

DIGITAL HEALTH STRATEGIC PLAN 2026-2030

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Executive Summary

Digital health has the power to transform primary care by addressing long-standing challenges such as access, rising system costs, and the increasing burden of chronic disease. By enabling better use of digital technologies and health data, individuals gain timely access to their health information, improving health literacy, care quality, and system efficiency.

The CESPHE Digital Health Strategic Plan 2026–2030 outlines our vision for a digitally connected and person-centred primary healthcare system. It supports the broader CESPHE Strategic Plan 2025–2027 and is grounded in the Quintuple Aim—improving patient experience, advancing population health, reducing per capita cost, enhancing provider experience, and improving equity. The CESPHE Digital Health Strategic Plan 2026–2030 aims to systematise the use of digital health in primary care and improve patient care. Our vision for digital health is reflected in our four strategic priorities:

- **Digitally Enabling the Primary Care Workforce**

The primary care workforce is the foundation of a connected and digitally mature primary care system. Digital health adoption remains uneven across the sector with many small practices and allied health slower to adopt digital solutions. CESPHE will lead efforts to build digital capability, confidence, and literacy through accessible education, practical support, and targeted investment.

We will deliver tailored training on secure messaging, My Health Record, AI-assisted tools, and business improvement software. Newly graduated professionals, allied health, small practices, GP registrars, and aged care visiting GPs will be a focus. Digital maturity assessments will guide our support model. Digital tools should reduce clinician burden, not add to it—and we'll work to ensure they do.

- **Data-Driven Primary Care**

High-quality data is essential for safe, sustainable, and accountable care. We will support general practices and primary care providers to use data not only for compliance and reporting, but to drive improvement, enable planning, and secure funding.

We will support access to linked datasets across primary care, local health districts, and national systems, including the NSW Single Patient Digital Record. Practices will be supported to use MBS-level data to improve financial performance, as well as clinical quality indicators. Engagement with vendors and peak bodies will help shift the system toward integrated, analytics-ready platforms. Our goal is to make data practical and usable for every level of a practice team.

- **Collaborative Care**

Seamless care relies on systems that talk to each other. We will champion interoperable clinical communication across the full continuum of care—from GPs and allied health to hospitals, aged care, and community-based services. In doing this we will support a strong focus on cybersecurity. Virtual care and telehealth solutions will be supported to promote care integration.

Our efforts will support the adoption of secure messaging, eReferrals, and shared care plans that are integrated with clinical software. We'll collaborate with LHDs on statewide platforms and advocate to enable routine health data exchange. We will advocate to ensure patients are included in the design of data-sharing solutions to ensure consent, transparency, and trust are built into local digital health innovations.

- **Person-Centred and Inclusive Care**

Digital health should empower consumers—not widen gaps. We will focus on digital inclusion and work to support practices ensure patients are given the knowledge and tools they need to take an active role in their care. A one-size-fits-all approach will not work in a region as diverse as ours.

We will expand the use of My Health Record, ePrescriptions, and wearable devices by improving consumer awareness, system integration, and health literacy. We will support primary care providers in

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the use of digital entry points like online bookings, telehealth, and triage portals and ensure they are designed to make access easier especially for underserved communities, ensuring they are culturally appropriate, accessible, and useful.

This strategy aligns with the National Digital Health Strategy 2023–2028, which prioritises person-centred, connected, and data-driven care. Our work supports the ADHA's focus on digital infrastructure, health data quality, and shared access to information. We also align with the Commonwealth Digital Health Blueprint 2023–2033, which outlines a future system that is collaborative, trustworthy, and enduring.

By building digital capability in primary care and improving data flow across the health system, CESPHN will help deliver this national vision at the local level.

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Central and Eastern Sydney Primary Health Network

Our vision is healthy and thriving communities and our purpose is enabling high quality and accessible healthcare. We work to achieve this by collaborating with key stakeholders including general practitioners, allied health, nurses, secondary care providers, local health districts and specialty health networks, local communities, and non-government organisations to ensure improved health outcomes for people living and working in the region.

We offer programs and services to strengthen and support general practice and allied health services, including practice management and professional development. Additionally, we collaborate with local health districts and specialty health services to deliver a variety of programs in integrated care.

The CESPHN region boundaries align with those of the South Eastern Sydney Local Health District (SESLHD) and Sydney Local Health District (SLHD).

CESPHN has a resident population of nearly 1.6 million. We have a large non-resident population with nearly 351,000 additional people entering our region daily for work, study or visiting. Our region is characterised by high cultural diversity and population growth with 40.7% of our community born overseas; 46.8% speak a language other than English at home; and 6.3 % do not speak English well or at all. Our region's population is projected to reach more than 1.8 million by 2043, an increase of 15 per cent.

As of June 2025, there were 552 general practices operating within our region and this includes one Aboriginal Medical Service. Of those, over two thirds (69.8%) were accredited or registered for accreditation. In 2024 there were 2,697 general practitioners (GPs) and approximately 175 trainees working in the CESPHN region.

Background and Context

What is Digital Health?

