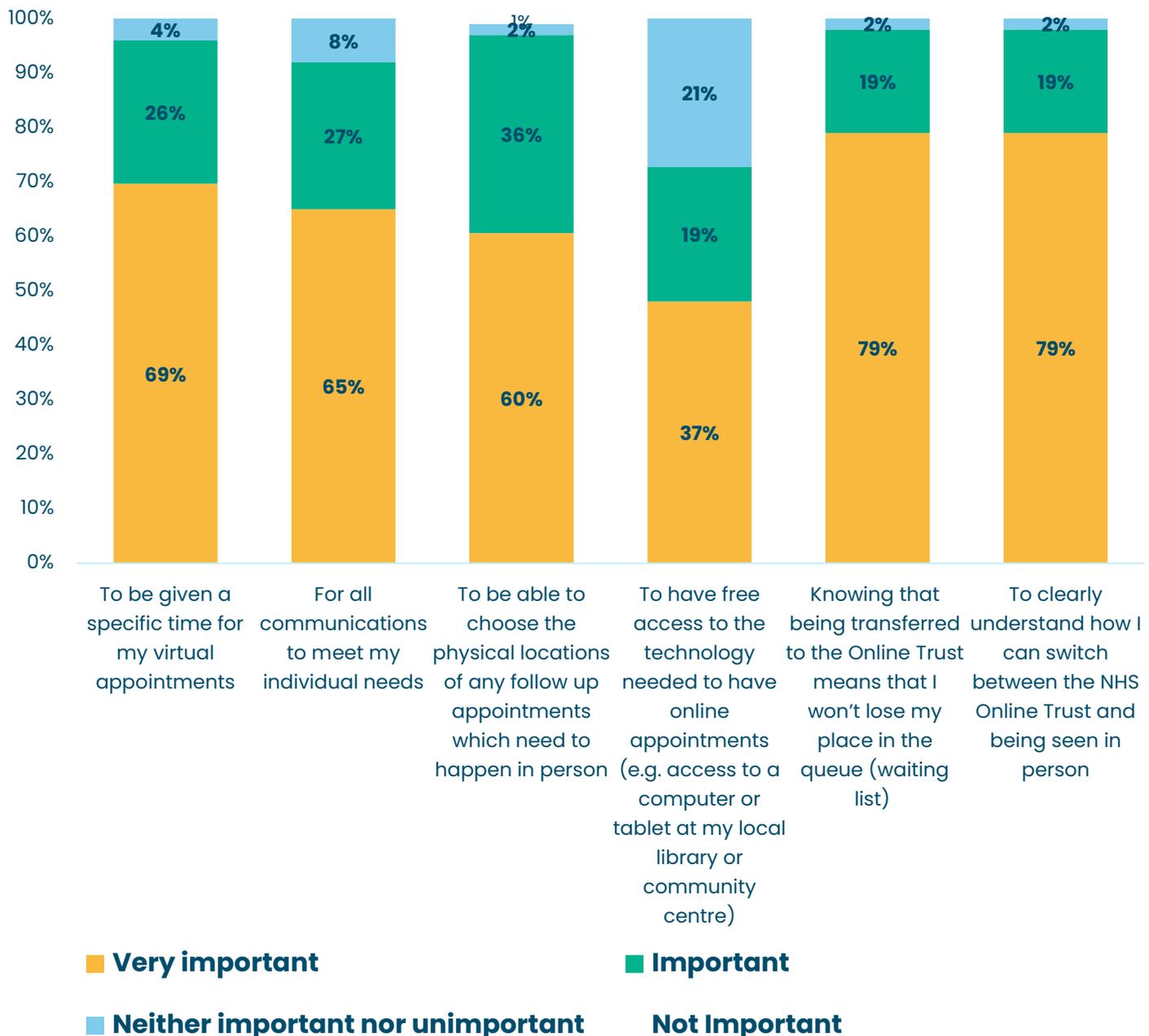
Of those that said they would be very unlikely or unlikely to want to be referred to NHS Online (n~41) the top three reasons as to why they would not want a referral were:

- I do not think you can get the same level of care virtually/ online (78% or 32 people)
- I do not like using online services for my care (I prefer face to face appointments) (76% or 31 people)
- I have concerns over the use of Artificial Intelligence (73% or 30 people)

2. Respondents want online appointments during standard working hours and at weekends. When asked 'If using the Online Trust, when would you like virtual/online appointments to be available?', the majority of respondents favoured appointments between 9am-5pm (79% or 101 people) with 71% wanting appointments at weekends (91 people). 56% wanting appointments in the evening after 5pm (72 people) and 42% (54 people) in the morning before 9am.

3. There was great interest in understanding how you could switch between using NHS Online and being seen in person and in knowing that you won't lose your place in a waiting list if you transfer to NHS Online. When asked 'How important the following features were in using an Online Trust?', knowing that being transferred to the online trust means you will not lose your place in the waiting list and understanding how to switch between the NHS Online Trust were rated as most important by respondents:

Importance of following features re an Online NHS Trust (n~133-135)



Respondents left a diverse range of comments, some were positive and others voiced concerns that included cyber security, and concerns for those who are digitally excluded

When asked do you have any further comments re the NHS Online Trust, we received 87 comments. 19 of these were positive comments about how the technological shift to an Online Trust could be beneficial for patients. For example:

"I feel that the Online trust is a good way to go and hopefully will improve services over time"

"The introduction of technology so that everything is known in the same place will be a vast improvement on the position as it is at present"

"I think it is a good idea for people like me who are autistic (..) as it is more accessible and less stressful"

"Online is more flexible due to caring responsibilities - I sometimes have to cancel my appointments if my children need me".

The second area most commented on (18 comments) concerned problems associated with technology, i.e. security and systems communicating with each other

"It MUST be able to talk to other systems used by the NHS/GPs. Confidentiality and Data protection is high priority too".

"I do worry about receiving inaccurate information and the security of my data".

"I would like to know be given absolute certainty that patient data is secure and won't be used for any purpose other than providing individual healthcare to the patients who opt in".

12 respondents voiced concerns re accessing an Online NHS Trust

"It's not something that I as an OAP welcome. It is very difficult for older people to get used to, particularly those who are not tech savvy".

"There are a lot of people that do not have the equipment to do all this online service also have medical issues that would make it very hard to use this service".

"I am inept and incompetent using technology. It scares me"

In summary, knowledge about the creation of NHS Online is low in Brighton and Hove. Our findings show a divided response to the new trust, with some welcoming its creation and the possibility of online appointments. For others it raises several concerns including digital security and access for those who struggle with technology.

Tell us your experience

We always want to hear more about people's experiences of health and care services.

Share your story with your local Healthwatch:

Healthwatch Brighton & Hove

info@healthwatchbrightonandhove.co.uk or 01273 234 040