

Omnichannel care: a new model of health care

The disruptive shift from in-person health and social care during the COVID-19 pandemic has catapulted the rapid adoption and implementation of new models of delivery. Here we provide insights into the opportunities and considerations for implementing an omnichannel approach.

What is omnichannel care?

Omnichannel care is the provision of health and social services across multiple channels. It encompasses a mixture of kanohi ke te kanohi (face to face), secure messaging on web, text, chat and email, as well as video and phone consultations, self management tools and access to information, such as test results. Enabling this are back end systems and digital tools that allow the coordination and consistency of information, providing health consumers with a fluid, seamless experience across the continuum of care.

Omnichannel care's consumer-centric approach is associated with improved engagement and participation in health care, and enhanced consumer satisfaction and experience of services. Consumers are empowered to be experts in their own care, determining how and when they interact with providers, using their preferred channels.

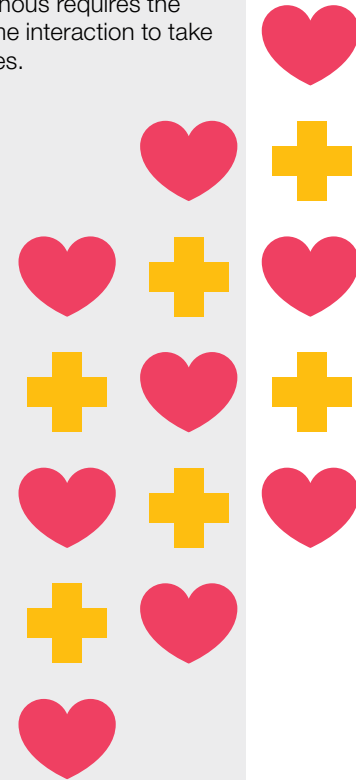
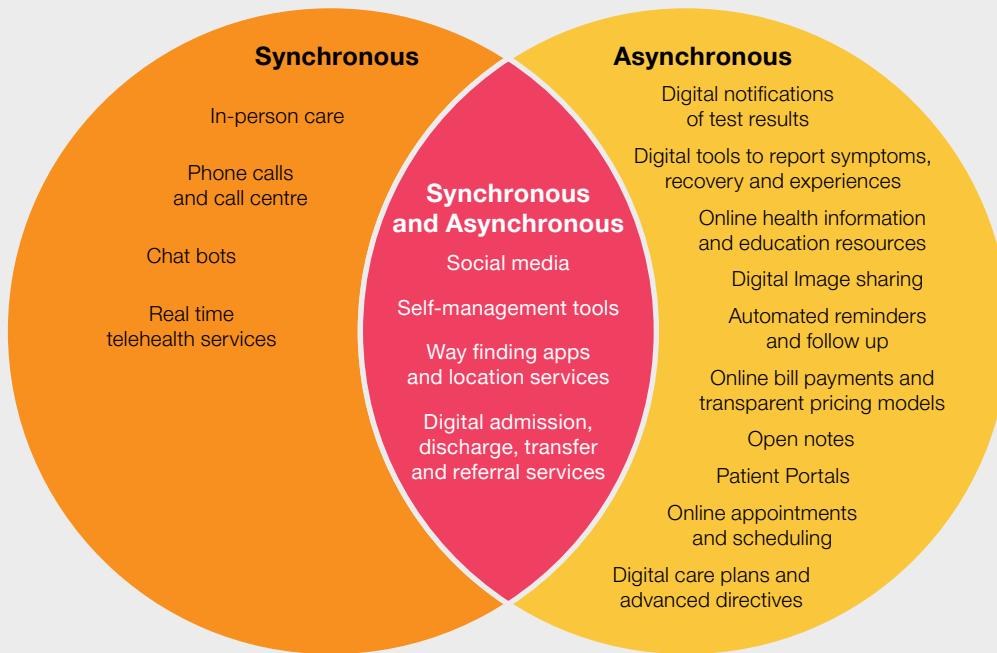


An omnichannel approach offers considerable benefits for health and social systems, including:

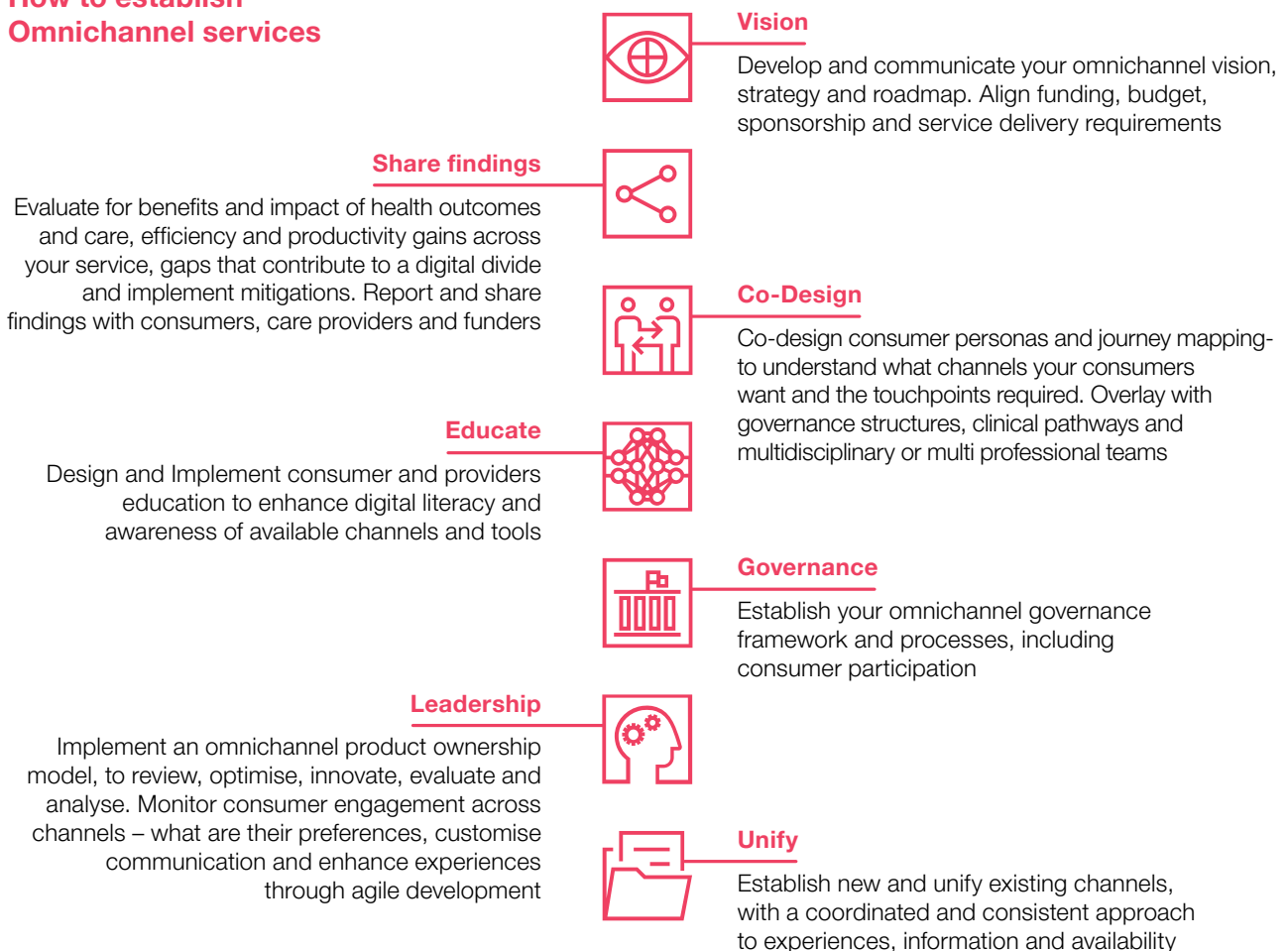
- Improved sustainability through a reduction in the use of resources
- A unified and consistent approach to care, reducing variability in the care and information provided
- Alignment of in-person and digital tools and systems
- Addressing inequity across the health system through the provision of multiple channels to meet the access and communication preferences of consumers and their whānau
- Promotion of a partnership model with health consumers and their whānau, with their needs truly at the centre
- Improvements to patient satisfaction, resulting in an improvement in people's reported measures and outcomes (PREMs and PROMs)
- Real time data analytics to iterate and inform system efficiencies, policy, planning and insights
- Opportunity to learn from other industries that have successfully implemented an omnichannel approach, such as retail
- Health promotion and activation, improving wellbeing through integrated education and self management tools
- Upscaling potential for industry sectors to leverage more remote or underutilised workforces by enhanced connectivity, with an increased potential to access global resources and specialists
- Reduced potential cross-infection risk from communicable diseases such as COVID-19 and influenza, with fewer in-person health appointments