Digital health is the spectrum of technologies in healthcare which connect and empower individuals and communities to manage their health and well-being. Digital health offers healthcare providers a comprehensive overview of patient health through integrated, interoperable, and digitally enabled health care environments. More than just tools, digital health represents a shift in how we promote wellbeing, prevent illness, diagnose and manage conditions, and support population health. It empowers consumers to take a more active role in their health, supports clinicians with timely and connected information, and enables health systems to respond more effectively and efficiently to community needs. At its core, digital health is not about technology for its own sake, but about improving outcomes, reducing fragmentation, and creating a more resilient, accessible, and inclusive healthcare system.

Safety and quality improvement of healthcare delivery is driven by interconnected, interoperable, and real-time accessible data. Use of digital health also brings health system efficiencies, leading to time savings for clinicians, reduced duplication of investigations, and fewer hospital admissions.

Our digital health strategy will work to support the eHealth Strategy for NSW Health 2016-2026, the SLHD Digital Health Strategy 2022-2027 and SESLHD Strategy, Innovation and Digital Health. Our strategy follows the leadership of the Australian Digital Health Agency and eHealth NSW as well as evidence highlighting the benefits of integrating digital health solutions

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Strategic Priorities

Our digital health strategic plan demonstrates CESPHN's commitment to integrating digital health within the local primary care sector and will guide future activities and investments. This strategy responds to key challenges and opportunities in primary care which include rising patient expectations, greater focus on multidisciplinary team based care, practice viability, value based care and quality improvement and use of AI tools that will transform both business processes and interactions between patients and their care providers.

With patients and primary care providers at the centre our strategic priorities are:

- **Digitally enabling the primary care workforce:** through communications, education, and digital health support to embed digital health initiatives into routine primary health care and leverage emerging technologies including AI.
- **Data driven primary care:** with customised analysis, tracking and reporting of data for quality improvement in practices including linkage to state and Commonwealth datasets. This includes data sharing from clinical information systems used by allied health, residential aged care and medical specialists and supporting primary care to access hospital data via the NSW Single Digital Patient Record.
- **Collaborative care:** working together on the consolidation of electronic clinical communications, expanding the use of digital health initiatives and technologies across the primary care, hospital, residential aged care, and NSW Health settings.
- **Person centred and inclusive care:** through a focus on equitable access to care and improving health literacy.

Priority 1: Digitally Enabled Primary Care Workforce: The primary care workforce is the foundation of a connected and digitally mature primary care system.

Digital health adoption remains uneven across the sector, particularly among small practices, older clinicians, and administrative staff. CESPHN will lead efforts to build digital capability, confidence, and literacy through accessible education, practical support, and targeted investment.

We will deliver tailored training on secure messaging, My Health Record, AI-assisted tools, and business improvement software. Newly graduated professionals, allied health, small practices, GP registrars, and aged care visiting GPs will be a focus. Digital maturity assessments will guide our support model while cybersecurity and system interoperability will be embedded into education. Digital tools should reduce clinician burden, not add to it—and we'll work to ensure they do.

Through communications, education, and digital health support we will seek to promote embedded initiatives including business system support into routine primary health care and leveraging emerging technologies including Artificial Intelligence. We will achieve Priority 1 Digitally Enabled Primary Care Workforce by:

- **Delivering tailored training and education:** Digital health adoption varies among different demographics of healthcare professionals. Tailored education is required for health professionals based on current capabilities and structure of the organisation. The roles of administrative staff, practice managers and nurses are essential in educating the wider practice team. We will place a greater focus on newly graduated health professionals, GP registrars, and final year university students. Opportunities exist for Artificial Intelligence to enable easier clinical management of patients and reduce administrative processes.
- **Offering flexible training delivery:** Preferences differ based on demographics, and will include face to face, in-practice support, and webinars. In-person education is essential for networking and knowledge sharing, with cybersecurity training being a top priority.
- **Providing Support for Business Digital Health Tools:** Healthcare professionals require assistance in adopting digital solutions like AI that enhance administrative efficiency, practice management, and business sustainability.
- **Enabling Software Access beyond the practice:** Support is required for general practitioners visiting services such as Residential Aged Care Homes with accessing and entering notes into RACH software.

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Priority 2: Data Driven Primary Care fosters a more efficient, data-driven healthcare system, improving care delivery and resource allocation. High-quality data is essential for safe, sustainable, and accountable care. We will support general practices and primary care providers to use data not only for compliance and reporting, but to drive improvement, enable planning, and secure funding.

