

# Aotearoa New Zealand Digital Mental Health Roadmap

A sector-informed plan for  
better access, choice, and  
outcomes

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# Acknowledgements

This roadmap results from extensive collaboration across a broad spectrum of stakeholders in the digital mental health eco-system including Mental Health & Addiction service providers, academia, government and Industry. We acknowledge contributions from over 92 participants from 52 organisations (including providers, innovators, clinicians, and people with lived experience) at the 2024 Digital Mental Health Summit, DHA Digital Mental Health Industry Group members, and the current DMHIG Working Group who provided ongoing guidance and validation.

It provides strategic guidance for policy development and commissioning decisions and should be read alongside other sector submissions, particularly from Platform Trust, with whom we share broad alignment on key priorities. The roadmap is not an implementation plan or operational manual.

*Views expressed represent consensus from extensive sector consultation and may not reflect individual contributors' organisations. All contributions were made on behalf of the DMHIG working group and are endorsed by the Digital Health Association Executive and Board.*



# Executive Summary

This roadmap responds to the Minister for Mental Health's request for practical actions to harness digital and data as enablers of better access, choice, and outcomes for all New Zealanders.

Developed by the Digital Health Association through its Digital Mental Health Industry Group, it reflects three years of consultation with providers, Māori and Pacific partners, clinicians, researchers, industry experts, people with lived experience, and peak bodies.

## The Challenge:

Aotearoa has quality mental health services and digital interventions, yet the system remains fragmented and difficult to navigate. Equity gaps persist for Māori, Pacific, disabled, rangatahi, and rural communities. Demand outstrips capacity despite improvements through IPMHA and online initiatives.

## Current State:

Traditional services (in-person primary, community, and specialist care) and digital supports (online directories, telehealth, e-therapeutics) remain inconsistently integrated. No single, sector-wide trusted pathway exists for finding, comparing, or connecting with available services. This limits choice, slows access, and prevents proven digital tools from scaling.

## The Opportunity:

Rapid advances in technology, including AI, present opportunities to bridge navigation gaps, remove access barriers, personalise pathways, and support health professionals through blended-care models. COVID-19 demonstrated how quickly digital solutions mobilise at scale. International exemplars from Australia, Canada, the UK, and Netherlands show phased approaches transform access, improve outcomes, and ease workforce pressure.

## Three Priority Areas:

- System & Service Navigation - A trusted national Navigation Tool streamlining access across traditional services and digital interventions
- Digital Intervention Ecosystem - Robust accreditation framework enabling safe, effective digital interventions embedded in pathways
- Health Workforce Enablement - Workforce development and hybrid-care planning building confidence and capability

Together, these priorities create immediate navigation, access, and capacity gains while laying foundations for integrated, future-proofed mental health plans aligned with Mental Health and Addiction Plan targets.

# Context & Background

This roadmap synthesises insights from more than three years of engagement, building on several key documents:

- [Optimising our digital mental health ecosystem](#) (June 2022)
- [Briefing to the Incoming Minister](#) (November 2023)
- [Creating a more connected, equitable system](#) (March 2024)
- [Digital Mental Health Summit Report](#) (December 2024)
- [Ministry of Health meetings and draft Terms of Reference](#) (2025)

The December 2024 Parliamentary Summit generated critical insights from 92 senior leaders representing primary, secondary, community NGO, Kaupapa Māori, Pasifika organisations, researchers, clinicians, and youth representatives.

While perspectives were diverse, consistent principles emerged:

- Te Tiriti and equitable outcomes by design
- Partnership with lived experience and Kaupapa Māori organisations
- Leadership, strategy, standards, and governance
- Digital ecosystem creation and integration into traditional pathways
- Workforce capability enhancement
- Translation of research into practice

These principles inform the recommended actions designed to rapidly enhance access to primary, community, mental health, and addiction services.



# Guiding Principles

These principles anchor all recommended actions, ensuring equity, lived experience, integration, and evidence are embedded from the outset.

## Equity as an Outcome

Digital solutions can deepen or reduce inequities, so equity must be considered at every stage. This means understanding existing gaps and designing with priority populations—including Māori, Pacific and Asian peoples, youth, disabled communities, rainbow populations, and rural areas. In line with Te Tiriti o Waitangi, equity for Māori requires particular attention through elevating Māori voices and early partnership with Kaupapa Māori organisations.

