

National Telehealth Service Plan 2024 › 2026



Whakarongorau
Aotearoa//
New Zealand
Telehealth
Services//



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Foreword from the CEO of Whakarongorau Aotearoa

The National Telehealth Service (NTS) is a cornerstone of New Zealand's health system. Every day, every hour, our services save lives, reduce suffering, and connect people with the care they need. From remote rural communities to urban centres, we ensure no one faces a health crisis alone.

For eight years, NTS has been the safety net and first point of contact for millions of New Zealanders. During COVID-19, we demonstrated our critical national role by scaling from 400 to 4,000 staff, managing 40,000 daily contacts while maintaining our essential health services. This proved our ability to adapt and deliver when the country needs us most.

Today, as the health sector faces unprecedented pressures, NTS is more vital than ever. We're the first call for health advice, the lifeline for mental health support, and the bridge to emergency services. Our work reduces pressure on hospitals, supports GP practices, and ensures people get the right care at the right time - whether that's an ambulance dispatch, mental health support, or connecting with local health providers.

Every day, our services handle thousands of calls that shape health outcomes across New Zealand:

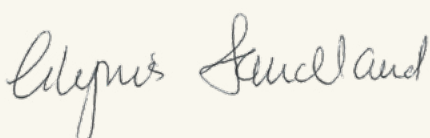
- Nurses providing critical health advice
- Mental health counsellors supporting people in crisis
- Social workers connecting people with essential support
- Supporting ambulance services by managing low acuity calls
- Specialist teams supporting addiction recovery and poisoning.

In the year ahead, healthcare faces major challenges - growing demand, increasing complexity of care needs, and workforce pressures. Our response focuses on triage, prevention and wellbeing, through four key areas:

- Improving access to quality clinical care
- Breaking down barriers to healthcare
- Strengthening our digital capabilities
- Building stronger connections across the health system.

We're taking a practical, proven approach to service improvement, always putting tāngata whaiora first. Through partnerships, clinical excellence, and ensuring people can talk to someone who understands their needs, we're working to improve health outcomes nationwide.

This is an ambitious but essential plan. With our experience, dedication, and commitment to this vital work, we will continue to be there when New Zealanders need us most.



Glynis Sandland
Chief Executive Officer
Whakarongorau Aotearoa



**Kua tawhiti kē to haerenga mai
Kia Kore e haere tonu.**

You have come too far not to go
further, you have done too much
not to do more.

Tā Himi Henare



**Whakarongorau
Aotearoa//**
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The National Telehealth Service

The Government launched plans in 2011 to create a nationwide telehealth service, building on existing 24/7 services including Healthline and Depression Helpline, to improve service delivery and cost-effectiveness.

In November 2015, the Ministry of Health partnered with Whakarongorau Aotearoa to set up and run this comprehensive telehealth service. Whakarongorau Aotearoa is a social enterprise jointly owned by two primary health organisations - ProCare and Pegasus Health.

Today, the National Telehealth Service provides millions of New Zealanders with free, round-the-clock access to health, mental health and social support through seven digital channels, including phone calls, webchat and text messaging. The service operates under a 10-year contract that started in 2015, with a Service Improvement Board providing oversight.



Ko wai mātou // Who we are

The National Telehealth Service (NTS) is a cornerstone of Aotearoa's health and social system, working in close alignment with Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora to deliver national health priorities.

Delivered by Whakarongorau Aotearoa, the NTS ensures healthcare and support remain accessible when traditional services are out of reach, whether due to location, timing, cost, or cultural considerations.

In 2024, the NTS touched the lives of more than 1.3 million New Zealanders through comprehensive telehealth services. Working in partnership with the Government and health sector partners, we create meaningful impact across the healthcare continuum.

Our core strengths include:

- Round-the-clock clinical expertise across physical, mental, and social health - a service unique in Aotearoa, supported by robust digital systems that work across multiple channels
- Comprehensive clinical oversight ensuring quality care, backed by a nationwide directory connecting staff to local support organisations throughout New Zealand
- End-to-end support linking mental health, and specialised services within our network for seamless care delivery
- A culturally diverse workforce providing care in Te Reo Māori, and 24/7 interpreter services, including sign language support (limited hours)
- State-of-the-art infrastructure protected by comprehensive privacy and security protocols.