We will support access to linked datasets across PHN, LHD, and national systems, including the NSW Single Digital Patient Record. Practices will be supported to use MBS-level data for financial performance, as well as clinical quality indicators. Engagement with vendors and peak bodies will help shift the system toward integrated, analytics-ready platforms. Our focus will be on making data practical and usable for every level of a practice team. We will achieve Priority 2 Data Driven Primary Care by:

- **Data-Driven Quality Improvement:** Integrating quality improvement (QI) into everyday practice processes is crucial. Training of the wider practice team including practice managers in the Practice Progress Report and Quality Improvement Initiative is essential. Our teams will be supported and acknowledged for QI efforts, with performance tied to key indicators. The ability to compare performance with neighbouring practices and change management training are vital for successful implementation.
- **Data Sharing Across the Health System:** Broader data sharing is needed beyond general practices to include allied health, medical specialists and RACH datasets. We will support software vendors engaging with ADHA and peak bodies for data sharing opportunities. Improved data-sharing platforms can enhance collaboration among health professionals, leading to better patient care.
- **Greater Data Insights:** Data driven quality improvement should encompass business and MBS-level data to support financial sustainability and strategic planning at organisational level. Integrating healthcare data with hospital systems and leveraging AI for deeper analysis can further enhance decision-making.
- **Data-Driven System Change:** While data is available, it is underutilised. High-quality data is essential for general practices and PHNs to demonstrate healthcare quality, secure funding, and engage with state and commonwealth organisations.

Priority 3: Collaborative Care supports a more connected, secure, and efficient healthcare system with seamless data exchange. Seamless care relies on systems that talk to each other. We will champion interoperable clinical communication across the full continuum of care—from GPs and allied health to hospitals, aged care, and community-based services.

Our efforts will support the adoption of secure messaging, eReferrals, and shared care plans that are integrated with clinical software. We will collaborate with LHDs to enable routine health data exchange. Patients will be included in the design of data-sharing solutions to ensure consent, transparency, and trust are built into the digital health experience. We will achieve Priority 3 Collaborative Care by:

- **Improved Communication:** Health professionals require better access to interoperable technology and communication channels to facilitate efficient information exchange.
- **Improved Data Sharing:** Identify opportunities for improved local data sharing using digital tools that bridge existing gaps between general practice, allied health, and RACHs. A Single Patient Digital Record is essential for hospitals.
- **Increasing Digital Health Integration:** Integrating digital health initiatives such as My Health Record, secure messaging and other digital health solutions, with practice software enables health professionals to work more efficiently. General practice Clinical Information Systems and RACH care systems should interface with one another. By working with vendors or recommending solutions to integrate with CIS, all health professionals can benefit from these digital health initiatives.
- **Consumer Participation:** Patients should be included in any communication and data-sharing initiatives in future. Cybersecurity must be addressed to reduce data breaches.

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Priority 4: Person Centred and Inclusive Care focuses on the needs of the patient and empowers the patient with health literacy. Digital health should empower consumers—not widen gaps. We will focus on digital inclusion and equip patients with the knowledge and tools they need to take an active role in their care. A one-size-fits-all approach will not work in a region as diverse as ours. We will expand the use of My Health Record and ePrescriptions and recognise the use of wearable devices by improving consumer awareness, system integration, and health literacy.

Digital front doors—like online bookings, telehealth, and triage portals—will be scaled to make access easier. We will co-design our initiatives with underserved communities, ensuring they are culturally appropriate, accessible, and useful. We will achieve Priority 4 Person Centred and Inclusive Care by:

- **Focussing on building Consumer Health Literacy:** Consumers are frequently left out of digital health education and would benefit from greater awareness of My Health Record, My Health App, and ePrescribing.
- **Empowering Consumers to Participate in Self-Care:** Patients should be encouraged to improve their lifestyles and adopt technology that can help them. Health professionals will be supported to use targeted educational resources to promote My Health Record, My Health App, and ePrescriptions and other patient technologies.
- **Improved Integration and Use of Patient Technologies:** Wearables, self-monitoring devices, and health applications can generate valuable data. Improving integration with existing software can help maximise the benefit of these technologies. We will work with providers on how they can improve their use of patient collected digital health data.
- **Technologies Facilitating Access:** Telehealth and ePrescribing facilitates better access to services. We will support improvements in electronic shared care planning to strengthen collaborative care. Patient booking and screening portals allow for seamless booking and triage. Directories support patients to find suitable health professionals and book appointments.

Key Enablers

Key enablers that will support the achievement of the CESPHN Digital Health Strategic Plan 2026–2030 include:

- **Data Security & Cybersecurity**
We will strengthen protections against cybersecurity threats by supporting practices to implement robust, nationally aligned security measures. Building trust in digital health requires protecting personal information, promoting clear consent, and helping consumers understand how their data is used—fostering confidence in digital technologies.
- **Interoperability and System Integration**
We will champion the use of APIs and integration tools that allow secure, efficient data sharing across systems and providers, reducing duplication and administrative burden.
- **Advancements in Telehealth & Artificial Intelligence (AI)**
We will promote the uptake of advanced technologies including AI, and telehealth solutions to enhance decision-making, workflow efficiency, and patient care outcomes.
- **Consumer and Workforce Readiness**
We will support digital health literacy for patients and providers, improve the usability of technology interfaces, and address concerns related to data privacy and equitable access.

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Governance and Monitoring

CESPHN will implement this strategy through, cross-sector partnerships, a strong digital governance model and with staff equipped and able to support primary care providers on their journey of digital maturity. Annual plans will be developed with specific actions and milestones, including adoption targets, workforce development, and technology integration. Evaluation will be built into each phase to measure impact and guide continuous improvement. We will establish a Digital Health Advisory Committee with primary care and digital health professionals to provide oversight support and guidance.