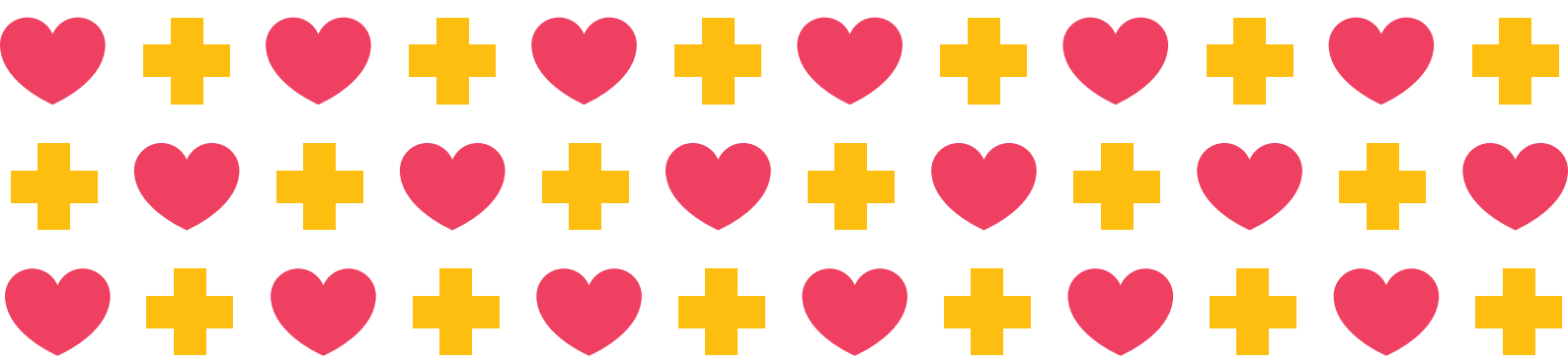
Asynchronous vs. Synchronous services

Omnichannel interactions are provided using a mix of synchronous and asynchronous delivery. Synchronous requires the presence of both parties at the same time and a communication link between them that allows a real-time interaction to take place. Asynchronous delivery involves acquiring, storing and transmitting data, within different timeframes.



How to establish Omnichannel services





Enablers

A successful omnichannel approach for health and social services requires a number of enablers. These include:

- Interoperability and data quality across channels, facilitating the ability to aggregate data and information for providers at the point of care. For consumers, information should be presented in ways they understand and via the channels they want to receive it.
- Moving from a system and application ecosystem to an integrated platform
- Building the data and digital capacity and contingency considerations to aid societal digital resiliency for services to become a trusted long term option for care delivery. This makes care in the community a viable reality
- Funding models that focus on commissioning for outcomes and consider the health consumer experience, as opposed to contracting for output
- Transparent pricing models for privately funded health care, enabling consumers and their whānau to make financial choices
- Enhanced consumer experience - including time and cost saving efficiencies
- Analytics to monitor engagement and channel preferences, consumer experiences, health outcomes, performance efficiencies
- Digital literacy and ongoing practical teachable moments using different learning styles for practitioners
- Tools that are up to date, monitored for cyber risks that are fit for purpose and create a positive impact for users
- Sound strategic oversight or governance frameworks that support ongoing development and proactive management in an evolutionary cycle
- Integrated research and evaluation into monitoring and development of omnichannel models of care
- Workforce adaptation and flexibility has enhanced opportunities to create new roles, expand ways of skill sharing, rebalance workforces in higher demand and create recovery time for stressed existing workforces
- New roles to support health communication expertise to curate health information and content to ensure consistency of information and consumer experience
- Change management to ensure consistent and high quality delivery as processes are integrated, lessons are applied and consumers and providers are supported to integrate it with their day to day role
- Organisations embracing a continuous quality improvement, using data driven insights from feedback and analytics

Considerations for implementation

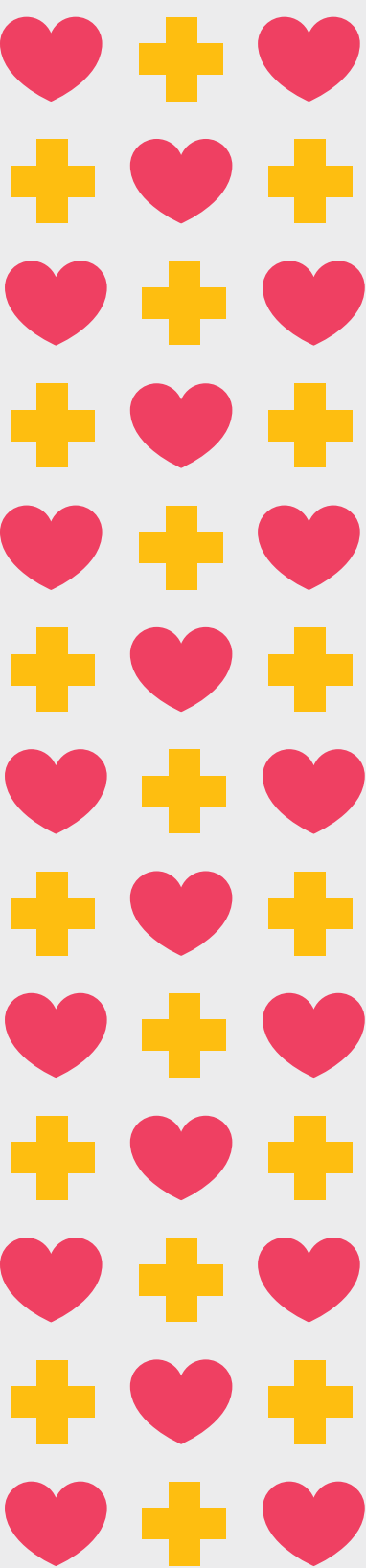
Organisations transitioning to an omnichannel strategy will need to overcome a number of resourcing, platform management and governance considerations include:

- The time, effort and resources required to establish omnichannel care
- Transformative change management to ensure applying new technology and processes deliver the desired benefits and outcomes
- How multiple channels will be managed to ensure consistency of messaging, information and customer experience
- Security and privacy considerations including any potential cyber security risks in a rapidly-evolving landscape
- Procurement approaches that consider omnichannel and interoperability requirements
- Applying new technology and processes to traditional models of care without exploring transformative change can severely limit the benefits that can be reaped

Governance

- The ongoing investment required to ensure quality and continuous improvement of customer experience
- Without due and careful consideration, omnichannel initiatives may lead to a widening in the digital divide between some consumer groups and vulnerable populations. This could result in decreased access to care for some consumers or some receiving poorer care due to poor service design, device choices, deployment considerations, internet or mobile access
- Robust contingency planning is required as omnichannel practices increasingly perform core business and clinical functions

While these may appear complex, PwC has significant expertise and can confidently assist those planning an omnichannel approach. The benefits of omnichannel provision of health and social services offers substantial benefits for consumers and, as we move towards more care provision in the community, it is time to think differently and reimagine hauora for New Zealanders.



About us

Our Data & Digital team brings trusted expertise to provide best practice solutions, service design, operating models and stakeholder engagement. We work with Government agencies, PHOs, public and private hospitals and providers, social sector agencies, Māori and Pacific health organisations, and industry providers.



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