The NTS is delivered by twelve specialist clinical teams working around the clock, comprising registered nurses, paramedics, mental health professionals, emergency triage specialists, poisons experts, sexual harm and family violence professionals, life mentors, and dedicated advisors. More than 400 Whakarongorau Aotearoa professionals deliver these services from contact centres in Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch, and from home offices throughout New Zealand.

Note: From 1 July 2024, the COVID Healthline and the Healthline doctor service were decommissioned as Health New Zealand moves to manage COVID-19 as part of business as usual. Healthline nurses and paramedics continue to provide expert, trusted health advice and information.

Our Partnership Approach

Working alongside government agencies and healthcare providers, we build integrated solutions guided by:

Service user focus: Decisions will be based on what is best for and what works for New Zealanders

Partnership: Collaborate in areas of mutual interest, proactively seeking input and valuing the expertise and opinions of others

Good faith: Act openly with honesty, trust, and sincerity, and handle information with care and confidentiality

No surprises: Provide early warning to partners on matters that may require a response or attract stakeholder attention.

Ō mātou hoa pakihi //

Our Partners

The National Telehealth Service is co-funded by Health New Zealand / Te Whatu Ora, the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC), the Ministry of Social Development (MSD), and the Department of Corrections.

Health New Zealand / Te Whatu Ora

Health New Zealand | Te Whatu Ora manages and oversees our national health system, operating at local, district, regional and national levels. They work across government to improve health services and outcomes, upholding Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles. Their core mission is to build an equitable, integrated and sustainable health service that enhances collaboration, strengthens leadership, and improves access and outcomes for all.

ACC

ACC's vision - Tōnui Ake Nei | Thriving Aotearoa - aims to create a future where all people and communities can live lives they value. This vision is driven by three strategic goals:

- **Mana Taurite / Equity** - ensuring equal access, service experience and outcomes for all
- **Ringa Atawhai / Guardianship** - supporting and enabling people through their ACC journey
- **Oranga Whānau / Safe and Resilient Communities** - empowering recovery and wellness after injury.

Ministry of Social Development

The Ministry's purpose is to help New Zealanders be safe, strong and independent. Their core outcomes focus on:

- Delivering essential support to those who need it, ensuring New Zealanders can access vital services and assistance
- Building resilient, inclusive communities that support and strengthen all members of society
- Creating opportunities for New Zealanders to participate fully in society and achieve their potential.

Department of Corrections / Ara Poutama Aotearoa

Corrections aims to keep communities safe while transforming lives. Their strategy centres on six key areas:

- Building effective partnerships and demonstrating strong leadership
- Taking a humane approach focused on rehabilitation and healing
- Supporting whānau connections and wellbeing
- Embracing Te Ao Māori principles and perspectives
- Acknowledging and respecting whakapapa
- Creating solid foundations for community participation.

Health New Zealand Te Whatu Ora



**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIAO ORA



**He Kaupare. He Manaaki.
He Whakaora.**
prevention. care. recovery.



More than the NTS: Stronger Partnerships

Whakarongorau is committed to building strong partnerships that create meaningful solutions for New Zealand, recognising that collaboration multiplies our impact.

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Beyond our core National Telehealth Service partners, we work with trusted, experienced organisations who bring additional capability, diversity, and expertise to our long-term service delivery.

Our network includes partnerships with key organisations such as Plunket, the Immunisation Advisory Centre, National Poisons Centre, emergency services, regional health providers, GPs, Women's Refuge, Presbyterian Support Network, National Screening Unit, and the New Zealand Defence Force.

We work together with three iwi who support with non-clinical services through a Limited Partnership (Taki O Autahi) with Te Arawa Lakes Trust, Te Hau Ora Ō Ngāpuhi Limited and Te Taiwhenua O Heretaunga Trust.

Our effectiveness stems from deep integration within New Zealand's health system. By combining technology, people, and systems, we improve healthcare access and outcomes nationwide. Our strong connections with local communities and iwi, support for regional priorities, and comprehensive clinical expertise enable us to adapt to local needs while delivering safe, connected services that enhance healthcare accessibility.

We go beyond standard service delivery - our dedication to innovation, excellence, and collaboration ensures we deliver outstanding healthcare with lasting benefits for all New Zealanders.



Our strong connections with local communities and iwi, support for regional priorities, and comprehensive clinical expertise enable us to adapt to local needs while delivering safe, connected services that enhance healthcare accessibility.

Ō mātou moemoeā //

Our Vision

Our vision is to deliver care, support, and advice to people in Aotearoa to positively impact and improve their wellbeing and health outcomes through phone and digital channels.

We achieve this through:

Core Service Delivery

- Providing accessible, high-quality health advice and support, particularly focusing on populations with lower health-system engagement
- Delivering the right care, at the right time, by the right person in the right place
- Supporting whānau to improve self-care and health literacy, reducing the need for acute and unplanned care
- Enabling people to receive care at home or in their community while maintaining optimal health outcomes.

System Integration and Partnerships

- Collaborating seamlessly with local, regional and national health, social and ACC claims registration
- Contributing to and utilising shared patient records to ensure coordinated care delivery
- Providing rapid, effective responses to public health incidents and national emergencies
- Supporting other government agencies and services by sharing our infrastructure and relationships.

Quality, Excellence and Trust

- Building and maintaining public trust through consistently high-quality service delivery
- Taking responsibility for clinical quality through robust governance mechanisms and processes
- Delivering accountable, evidence-based telehealth services through phone and digital channels
- Promoting activities and resources that protect and improve the wellbeing of New Zealanders.

Improving system sustainability

- Adapting flexibly to meet evolving consumer needs and technological advancements
- Developing new channels and services to improve accessibility and engagement
- Maintaining a strong focus on continuous quality improvement
- Enabling system-wide efficiency by reducing pressure on other health services.

Ā mātou mahi //

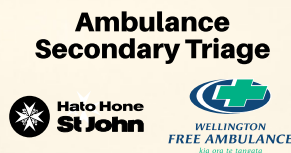
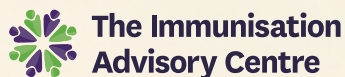
What we do

NTS delivers comprehensive healthcare support through an integrated digital platform, powered by a skilled team of health professionals and advisors. Our services span physical and mental health needs, available 24/7 across Aotearoa.

Our focus is unwavering: ensuring everyone receives the care, advice and support they need, when they need it. We prioritise those with the greatest health needs while helping reduce pressure on the wider health system.

Through 15 specialist health services and multiple access channels, we connect tāngata whai ora with the right care at the right time, in the right place. Our platforms seamlessly integrate voice, digital and video options, supported by clinical expertise and modern technology.

A description of each service is provided in Appendix A.



Beyond NTS: Leading Healthcare Integration

Whakarongorau Aotearoa drives innovation through powerful partnerships and integrated service delivery.

Our additional services connect healthcare providers, enable 24/7 access, and create seamless pathways across Aotearoa:

Primary and Mental Healthcare

- **GP After Hours** - supporting over 430 primary care practices nationwide
- **Crisis Mental Health Services** - registered mental health nurses backing 13 local crisis teams with 24/7 support
- **Puāwaitanga** - delivering phone and web-based mental health and addiction services for mild to moderate conditions, in partnership with MSD.

National Health Programmes

- **National Coordination Centre** - managing both Bowel and Cervical Screening Programmes
- **Vaccination Helpline** - providing critical immunisation support and proactive engagement with priority populations.

Community Support

- **Whitiki Tauā** - video-based mentoring supporting MSD's Mana in Mahi youth programme
- **Family and Sexual Harm Services** - 24/7 support through partnerships with Presbyterian Support Northern/Shine and over 40 Women's Refuge centres.

Through these services, we create connections that spark innovation and drive meaningful change in healthcare delivery, while ensuring essential support reaches those who need it most.

Improving access for tāngata whai ora

Over the past year, our NTS services have seen numerous improvements to enhance efficiency and access for tāngata whai ora:

- A digital front door on healthy.org.nz providing links to trusted health information and registration of call-back requests
- Options for uploading images and videos to help clinicians assess symptoms
- SMS summaries of advice with links to approved information
- Our robust digital platforms enable our kaimahi to work securely from anywhere in New Zealand, supporting service delivery across all regions
- ACC claims initiated through Healthline for injury-related calls
- A dedicated Quit Vaping programme
- Support for Health New Zealand's privacy and data breach responses.

Ō mātou whakapapa // Integrating Healthcare

At the heart of New Zealand's health system, Whakarongorau stands as a transformative force, weaving together technology, clinical excellence, and cultural competency to revolutionise healthcare delivery. Through the National Telehealth Service (NTS), we've established ourselves as a trusted catalyst for change, driving innovation and integration across the health sector.

Pioneering Multi-Agency Integration

The NTS represents a groundbreaking approach to healthcare delivery, operating under a unique 10-year contract that brings together Health New Zealand, ACC, Ministry of Social Development, and Department of Corrections. This innovative model breaks down traditional silos, creating unprecedented cross-agency efficiencies while maintaining unwavering standards of clinical excellence.

Our co-designed approach ensures services evolve dynamically with sector needs, supported by:

- Strong independent clinical governance
- Cross-agency Service Improvement Board oversight
- Innovative IP ownership arrangements
- Shared platform capabilities across the broader sector
- Commitment to service complementarity, not duplication.

Leading Through Innovation

Innovation isn't just part of our strategy—it's woven into our organisational DNA. Our Digital Innovation Strategy aligns with three strategic horizons:

- **Right Tool for the Job** - optimising existing processes and systems to enhance efficiency and effectiveness
- **Connecting Digital Pathways** - explore and implement technologies that transform accessibility and engagement for tāngata whai ora
- **Exploring the Possible** - through partnerships and integrated experiences, innovate with new solutions that benefit the broader healthcare sector.

Responsive and Scalable Support

As a cornerstone of Aotearoa's health infrastructure, we provide crucial support during local, regional, and national health events. Our proven track record includes rapid response to the Christchurch terror attacks, Whakaari explosion, and the COVID-19 pandemic. This agility extends beyond crisis response—we maintain the capability to scale our systems and workforce rapidly, ensuring continuous support when the sector needs us most.

Recent trends demonstrate our growing impact, with increasing service efficiency, rising digital channel adoption, and consistent above-population engagement with Māori users. Our Emergency Triage service supports ambulance services by effectively managing low acuity calls, helping ensure emergency resources are available for those who need them most, showcasing our role in optimising healthcare resource utilisation.

Clinical Excellence and Cultural Competency

Our clinical leadership spans twelve frontline teams working around the clock, supported by our Chief Clinical Officer and six Clinical Leads. This expertise is further strengthened by our independent Clinical Governance Committee and ISO 9001 accreditation, ensuring consistently high standards of care delivery.

Transforming Health Outcomes Through Partnership

Our commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi is exemplified through the Taki o Autahi partnership, which has revolutionised telehealth delivery for Māori communities. This partnership has:

- Managed nearly 3.5 million contacts since August 2022
- Employed over 220 Māori kaimahi
- Consistently achieves high scores in quality reviews, maintaining clinical safety and effectiveness
- Delivering targeted interventions across life stages, from pepi to kaumātua.

The partnership enables unique insights and opportunities to engage with Māori communities, fundamentally transforming how we deliver culturally competent services that respect Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles.

Our Commitment to Equity

Our Hauora Māori strategic plan continues to guide our commitment to equity through:

- **He tirohanga whānui** - Ensuring equity for Māori is a focus for all parts of the organisation
- **He mahi** - Developing and celebrating best practice for improving equity for Māori
- **Kotahitanga** - Establishing meaningful relationships with iwi, hapu, and Māori providers
- **He tāngata** - Growing Māori workforce and weaving Te Ao Māori understanding throughout the organisation.

As we look to the future, Whakarongorau remains committed to its role as a sector leader, innovator, and partner in transforming healthcare delivery across Aotearoa. Through continued collaboration, innovation, and unwavering commitment to equity, we're building a healthcare system that truly serves all New Zealanders.

Refer to Appendix B to see the Whakarongorau Journey Map.

Ngā mahi / whakatutukihia //

2023-24 Performance



Whakarongorau
Aotearoa//
New Zealand
Telehealth
Services//



Mahi that Matters.

Refer to Appendix C for full end of year performance for the financial year ending 30 June 2024.

Responding to
~664,000 contacts

Connecting with nearly 430,000
people – 1 in 12 people in Aotearoa

Delivering ~173,000 hours of
contact time

Answering 64% of calls
within 10 minutes

That meant improved access, resolution, and choice for tāngata whai ora / people seeking wellness

50% of all contacts were resolved for the person at the time of contact

86% of contacts didn't get referred to 111 or ED

76% of 'at risk' individuals had their distress managed without emergency services being required

48% of the ~89,000 injury-related contacts got self-care advice and were diverted away from the sector

28% of contacts supported Māori, Pacific, and Disabled tāngata whai ora

6,700 people chose support through our dedicated Māori pathways to speak with a Māori clinician



MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

34,700+ people relied on the 1737 Need to talk? service – the team responded to **~110,600** contacts

5,700+ people had peer support from someone with lived experience

10,000+ people were supported when they contacted the Depression Helpline

The Alcohol and Other Drugs team supported **~8,800** people dealing with the effects of substance abuse

The Gambling Helpline team supported **~2,500** people

The Earlier Mental Health Response team triaged **~12,000** contacts from Police and ambulance services, to support **~6,400** people in social and psychological distress - **90%** were diverted away from those emergency services



HEALTH SERVICES

Healthline nurses, paramedics and doctors supported more than **284,000** people – **~34%** of the **~377,000** callers had their issue resolved on the call

~10% of contacts shared an image or video to support the triage - callers supported using an image are less likely to be sent to ED or 111 - **8% vs 16%** without image

Our Emergency Triage nurses managed **~44,000** non life-threatening 111 ambulance calls - **52%** were redirected to non-emergency services which keeps our hospitals and ambulances for emergencies

The Poisons team helped **~25,800** people – **76%** required no further treatment or info



IMPACT OF OUR NON-CLINICAL TAKI-O-AUTAHU PARTNER TEAMS

While COVID service demand dropped from the peaks seen in previous years, demand has been solid through the last 12 months - our teams supported **643,000+** contacts connecting with **~600,000** people (1 in 10 people in Aotearoa)

That included making **556,000+** outbound calls to encourage and support booking COVID, flu and whooping cough vaccinations

They also supported **~8,000** contacts from the Disability Community - providing COVID and general health advice and support



SUPPORT FROM WHAKARONGORAU DOCTORS

Completed **24,000+** telehealth consults across Healthline and COVID services - **68%** of medical needs were resolved on the call, allowing people to stay in their homes; **85%** were diverted away from ED or 111

Supported **~2,000** paramedics on-scene - resulting in **76%** of those patients diverted from EDs

Responded to **1,100+** calls into the Clinical Advice Line to provide peer-to-peer medical advice to frontline clinicians, pharmacists and allied health professionals



HELP PEOPLE QUIT SMOKING AND VAPING

Quitline supported **~16,200** people on their quit journey - **33%** were smokefree after 4 weeks (an increase of 5% on last year)

2,500+ people enrolled in the new Quitline programmes to become smoke or vape free

FEEDBACK & EVENTS



145 compliments were received

Nearly **30,000** people provided feedback in co-design activities and service user experience surveys

325 complaints were received. All were investigated and contributed to our quality improvement programme

1,836 break glass events* occurred and **15,027** 'at risk' contacts were supported (up 21% on last year)

Powered by
 Whakarongorau Aotearoa//
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Ō mātou te whāinga tōmua // 2024-26 Plan



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Ō mātou te whāinga tōmua // 2024-26 Plan

This plan outlines the key priorities and focus areas for the National Telehealth Service and Health New Zealand over the 2024-26 financial years.

The workplan has been developed collaboratively with all co-funding partners to align with and advance the Government's health and wellbeing priorities.

A dynamic approach

The health system continues to evolve, with significant reviews and strategic updates reshaping priorities and direction. Our plan is designed to be responsive to these changes while maintaining focus on our core purpose of delivering quality telehealth services.

Several key factors are driving change in healthcare delivery:

- The urgent need to address inequitable access and health outcomes
- Growing expectations for consumer involvement in healthcare decisions
- Rapid advances in technology transforming service delivery.

Our National Telehealth Service plan is designed to be flexible and responsive, allowing us to adapt quickly to emerging priorities from Health New Zealand and the wider health and social services sector

Looking ahead and alignment

Our National Telehealth Service plan aligns with and supports key health and wellbeing strategies, including:

- **Te Pae Tata:** The New Zealand Health Plan (under review)
- **Kia Manawanui Aotearoa:** Mental Wellbeing Strategy
- **Pae Tū:** Hauora Māori Strategy
- **Te Mana Ola:** Pacific Health Strategy
- The Health of Disabled People Strategy
- The Rural Health Strategy
- The Women's Health Strategy.

These strategies collectively work towards achieving Pae Ora (healthy futures) for all New Zealanders. Our plan is designed to be flexible and responsive, allowing us to adapt quickly to evolving priorities from Health New Zealand, strategy updates, and the wider health and social services sector.

2024-26 Innovation Initiatives


The NTS continues to focus on driving health innovation, particularly technology-enabled solutions, to deliver high-quality, multi-disciplined, clinically driven programmes that adapt with the changing needs and expectations of the population.

As at 30 June 2024, the innovation fund balance was \$550,000.

Use of the fund requires the Designated Representative and Whakarongorau Aotearoa Board to agree and approve the funding. When funding requirements and project briefs are established, formal requests for innovation funding will be made to the Whakarongorau Board and Health New Zealand.

As part of the NTS Plan, four initiatives that have a future-focused, innovative lens have been identified and have been approved for funding through the Innovation Fund.

Refer to Appendix D for the identified 2024-26 initiatives to deliver innovation and service enhancements.



A key strength of the NTS 10-year contract has been the inclusion of the NTS Innovation Fund, which prioritises innovative service enhancements and developments.

Ō mātou pou

The National Telehealth Service (NTS) has four pou that guide its work to deliver better health outcomes for all New Zealanders:

- **Timely access to quality care**
- **Achieve equitable health**
- **Strengthen our foundations**
- **Connect the system**

These pou work together to provide physical, mental and social health services that are fair and sustainable. They guide NTS towards its long-term goal of pae ora for New Zealand, while supporting current needs at local, regional and national levels.

Our work plan balances:

- Improving core services
- Reducing health gaps
- Using new technology
- Making decisions based on evidence

This approach helps NTS deliver better health results for tāngata whai ora, whānau, and communities.

Refer to Appendix D for the full 2024-26 work programme and identified initiatives.



**TIMELY ACCESS
TO QUALITY CARE**

**ACHIEVE
EQUITABLE HEALTH**

**STRENGTHEN
OUR FOUNDATIONS**

**CONNECT
THE SYSTEM**



TIMELY ACCESS TO QUALITY CARE

This pillar focuses on improving access to quality telehealth services to meet growing demand, ease pressure on the health system, and help people receive care at home.

NTS will achieve this by:

- **Managing demand** - developing new ways to provide early support and connect people with the right care across the sector
- **Digital care options** - using digital systems to deliver new care models that meet emerging needs and help more people get care directly through NTS services
- **Developing our workforce** - empowering our people through training, technology and innovative workforce models.

What success means:

Making it easier for people to get the right advice and care, at the right time, through the right channel.

Supporting Government health targets, NTS works with the sector, local communities and whānau to design services that meet local needs, help whānau stay well, make informed choices, and access quality healthcare at home.

The growth of digital Healthline has changed how people find health information and get clinical support. This has increased engagement with people who rarely use health services, provided self-help options for basic needs and queries, and improved first-call solutions to reduce pressure on the wider system.

Better connections across the sector make Healthline the 'first virtual responder' for health queries, with more people calling before going to ED or 111. Direct links to telehealth GPs provide faster access to care when local in-person visits aren't available - further easing pressure on local services.

NTS outreach, equity focus, and technology helps local providers and iwi actively engage and book people into key health programmes. Using different types of staff and supporting Health New Zealand regional teams and ACC with planned care, treatment follow-up, and remote monitoring has improved health outcomes, reduced hospital returns, and freed up sector capacity.

In mental health services, AI technology makes services more accessible while people wait for a counsellor. This innovation uses automated 'chatbot' messaging to respond quickly when people reach out, identify risks early, gather key information, and prepare people for counsellor conversations.

This has helped manage expectations and demand through non-phone channels, improved user experience and service pathways, while reducing wait times and barriers for people in mental health distress.



ACHIEVE EQUITABLE HEALTH

This pillar focuses on delivering fairer health outcomes for groups who haven't been well served before. The National Telehealth Service (NTS) does this by making services easier to access and more relevant to their needs. It's about building strong relationships and truly understanding what matters to people seeking care, their families, iwi, and communities.

NTS will achieve this by:

- **Building better pathways** - growing dedicated Māori and Pacific mental health and social services
- **Making services accessible** - improving how people with disabilities can use and connect with NTS services
- **Supporting young people** - increasing capacity to help youth mental health, both directly and through partnerships
- **Working with iwi** - partnering to deliver services for Māori, by Māori, in their communities.

What success means:

Health gaps are reduced as more people access and use services designed with their needs in mind.

NTS has built services that remove barriers and meaningfully connect with priority groups. Service improvements reflect local needs and directly help our most vulnerable communities.

The equity-focused services have transformed how NTS works. They show real value by offering culturally relevant, accessible care where people can connect with someone they relate to. People feel supported and confident using NTS services in ways that are both culturally and clinically safe. The approach centres on families, builds relationships, respects cultural practices, and ensures services work for Māori, Pacific peoples and disabled people.

Supporting local delivery has helped reduce barriers to care. Digital options have made it easier for people to access care when needed, helping more people stay well at home and connected to their communities, especially where there are gaps in services or limited health workers.

All NTS services are accessible, inclusive and fair. NTS services provide access to interpreter services supporting multiple languages, including te reo Māori and Pacific languages, ensuring all New Zealanders can access care in their preferred language, as well as supporting people with disabilities. This helps raise awareness and makes it easier for everyone to connect with health services.

Strong partnerships with Taki o Autahi, communities, iwi and local health providers ensure services are culturally safe, relevant, and offer quality choices that improve Māori health outcomes. NTS works with education, housing, youth services and private sector partners, recognising that health and wellbeing need a complete approach, using Te Whare Tapa Whā in service delivery.

This is supported by a diverse, engaged and culturally-aware workforce that reflects the communities served. NTS is committed to strengthening cultural understanding and sharing information to develop new ways to improve fairness across the organisation.



STRENGTHEN OUR FOUNDATIONS

This pillar recognises how health sector, local, and user needs are changing and becoming more complex. NTS prioritises ongoing improvement and innovation to increase service access by using clinical expertise, partnerships, new technologies, and equity-focused insights, while strengthening core services.

NTS will achieve this by:

- **Improving mental health pathways** - reviewing all mental health care to better handle increasing demand, complexity and access challenges, including rising numbers of at-risk people
- **Enhancing addiction services** - improving services to increase engagement with priority groups, better capture data and insights, and build stronger connections with in-person providers to share knowledge and development opportunities
- **Managing 111 calls** - working with emergency partners to improve services and technology to direct non-emergency and mental health calls to more appropriate services
- **Expanding workforce options** - exploring peer support and lived-experience roles to help with recruitment and capacity challenges across NTS services.

What success means:

Excellence in clinical leadership, sector and technology integration, and workforce diversity has made NTS services more innovative, relevant, and responsive to current and future needs.

Working with Health New Zealand, NTS has redesigned care models to meet changing needs and complexity of people seeking help, especially in Mental Health & Addiction services.

Services are organised by need level, offering different support options for mild, moderate, complex, and crisis support. This includes more peer support workers and people with lived experience to provide valuable understanding and connections.

This has created more capacity (within NTS and local providers) and better matches resources to different support needs, while self-help digital tools offer more choice, accessibility, and responsiveness to different needs.

People and their families can lead their own wellbeing journey, with strong clinical oversight and clear emergency pathways ensuring support is readily available when needed.

Expanded services supporting 111 have created better pathways and awareness for non-emergency health and mental health response, ensuring people can access support anywhere, anytime, with the right level of response. This has reduced pressure on ambulance and Police, keeping emergency services available for urgent needs.

Nationwide after-hours services (mainly in primary care and crisis mental health) now support all families across New Zealand. This includes working with local response networks to meet community needs and help families in distress.

Connected data provides better understanding of clinical and social impact - measuring if services meet needs and expectations, improve access and engagement, and change outcomes for people. Data sharing across the sector helps coordinate care for people using multiple services.



CONNECTING THE SYSTEM

This pillar focuses on using modern technology and digital solutions to improve healthcare access and choice. The National Telehealth Service (NTS) uses connected data systems to provide quality insights and support evidence-based decisions.

NTS will achieve this by:

- **Platform improvements** - using cloud-based systems and new technology to make processes simpler, more efficient, and faster for accessing care
- **System connections** - sharing information securely through APIs and enabling people to manage their health information for better experiences
- **Data insights** - developing data systems to gain valuable insights while respecting data sovereignty and treating information as taonga
- **Workforce mobility** - continuing to work with emergency service partners to enhance secure remote working capabilities
- **Digital skills** - building staff knowledge and ability to work with digital tools and data.

What success means:

Better technology connects people, services, and digital tools, while integrated data shows the impact of clinical and social services.

NTS builds trust in digital healthcare by adopting new integrated solutions early, creating a foundation for innovation that helps meet changing community needs.

Digital options give people more choice in how they access healthcare and information, making it easier to connect with health services. People have the right tools to move smoothly between digital and person-to-person care, helping them manage their health and wellbeing.

Advanced cloud-based platforms and service improvements help NTS work more efficiently and grow easily, using new technologies like AI to quickly analyse and provide insights.

NTS quickly develops new service channels, delivering connected experiences that meet changing health needs and show better outcomes. Local providers also use this digital infrastructure to improve care in their communities.

With connected health system information, NTS uses innovative tools (including AI) to handle health data and understand needs at individual, regional, and national levels. This includes working with others to support evidence-based decisions and system-wide improvements.

Every contact point becomes the right one for people using services, who can be identified as they move between services and channels. Using My Health Record, connected systems mean faster, better experiences when contacting NTS, shorter calls as information is already available, simpler processes, easy information sharing with care teams, and alignment with national health platforms.

As information flows better, with more meaningful data, staff are more engaged, efficient, and digitally capable, allowing clinicians to work to their full potential and strengthen clinical excellence

Delivering the Plan

Strategic direction and governance

The National Telehealth Service (NTS) 2024-26 Plan needs clear priorities, resources, and milestones to achieve its goals. Regular oversight comes through three key groups:

1. Whakarongorau Aotearoa Board

- Sets overall strategic direction
- Oversees NTS contract delivery and management

2. Clinical Governance Committee

- Provides independent oversight of clinical safety, effectiveness and system
- Ensures patient safety and clinical compliance
- Monitors clinical quality and outcomes.

3. NTS Service Improvement Board

- Oversees the NTS contract delivery
- Guides and approves service developments and improvements
- Ensures alignment with government agency and stakeholder priorities
- Maintains focus on NTS strategic direction.

This structure ensures all key stakeholders stay informed and can act early if organisational or market needs change.

Progress monitoring

The Quarterly Service Monitoring and Review group:

- Reports to the Service Improvement Board
- Reviews NTS performance, quality and risks every three months
- Tracks progress against agreed work plans
- Includes representatives from Health New Zealand and NTS funders
- Recommends actions and changes as needed.

Adapting to change

The plan will evolve as health sector priorities and technology change, while staying true to agreed strategic priorities. Key influences include:

- Health New Zealand Telehealth Review outcomes
- Pae Tata Health Strategy direction
- New Ministry of Health programmes and priorities.

Any significant changes will be reviewed and approved by both the Whakarongorau Aotearoa Board and NTS Service Improvement Board.

Key risks

Initial risk assessment has identified these main areas:

- Workforce challenges (shortages, pay parity, retention)
- Sector changes and multiple reviews affecting operations
- Resource constraints and programme delivery challenges
- Changes to health system commissioning approaches may impact service delivery models and funding mechanisms, requiring careful management of transition periods and strong partnership approaches.
- Service continuity during procurement and transition periods presents a key risk requiring careful management to maintain quality and accessibility of services
- Digital security, data protection and platform management
- Financial sustainability in current economic conditions

Each initiative will have its own detailed risk assessment and management plan.

The complete risk register is available in Appendix E.

Te ine i te angitū // 2024-26 Forecasts



Whakarongorau
Aotearoa//
New Zealand
Telehealth
Services//



Forecasted Contacts by Service

Our service contact forecasts are based on funding levels as part of the NTS contract.

NTS contacts by service line	FY 2023-2024 annual forecast	FY 2023-2024 actual	FY 2024-2025 annual forecast
Health Services	438,637*	377,117	359,097
Mental Health & Addictions	150,874	150,874	184,533
Quitline	55,102	54,195	55,102
Poisons	24,557	25,788	24,557
Emergency Triage	43,000	43,811	43,000
Earlier Mental Health Response	11,701	11,911	11,701

*Includes the COVID funded Healthline uplift

*Covid-funded service changes impacting year-on-year comparisons

Ngā āpitihanga // Appendices



Whakarongorau
Aotearoa//
New Zealand
Telehealth
Services//

Appendix A - Service Directory

Ratonga Hauora // