# One in Two Under-35s Now Find Private Healthcare Appealing as a Younger, Insured Patient Reshapes Demand

**Tuesday 16 June, 2026**

**New survey findings and record private medical insurance data point to a generational shift in who is going private in the UK, with significant implications for how clinics attract patients.**

The private healthcare patient is getting younger. New research from not-for-profit provider Benenden Health has found that 51 percent of 18 to 34-year-olds now find private health cover appealing, and half say they would consider the private sector if NHS waiting times were long. Almost a third of younger adults, 32 percent, said they would prefer to use the private sector for their health needs, more than double the 14 percent recorded among the over-55s.

This marks a clear break from the traditional view of the private patient as older, affluent and seeking elective surgery. For a growing number of younger adults, the appeal of going private is not about operations. It is about access and the certainty of being seen quickly.

The shift is backed by record insurance figures. The Association of British Insurers reported that 6.5 million people were covered by health insurance in 2024, up 4 percent on the previous year, with 4.8 million of those covered through workplace policies. That figure represents a second consecutive record in more than 30 years of data collection. Health insurers processed a record 4 billion pounds in private medical insurance claims that year, up 13 percent.

Activity across the sector continued to rise into 2025. Healthcode, the UK clearing organisation for private medical invoices, processed 11.8 million invoices last year, generating 7.5 billion pounds in revenue for the sector.

The composition of demand is also changing. The Private Healthcare Information Network reported 242,500 admissions in the first quarter of 2026, the second-highest quarterly total on record. Within that total, insured admissions rose while self-pay admissions fell by 6 percent, the first significant drop in self-pay activity in years. The decline coincided with NHS England admissions reaching their highest level since 2019, easing some of the pressure that had pushed patients to fund one-off procedures themselves.

For private clinics, the message is that growth is increasingly being driven by insured patients rather than self-funders, and by a younger audience that finds and judges providers online before making contact.

Stephen Tasker, founder of MediWorks Digital, said: "The private patient is getting younger, and the reason is not surgery, it is access. This is a generation that expects to be seen quickly, and when the NHS cannot offer that, they look elsewhere. For clinics, that changes who you are marketing to and how those patients find you."

He added: "Younger patients research before they book. They check reviews, compare pricing pages and form a view of a clinic from its website long before they pick up the phone. Practices that treat their online presence as an afterthought are quietly losing patients to competitors who do not."

The underlying pressure on NHS access remains. The waiting list for elective treatment in England stood at around 7.1 million in spring 2026, far above the pre-pandemic level of roughly 4.4 million, and the constitutional standard of treating 92 per cent of patients within 18 weeks has not been met since 2016.

MediWorks Digital works with private medical clinics across specialities, including cardiology, ophthalmology, audiology and aesthetics, helping them become visible to patients searching for care and convert that demand into enquiries.

## About MediWorks Digital

MediWorks Digital is a UK healthcare-focused digital marketing agency specialising in SEO and PPC for private medical clinics. Operating since 2020, the agency helps clinics and medical professionals attract more patients through search and paid media. The company has generated more than 200,000 patient enquiries and over 1.5 million patient views for its clients.

### Media:

### Related Sectors:

Health ::

### Related Keywords:

Private Healthcare And Gen Z ::

### Scan Me:

## Media contact

MediWorks Digital
Email: hello@mediworksdigital.co.uk
Office 125, Unit 5, 399 to 405 Oxford Street, Mayfair, London W1C 2BU
mediworksdigital.co.uk

## Company Contact:

**MediWorks Digital**

E. stephen@mediworksdigital.co.uk
W. https://mediworksdigital.co.uk

View Online

**Additional Assets:**

**Newsroom:** Visit our Newsroom for all the latest stories:
**https://www.mediworksdigital.pressat.co.uk**