## Integration & Interoperability

Future-proofed systems should connect seamlessly with the wider health ecosystem. New services should align with national digital health strategies and secure data use, including Māori data sovereignty. Commissioned services should use national interoperability standards (HL7, SNOMED CT, LOINC, FHIR) to reduce silos and support connected, person-centred systems.

## Lived Experience Participation

Solutions must reflect the realities of people, whānau, and communities. Embedding expertise of those with lived experience through human-centred design, feedback, and testing ensures solutions are trusted, relevant, and effective. Participation should be safe, collective, and equitable.

## Evidence-Based & Effective

Safety and effectiveness must underpin design. Services should combine research, clinical best practice, Te Ao Māori, and lived-experience knowledge. Local validation frameworks, ongoing evaluation, and continuous refinement ensure solutions remain trusted and deliver positive outcomes.

## Implementation Support

A dedicated Advisory Group with consumer representatives, clinical leaders, technology experts, and lived-experience voices should guide priorities, commissioning, and design decisions.



# Three Priority Areas for Action:

Together, these priorities create immediate navigation, access and workforce capacity gains while laying foundations for integrated, future-proofed mental health strategy.

## 1 System & Service Navigation

**Goal:**

AI-enabled national Navigation Tool delivering personalised access to traditional and digital mental health services.

**Challenge:**

Multiple directories exist. No integrated digital front door.

**Impact:**

Technology-enhanced entry enabling faster support across prevention, mild-moderate needs, and specialist services.

**Success:**

Live tool connecting consumers and workforce to verified services.

## 2 Digital Intervention Ecosystem Enablement

**Goal:**

Validated ecosystem of digital interventions reducing wait times and enabling prevention.

**Challenge:**

Inconsistent validation frameworks. Variable quality standards limit trust and adoption.

**Impact:**

Self-directed prevention through safe, effective online tools. Increased wellbeing. Reduced service pressure.

**Success:**

National directory of accredited interventions embedded in navigation tool.

## 3 Health Workforce Enablement

**Goal:**

Workforce capability in digital tools enabling hybrid care models.

**Challenge:**

Acute shortages. Variable digital adoption across sector.

**Impact:**

Optimised digital technology in Access and Choice programmes. Faster primary service access.

**Success:**

Digitally capable workforce using hybrid-care models.

# A Road to Faster Access, Greater Choice, and Better Outcomes

## 12-Month Roadmap: Advancing All Three Priority Areas

Drawing on the Priority Areas and Guiding Principles outlined above, this 12-month roadmap provides a practical pathway for progressing outcomes across navigation, digital ecosystem, and workforce enablement simultaneously.

### Implementation Vision

Within twelve months, Aotearoa New Zealand will have an operational navigation tool integrating verified services and digital interventions, supporting consumer choice, and strengthening mental health workforce capacity to deliver safe hybrid care.

This responds directly to the Minister's request for an achievable, sector-led roadmap delivering early wins, building public trust, and bringing to life the National Digital Mental Health Hub concept discussed at the 2024 Summit. The plan establishes tangible foundations for a connected digital mental health ecosystem, providing people with a digitally-led access point to primary and community mental health and addiction services while scaling access to digital therapeutics that support early intervention, relieving system pressure and advancing the targets outlined in Health New Zealand's Achieving the Mental Health and Addiction Targets, 2024 plan.

### End-of-Year Outcomes:

- Live navigation tool connecting consumers and workforce to verified services
- National directory of accredited digital interventions embedded within the tool
- Governance, technical, and accreditation frameworks adopted across agencies
- Digitally capable workforce actively using hybrid-care models
- Investment case and implementation plan approved for Phase 2 (national expansion)

# Recommended 12-Month Roadmap

Activities are sequenced to deliver visible progress each quarter, aligned with the Minister's priorities for a connected, sector-led digital mental health ecosystem.

