Service Provider Special Interest Panel

Session Summary
November 2023

Background

The Service Provider Special Interest Panel met Tuesday, 14 November 2023 for discussion to inform the WA Primary Health Alliance (WAPHA) Digital Health Strategy.

Participants represented a range of services across metropolitan and regional locations. Digital Health is increasingly, a core resource for health care providers and consumers.

Digital health is fundamental to the provision of multidisciplinary, team based care. It is one of the seven key priorities for Primary Health Networks set by the Australian Government and is one of four components of the Strengthening Medicare Taskforce Report.

Guided by the Royal Commission into Aged Care, the use of digital health tools including telehealth/virtual care and My Health Record is rapidly rising in residential aged care homes.

Digital health tools enabled continuity of care for many health service providers. throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. This included service providers delivering remote consultations via telehealth/virtual and electronic prescribing, My Health Record, secure messaging, and other digital health tools in general practice.

Many service models initially set up as temporary measures are now regular practice and continue to be refined and expanded.

WAPHA's Strategic Plan 2023-2026 commits WAPHA to lead the delivery and support of secure digitally enabled health care with partners locally and nationally.

WAPHA's Digital Health Strategy 2024-2026 will provide the vision and high-level road map of activities designed to meet these commitments and leverage the power of digital health to shape, strengthen and sustain primary healthcare in WA and support an environment where:

- consumers are equipped to take an active role in managing their health
- communication and information sharing is secure and timely
- clinicians have access to key clinical information when and where required
- population data unique needs of each community are understood
- the primary care workforce is supported to use digital health tools.

Questions posed to the panel

Where have digital health technologies been successfully integrated into your service and what were the key reasons for this success?

- Improvements to digital health enablement during and following COVID.
- Telehealth is an amazing enabler to assist in connecting with clients.
- Repurposing office space within provider centres to create hubs, repurposing a consulting room to enable a private space for client digital consultation – offering digital services/telehealth for clients attending offices.
- The success of client satisfaction and utilisation of new digital modes has been pleasing for services. Providers are ensuring the digital equipment is working, sanitised following COVID protocols and connected for the client to use.
- Mindfulness of client technological skills ensures staff confirm on a first appointment what support is needed.

"Creating hubs during COVID-19 within our headspace centres has been sustained, and young people can come into our metro and regional centres, they can access telehealth. People often request face-to-face consultations in the first instance and then are happy to move to telehealth following." - Panel comment

- We have recently been using HealthLink to communicate with private GP practices. We use MMX software enabling direct messaging with other services in the Kimberley, however using HealthLink has enabled us to include private GP practices as part of our secure messaging. This has been a win for us.
- Streamlining of booking appointments and user instructions for services.
- Enhancing digital enablement and embracing digital services within our teams.
- The ability to have SMS messages to patients to assist in communication.
- Providers reported approximately 20 per cent of clients opt for telehealth appointments rather than face to face, demonstrating the uptake and ongoing need for choice in service provision options for clients.

Where do you see opportunities for digital health to provide value in the short-term (one to two years) and beyond (three to four years) ?

- Sharing satellite locations - if we could share sites in regional areas, rather than duplicating the services, co-locating, and sharing services would be a huge opportunity.
- Resolving challenges with wanting to offer more digital hubs and having the resources to host the equipment.
- Improving the capability of digital networks to create capacity for more video calls rather than phone calls.
- Streamlining the number of platforms clients are required to use, for example; teams, zoom, google mate etc.
- Utilising passwords or QR codes to access telehealth appointments to support confidentiality.

- We engage several visiting specialists who have various platforms, a way to easily enable/integrate platforms is an opportunity for the future.
- Ensuring our health professionals and staff are supported along the digital journey.
- Ensuring a skilled clinician such as nursing staff is with the client at their location when having a specialist consultation.
- Recognising investment requirements for digital enhancements.
- Awareness of accessibility of increased and enhanced digital technology that may be more accessible to some people than others. For example; some people may have a phone but not regular internet access or an email address.

"Investigating in shared technology resources and hub spaces via shared satellite locations to prevent duplication of services, maximum use of spaces, being able to direct someone to the service no matter what [and] utilising space within local agencies [is an emerging opportunity]." - Panel comments

"We currently write to the GP after an initial consultation session, or referral, with our service intervention plan at the end of the program, with conclusions and outcomes, and this process is currently via fax. Opportunities to offer a more digital based mechanism to do that would be good."

