

SYDNEY NORTH
HEALTH NETWORK

ALLIED HEALTH ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY 2021



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INTRODUCTION

Background

Sydney North Health Network (SNHN) is dedicated to improving and better coordinating health care across the local health system for the people of Sydney's North. With a focus on people who are at risk of poor health outcomes, SNHN is committed to building an integrated health system that allows our community to access the right care, in the right place, at the right time.¹

The SNHN vision, **Achieving together – better health, better care**, reflects our commitment to adopting a partnership approach with both the community and healthcare professionals. Our focus is on²:

- Services delivered where and how people want them.
- People being able to find what they need from local healthcare services.
- People understanding and building on fundamental habits for best health and wellbeing.
- Communities supporting each other.

To achieve this vision SNHN has identified five strategic priority areas (Figure 1) that inform the direction and delivery of all SNHN programs of work including:

- Community Activation
- System Transformation
- Commissioning
- Member and Provider Support
- An Exceptional Organisation

The Quadruple Aim

The work of SNHN is further guided by the principles of the quadruple aim which provides a framework for optimising health system performance through (see Figure 2)³:

- Improving population health outcomes
- Enhancing patient experience
- Improving provider experience
- Sustainable care delivery cost

Through utilising the quadruple aim⁴ SNHN aims to support the delivery of effective integrated primary care that improves health outcomes for the local community.

FIGURE 2. SNHN AND THE QUADRUPLE AIM

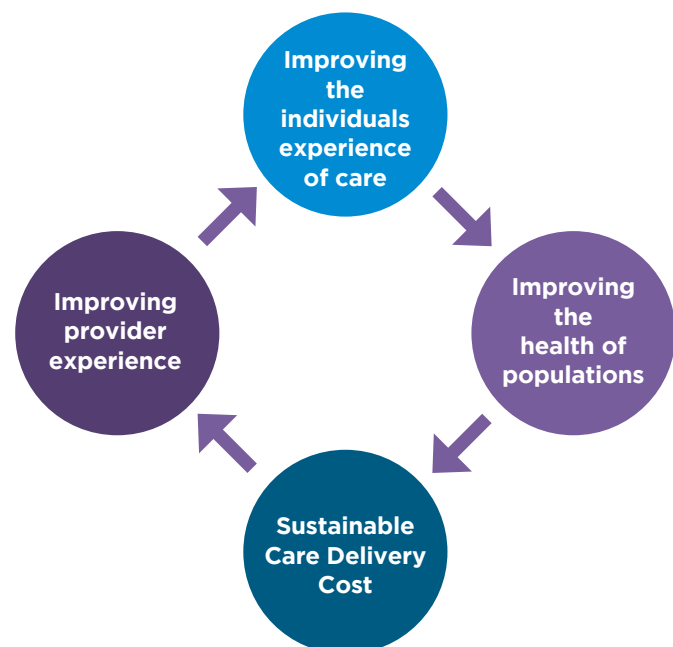


FIGURE 1: SNHN STRATEGIC PLAN 2018-2023

GOALS	ROLES	STRATEGIES
A. Community Activation 	Support our community to self-determine and help itself	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grow health literacy to enable self-determination • Enable health advocacy on highest-impact determinants of health • Facilitate communities to mutually support one another
B. System Transformation 	Catalyse change by enabling new approaches to health and healthcare	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop new partner and business initiatives • Redesign services to heighten Quadruple Aim • Build digital system enablers
C. Commissioning 	Attract and distribute resources to provide services that people need most	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carry out targeted health planning • Leverage service improvements through commissioned services
D. Member & Provider Support 	Build capacity for all providers of primary healthcare to adopt new tools, deal with disruption and improve outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide core practice support for quality improvement • Develop future change and skills capacity
E. An Exceptional Organisation 	Develop excellence in our operations, our people and our visibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate our purpose and achievements powerfully • Grow the capabilities and culture of our people • Develop financial and information systems that support ongoing investment and growth.

Regional collaborative commissioning

A critical role of SNHN is to lead regional health system commissioning in the Sydney's North to drive service improvement and achieve health system transformation. Partnerships and engagement are core to the SNHN commissioning process with the inclusion of all local health professions, including allied health, integral to understanding local need, to ensure the provision of the right services, in the right place, at the right time. SNHN is guided by the Primary Healthcare Integrated Commissioning Approach (see Figure 3) providing a framework for service planning, designing and negotiating across the health sector.