## 0–3 Months Establishment and Mobilisation

### Deliverable 1: Establish Advisory and Governance Structures

Form Digital Mental Health Advisory Group and Steering Group with strong representation from consumers, Māori, Pacific peoples, lived experience, clinical, digital, and NGO leaders.

#### Output:

Active Advisory and Steering Groups with Terms of Reference, project charter, and delivery plan.

### Deliverable 2: Define Scope and Mapping Framework

Confirm scope and technical approach for national navigation tool. Begin nationwide mapping across IPMHA, NGOs, Māori and Pacific providers, telehealth (1737), and validated digital therapeutics.

#### Output:

Approved mapping framework and initial dataset ready for consolidation.

## 3–6 Months Develop and Deploy

### Deliverable 3: Consolidated National Service Database

Complete service mapping and consolidate into single, dynamic national database forming the data backbone for navigation tool. Leverage existing directories (Healthpoint, Healthify) with new data addressing identified gaps.

#### Output:

Quality-assured, comprehensive national service database.

### Deliverable 4: Navigation Tool Development

Architect and design consumer interface with Advisory Group and consumer input, focusing on usability, accessibility, cultural safety, and interoperability.

#### Output:

Live navigation tool ready for user testing and refinement.

### Deliverable 5: Interim Validation Framework

Develop interim validation approach using approved and evidence-based digital tools. Establish transparent inclusion criteria. Prepare groundwork for future national accreditation framework.

#### Output:

Published validation framework and curated directory of currently approved digital tools.

## 6–12 Months Delivery, Workforce Enablement, and Governance

### Deliverable 6: Navigation Tool Deployment

Release navigation tool for initial public and workforce use, with continuous monitoring and iterative improvements. Enable self-referral, service comparison, and safe connection to verified supports.

#### Output:

Live, operational navigation tool accessible to consumers and professionals.

### Deliverable 7: Workforce Readiness and Hybrid-Care Capability

Conduct baseline survey of digital literacy levels. Roll out interim hybrid-care guidelines, privacy and consent protocols, e-learning modules, and supervision support. Establish national Community of Practice through Workforce Development Centres.

#### Output:

Trained early-adopter workforce confidently integrating digital tools and hybrid-care practices.

### Deliverable 8: Governance, Data, and Technical Frameworks

Finalise and operationalise mandatory data standards, interoperability requirements, and Māori data sovereignty protections under Advisory Group oversight.

#### Output:

Approved governance and data standards framework supporting secure, ethical deployment.

# Beyond Year One: Longer-Term Opportunities

The 12-month roadmap establishes essential foundations. Building on these foundations, longer-term opportunities exist to scale impact, deepen integration, and position New Zealand as a leader in digital mental health innovation. The following areas represent natural evolution pathways as initial implementation matures and sector capability strengthens.

## Scaled Navigation

- Streamlined e-referral, self-booking, and proactive follow-up
- National rollout via health promotion campaigns
- Cross-sector integration across health, education, social, and justice
- Ongoing governance, evaluation, and safety monitoring

## Digital Ecosystem Growth

- Multi-year commissioning tied to equitable outcomes
- Expanded intervention categories (distress management, relapse prevention, parenting, neurodiversity)
- National evaluation programme with open reporting
- Evidence-to-practice pipeline
- Position New Zealand as global mental health innovation leader

## Workforce Evolution

- National competency frameworks and micro-credentials
- Digital-first roles (navigators, e-therapists, peer coaches)
- National communities of practice
- Advanced training in AI-enabled triage, risk management, and digital outcomes tracking
- Productivity tools (auto-documentation, referral tracking, scheduling)



# Conclusion

These priorities provide a practical pathway toward a more connected, equitable, and digitally-enabled mental health system for Aotearoa. By focusing on navigation, validated interventions, and workforce capability, the roadmap delivers immediate opportunities to expand access and strengthen choice while setting conditions for long-term transformation.

The recommendations reflect sector consensus and are designed to complement existing programmes and reforms. The phased approach embeds digital as a trusted, default part of how New Zealanders find and receive mental health support.

Success requires coordinated action across government, sector partners, and communities. The roadmap provides the blueprint—implementation demands sustained commitment to relieve pressure on services, reduce inequities, and ensure safe, effective, culturally-anchored support is available when and where people need it.



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