"The very best thing we could do is to continue to market the value of digital health where we have people rurally, regionally and in remote locations."

"The biggest thing we could do for digital health is interoperability and system integration." - Panel comments

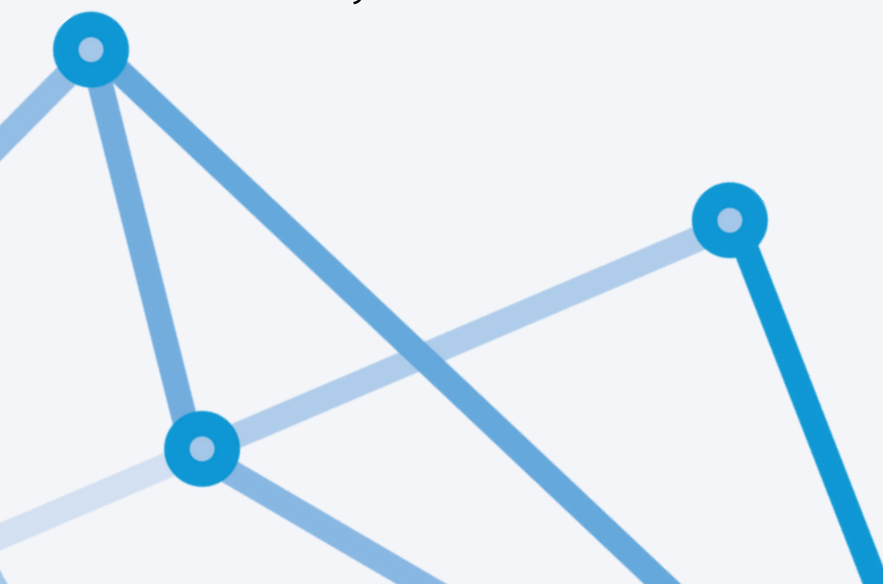## What are the key risks to realising these opportunities?

- When using a hub approach, it is important to recognise the risk regarding privacy and confidentiality in the site/room within a service location.
- Ensuring equipment is working when clients arrive, that it is clean, connected, and accessible for the client to use.

- Ensuring staff are available to support clients who may not be as technologically savvy, and are able to walk through the technology if needed.
- Ability to realise the costs associated with enhanced digital enablement.
- Data breach is high on our list of risk, for many multiple reasons, including between clinicians, providers, and clients.
- The digital environment and client safety. Ensuring standards for regular client/patient engagement is maintained in a digital environment [is critical].

"Whatever the platform or mode of service, be it face to face or online, we need to ensure the client feels connected to the service and support."

"One of the things we are doing at 360 Health is providing safe suicide prevention training to all staff, irrespective of the role, to ensure our organisation has a common language when we speak to each other and with clients."- Panel comments

- The risk of engaging a person in their own home and where we place staff on a video call can have implications for confidentiality. People may be in the background that are not easily seen.

What are the key risks to realising these opportunities (cont)?

- Training staff on awareness of cyber security and client security within online consultations.
- Risk of connectivity especially in remote areas when appointments are booked and there's a connectivity outage. which impact on clients and staff. What happens for client safety when we cannot contact them?
- There is a risk with telehealth services and clients being seen for mental health support to ensure the environment the service is provided in, is a safe place, and that the client can be followed up.

What are the key digital platforms required to realise the value?

- Having skilled technical staff to manage the platform whatever system is being used is important.
- Understanding how AI will impact and affect our platforms and how we work.
- An enterprise version of Microsoft.
- Recognising the number of new technologies and the availability of platforms.

"One of the big digital events is AI which is wonderful. It is fantastic in clinical decision support, however in terms of translating patient conversations it is not so good. Confidentiality and patient consent are big factors that need to be considered here."

"The missing aspect here is legislation and legislative control, which seems to be behind implementation of new technologies."

"I would like to acknowledge WAPHA with the support provided to NGOs when COVID-19 hit, offering support and funding to allow us to get to the stage where we could continue services to our clients." - Panel comments

Overall Themes

Clients initially prefer face-to-face consultation however are very supportive of telehealth consultations following the initial appointment.

Ensuring safe spaces to provide telehealth or digital platforms for client engagement, as well as confidential environments is paramount.

Data breach, and confidence in the use and provision of digital services is important for robust service provision.

WA Primary Health Alliance

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