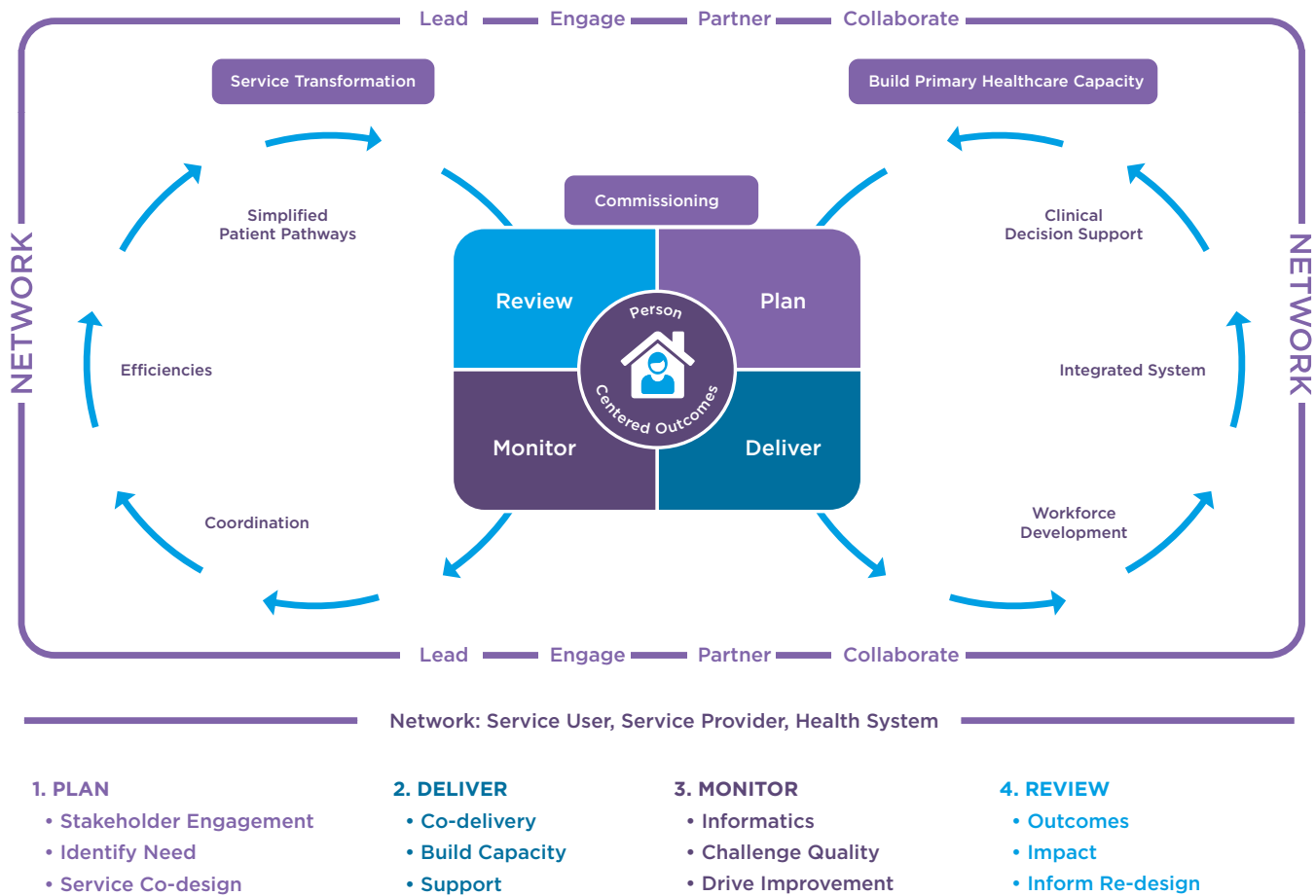
Engaging with allied health

Allied health professionals provide a broad range of services across the aged care, mental health, disability and health sectors to improve the health and wellbeing of people and communities. Therefore, they are an important partner in achieving SNHN's vision.

With over 2,000 allied health professionals in the SNHN region, this Allied Health Engagement Strategy reflects recognition of their important role in driving, supporting, and strengthening primary health care in the region. However, the unique knowledge and skills brought by individual disciplines to health care is important to recognise, with the use of the term 'allied health' not suggesting uniformity.

Broad consultation with allied health professionals in the region and peak bodies was undertaken in developing this strategy. Through this process it was identified that engagement needed to first focus on embedding mechanisms for routine engagement with allied health

FIGURE 3: SNHN PRIMARY HEALTHCARE INTEGRATED COMMISSIONING APPROACH



and their inclusion in decision-making processes. This would then provide the platform for ongoing engagement, with support for digital connectivity and collaboration to improve the health outcomes of people across the lifespan including children through to the older population to provide a consultative approach to providing appropriate services and being identified as important areas for building these relationships. Case studies that exemplify existing activities being led by SNHN have been included with this strategy to reflect some of the opportunities for targeting allied health engagement in these areas.

The Strategy is also underpinned by the SNHN **Stakeholder Engagement Framework**, which provides the principles, approach and methods to guide stakeholder engagement. Importantly, the Framework recognises that ‘engagement can take many forms with a range of methods and no one method fitting all. It’s important to be clear on the purpose of engagement and what you are hoping to achieve’⁵. Further, the Framework uses the IAP2 Public Participation Spectrum⁶ to inform the overall approach to engagement (see Table 1). This Strategy should be read in conjunction with the SNHN Stakeholder Engagement Framework.

TABLE 1. SNHN STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT APPROACH
(ADAPTED FROM IAP2 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION SPECTRUM)

Overarching approach	Inform →	Consult →	Involve →	Collaborate →	Empower →
	To provide members of our community with information to assist them to better understand their health and opportunities	To receive feedback on options and decisions	To work directly with stakeholders to ensure concerns, desires and expectations are understood and considered	To partner with stakeholders in decision making including development of alternatives and identification of the preferred solution	To place final decision making in the hands of the stakeholder

OVERVIEW

Goal: A trusted steward for allied health in primary care in the SNHN region

Priority areas:

1. Engaging allied health in decision-making
2. Building local relationships
3. Supporting digital connectivity
4. Facilitating collaboration

01

Engaging allied health in decision-making

- Embed allied health in SNHN governance structures and decision-making processes
- Recognise the expertise of allied health in understanding the needs of our community and setting priorities
- Create mechanisms for allied health to provide input and collaborate on commissioning decisions and processes where their knowledge and skills add value

02

Building local relationships

- Build local allied health professional awareness and trust in SNHN and its role in the region
- Strengthen local allied health relationships with SNHN, with each other, and with the broader health sector
- Build academic collaboration to support allied health engagement with education and research initiatives

03

Supporting digital connectivity

- Promote SNHN as a local digital health knowledge broker and support provider for allied health
- Recognise the common needs of allied health in digital connectivity to build relationships with the local allied health community
- Involve allied health in health system transformation initiatives designed to build digital system enablers

04

Facilitating collaboration

- Facilitate opportunities for collaboration between allied health professionals, general practice and the broader health system within the Sydney North region
- Develop and embed mechanisms to strengthen local referral pathways
- Include allied health professionals, with consumers and carers, in program co-design and development processes



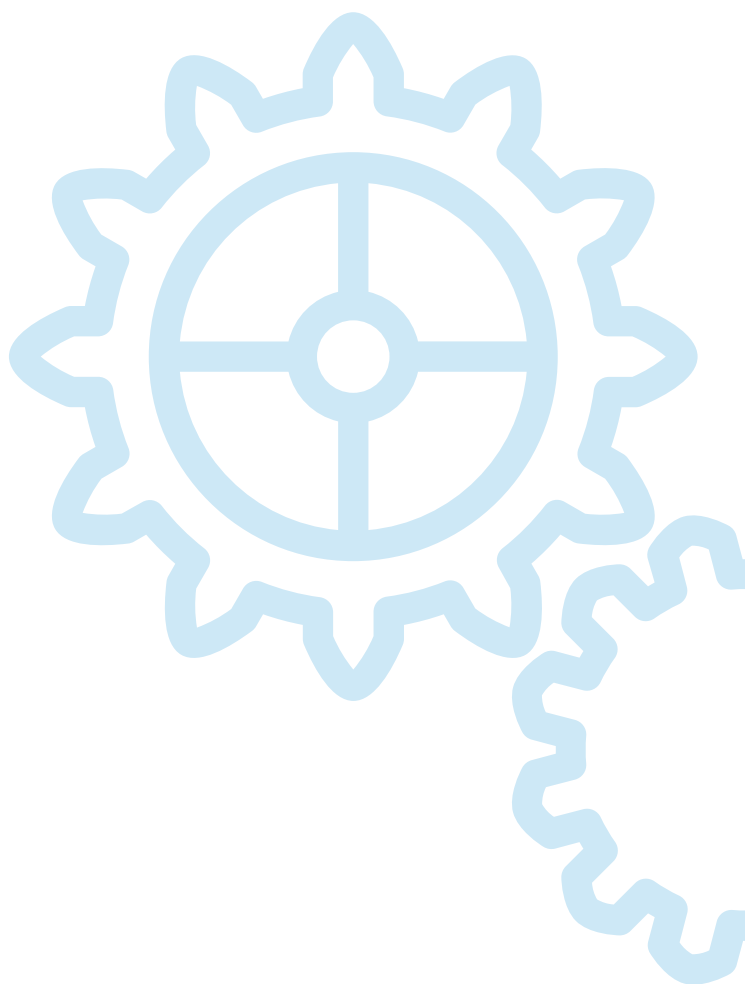
1. ENGAGING ALLIED HEALTH IN DECISION-MAKING

The effectiveness of an organisation to achieve its objectives is strongly linked to its governing body or Board, which carries overall responsibility for business and compliance responsibility.⁷ This responsibility includes implementing, maintaining and (as necessary) refining a system of good governance appropriate for the organisation, and has been defined as 'The system by which entities are directed and controlled. It is concerned with structure and processes for decision making, accountability, control, and behaviour at the top of an entity. Governance influences how an organisation's objectives are set and achieved, how risk is monitored and addressed and how performance is optimised'⁸. While literature on not-for-profit literature has focused primarily on Boards, there is growing evidence that this is an overly narrow conceptualisation, and that further attention is needed to the more complex, multilevel, and multifaceted governance structures and processes.⁹ This also extends to inter-organisational partnerships, collaborations, and alliances

For SNHN to fulfill its vision of ***Achieving together – better health, better care***, and uphold the principles of the Quadruple Aim our governance and decision-making processes actively seek to reflect our commitment to a networked healthcare approach through the inclusion of the insights and ideas from the diversity of primary care professions working within the region.

SNHN has extensive experience engaging with General Practice, with established processes and mechanisms that allow for GP involvement in organisational decision making (e.g., Board and Clinical Council positions). We are committed to strengthening and expanding these networks to develop a more integrated and system focused approach to governance with the inclusion of mechanisms to support allied health involvement in decision making.

Greater allied health engagement in our governance and decision-making will enable us to better understand the needs of our community, enhancing our value proposition and the support we provide to health consumers, health professionals, health services, the local community, and the health system. Strategies and actions to achieve this are outlined below.



STRATEGIES	SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE...	ACTIONS	TIMEFRAME
Embed allied health in SNHN governance structures and decision-making processes	E. An Exceptional Organisation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allied health professionals are formally recognised, included, and engaged in SNHN governance and decision-making processes Allied health membership has increased Increased partnerships and joint participation in programs and activities Increased use and contribution to SNHN HealthPathways 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> That SNHN recognises the unique knowledge and skills brought by individual disciplines, and as a complimentary sector to providing health care The SNHN constitution is amended to include a clause requiring two board positions be representative of the allied health professional community Regular reporting is provided to the board on the level of allied health engagement with SNHN to raise the profile of allied health within SNHN strategic decision making An increase in SNHN allied health membership is actively targeted to expand allied health participation in SNHN governance and election processes A review is undertaken of the SNHN clinical council and committee structures to ensure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sufficient and appropriate allied health representation Clinical collaboration is based around the needs of patients and communities Mechanisms facilitate shared learning and break down health professional silos 	Short Medium Medium Short Short
Recognise the expertise of allied health in understanding the needs of our community and setting priorities	B. System Transformation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allied health contribution to the SNHN needs assessment, priority setting, and targeted health planning is embedded in and recognised by the primary healthcare community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mechanisms for incorporating allied health professional's understanding of community needs into the SNHN local needs assessment are developed An understanding of the data available to inform allied health service provision and need in the SNHN region is gained through working with allied health peak bodies and professionals Professional development of SNHN staff incorporates increasing understanding of the roles of different allied health professions 	Short Medium Short
Create mechanisms for allied health to provide input and collaborate on commissioning decisions and processes where their knowledge and skills add value	C. Commissioning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allied health is involved in SNHN commissioning decision making processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mechanisms for incorporating allied health feedback at all stages (plan, deliver, monitor, review) of the SNHN Primary Healthcare Integrated Commissioning Framework are developed 	Short



2. BUILDING LOCAL RELATIONSHIPS

Health care is inherently interdependent and complex. With an aging population and increasing prevalence of multimorbidity in Australia the need for person-centred integrated primary care is critical. This need has been promoted for decades, yet the system is still facing challenges in operationalising such models.¹⁰

Local relationships are an essential component for optimising the delivery of integrated health care in line with the principles of the Quadruple Aim, as they facilitate the sharing of unique local knowledge and experience and build inter-disciplinary and inter-professional trust. The establishment of PHNs and their focus on planning for, supporting and funding primary health services at the regional level recognised the importance of local relationships for local integration. The value of local relationships is increasingly being recognised, as has been demonstrated in the agreement between the Commonwealth, state and territory governments, which identifies joint planning and funding at a local level as a strategic priority in reform of our health system.¹¹

SNHN has demonstrated experience in the development and optimisation of local relationships. In response to COVID-19, we were able to rapidly and effectively establish new, and call on existing, local relationships to create a network of 60 community organisations. This network was then supported to build relationships with local MPs, government, and stakeholders to provide enhanced local community information and provider support.

Our COVID-19 response highlights the vast skill set and existing relationships that provide the capability to connect and engage with allied health at the local level. This will help grow awareness and trust of SNHN and our role in the community, and to enable the creation of productive interprofessional and cross sector local professional networks of practice, research, and education.

Local relationships that include allied health are crucial for the delivery of integrated, team-based, person-centred care that improves value and outcomes, enhances the individual's experience, and improves provider engagement at the local level. Strategies and actions to achieve this are outlined below.



STRATEGIES	SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE...	ACTIONS	TIMEFRAME
Build local allied health professional awareness and trust in SNHN and its role in the region	B. System Transformation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Sydney North allied health professional community is aware of SNHN and are regularly engaging with their programs of work through activities facilitated by peak bodies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborative partnerships and formal, regular communication mechanisms with allied health peak bodies are established SNHN information is regularly communicated to allied health professionals within the Sydney North region through peak body communication mechanisms Information on SNHN programs and supports available to local allied health professions is easily accessible and clearly communicated to local allied health professionals (e.g., information is easily accessible on SNHN website) 	Short Short Short
Strengthen local allied health relationships with SNHN, with each other, and with the broader health sector	A. Community Activation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allied health professionals are regularly attending and engaging in SNHN led events and programs, and are increasingly accessing SNHN resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allied health professionals are informed of, and provided with regular opportunities to interact and engage with SNHN, each other, and the local health sector (e.g., seminars, events) Local allied health providers are made aware of the opportunities to build local relationship and access support provided through becoming a SNHN member 	Medium Medium
	D. Member & Provider Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allied health professionals are regularly participating in SNHN community activation initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allied health professionals are provided opportunities to participate in community activation initiatives targeting health literacy, high impact determinants of health and community empowerment 	Short
Build academic collaboration to support allied health engagement with education and research initiatives	B. System Transformation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The SNHN allied health community are regularly collaborating with, and influencing, education and research institutions on issues of shared interest through relationships facilitated by SNHN 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Opportunities are enhanced for local allied health professionals to participate in clinical placement programs, engage in academic research, and influence local research agendas, through SNHN facilitated partnerships with academic institutions Allied health professionals are supported to influence and contribute to relevant translational research through SNHN-facilitated collaborative relationships with local translation and research entities (e.g., Sydney Health Partners) The SNHN allied health community are supported to align initiatives with local research and education priorities and opportunities (e.g., NSLHD Precinct Plan and Functional Wellbeing Centre) 	Medium/Long Medium/Long Medium/Long



3. SUPPORTING DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY

The Australian Institute of Digital Health defines digital health as 'health and healthcare in the context of digital societies (the people, organisations and things engaged in persistent digital interactions)'.¹² Digital Health:¹³

- harvests data, information, and knowledge in real time from all societal activities, not just interactions with the health system and/or data traditionally regarded as 'health' data.
- uses sophisticated analytics to distil knowledge from these data.
- intervenes in the widest possible range of societal and economic activities and technologies to encourage and generate better health and better value for health investments.
- and is citizen centric, decentralised and requires health service providers to participate, not control.

Better use of data and technology is helping people live healthier lives, with greater control and better access to important health information. Digital health is about connecting people to better healthcare and Australia to a healthier future.¹⁴

Digital health solutions present an opportunity to revolutionise how health care is delivered, enabling the creation of a more sustainable and integrated health system that is delivering high quality, safe and effective person-centred care, improving the individual and provider experience, promoting system value, and enhancing outcomes for Australians.^{15,16,17}

In recognition of the growing importance of digital health, the Australian Digital Health Agency (the Agency) has established the National Digital Health Strategy supported by a Framework for Action.¹⁸ In addition, a National Digital Health Workforce and Education Roadmap was released in 2020 which sets out a path for health workforce digital enablement and ongoing skills development.¹⁹

SNHN has a remit to improve the coordination of care at the local level which will increasingly require the provision of digital connectivity and enablement support.²⁰ Experience as part of the GP, aged care, and specialist digital capability rollouts, initiated by the Australian Digital Health Agency, ensures we are well positioned to provide local leadership, connection and support for allied health digital enablement. Strategies and actions to achieve this are outlined below.

STRATEGIES	SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE...	ACTIONS	TIMEFRAME
Promote SNHN as a local digital health knowledge broker and support provider for allied health	B. System Transformation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SNHN is recognised by the Australian Digital Health Agency and the local allied health community as a digital health support provider with whom they regularly engage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SNHN's relationship with the Australian Digital Health Agency is strengthened through continued participation in Agency initiatives, including promoting the region for test bed opportunities for allied health professions The local Sydney North allied health community is notified of, and are participating in, SNHN digital support programs and initiatives that are relevant to their discipline Support provided by SNHN reflects the diverse needs and levels of digital maturity within the various allied health professions 	Medium Medium Medium
Recognise the common needs of allied health in digital connectivity to build relationships with the local allied health community	D. Member & Provider Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SNHN is regularly engaging with local allied health professionals on issues of digital health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnerships are established with peak bodies that enable SNHN to better understand the diverse digital needs of the various allied health professions Regular information and engagement opportunities are made available to local allied health professions on digital health issues and areas of common need 	Medium Medium
Involve allied health in health system transformation initiatives designed to build digital system enablers	B. System Transformation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allied health input into strategies designed to build digital system enablers is acknowledged, integrated, and visibly enhances the system 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Communication processes are established that enable SNHN and local allied health professionals to collaborate to enhance interoperability and build digital health system enablers within the local health system 	Short/Medium

CASE STUDY 1:

Telehealth enablement in response to COVID-19²¹

BACKGROUND

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 temporary MBS telehealth items were made available to help reduce the risk of community transmission of the virus and provide protection for patients and healthcare providers. These temporary MBS telehealth items were made available to GPs, medical practitioners, specialists, consultant physicians, nurse practitioners, participating midwives, allied health providers and dental practitioners in the practice of oral and maxillofacial surgery. A service could only be provided by telehealth where it is safe and clinically appropriate to do so.

HEALTHDIRECT VIDEO CALL PILOT

In response to enhanced digital telehealth needs of the local Sydney North healthcare community Sydney North Health Network (SNHN) became involved in the roll out and promotion of the Australian Government funded telehealth platform *healthdirect* Video Call.

A special funding agreement from the Australian Department of Health enabled the *healthdirect* service to be provided without cost to General Practices, Aboriginal Medical Services (AMS) and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations (ACCHOs). Health professionals who worked in aged care, allied health, Indigenous health, maternity health, and mental health services were eligible to use *healthdirect* Video Call under the Australian Department of Health pilot program and were therefore entitled to the support provided by SNHN.

SNHN ACTION

SNHN supported the registration, set up and use of the *healthdirect* platform within the Sydney North region for 101 clinics helping to connect vulnerable people within the community to the care they needed in a safe and convenient way. Healthcare services involved in the program received training and resources to support their use and adoption of telehealth. Amongst those clinics, 31 were allied health services.

OPPORTUNITY

As SNHN develops its strategy for supporting digital health in the region, engagement will ensure that the diverse needs of allied health professionals are identified and addressed through the programs developed, and that allied health professionals are aware of and engage with the support available.

4. FACILITATING COLLABORATION



The health sector landscape is changing with rising chronic disease, an aging population, emerging technologies and changing community expectations resulting in increased demand for services.²² Australia's health system is currently based around episodic instances of illness and disease, resulting in a siloed healthcare environment that challenges the provision of holistic patient-centred care.

Greater collaboration across and between healthcare disciplines is needed to improve the provision of multi-disciplinary integrated care that is cost effective, improves population health outcomes, enhances the individual's experience, and improves provider experience.²³

SNHN has the capacity to drive collaborative change through the provision of tools and resources that facilitate knowledge sharing and cooperation, enhancing the capacity of the workforce to adapt to meet the needs of local community and service

providers. We can bring the workforce together to share experiences, learn from each other and work together to ensure pathways of referral meet local need for both community and providers. Facilitating greater collaboration across and between professions, such as between allied health and general practice, will better ensure the local provision of skills and expertise that match the required roles and responsibilities. Through building capacity and enhancing capability, collaboration can also support a reduction in health professional and provider burnout.²⁴

Collaboration will support delivery of the Quadruple Aim strengthening the capacity and capability of local professionals and providers to enhance value and improve health outcomes within the local community. Strategies and actions to achieve this are outlined below.

Include allied health professionals, with consumers and carers, in program co-design and development processes

B. System Transformation

- Allied health professionals are routinely included, with consumers and carers, in decision-making processes to guide best practice patient care program co-design, and development processes
- Allied health professionals significantly contribute to SNHN programs

- Processes are established that enable allied health professionals to participate with consumers and carers in the co-design and co-development of best practice patient care and health promoting programs, where their expertise adds value

Medium

CASE STUDY 2:

Northern Sydney Frailty Initiative²⁵

BACKGROUND

Since 2018 SNHN has been working in collaboration with Northern Sydney Local Health District to design pathways of care for frail and elderly people living in the community. The aim of the project is to optimise the wellness and longevity of older people in Northern Sydney. The project has been implemented in a hospital inpatient setting, community health locations and general practice and has involved a variety of health professionals, including allied health. To support this initiative Northern Sydney has received funding from the NSW Ministry of Health to develop collaborative commissioning locally.

COLLABORATIVE COMMISSIONING

The objective of collaborative commissioning is to remove the financial, structural, and cultural barriers that prevent the health system from working as one. It involves extensive consultation and engagement with diverse stakeholder groups (e.g., consumers, allied health professionals, general practice, community services and acute care organisations).

Collaborative commissioning within the Northern Sydney Frailty Initiative enables the local health system and relevant services to be designed around the needs of Sydney North's frail and elderly residents. The aim is for local elderly residents to experience the delivery of care supports and services from a group of people acting as one team, and from organisations behaving as one system.

SNHN ACTIONS

Since 2018, actions undertaken by Sydney North Health Network (SNHN) in partnership with the North Sydney Local Health District (NSLHD) have included:

- Introduction, promotion (and evaluation) of frailty screening for older people to support early identification by healthcare providers.
- Development of pathways to appropriate evidence-based management.
- Development of a frailty app in partnership with the Pen CS company.
- Education events, newsletter articles, workshops and a multidisciplinary hospital inpatient screening pilot was conducted, with frailty screening embedded in the hospital's electronic medical record to target specific admitted patient cohorts.

OPPORTUNITY

The health outcomes of older people can benefit from a diverse range of allied health services. Improved engagement with allied health professions will ensure programs and initiatives incorporate their contributions in care pathways.

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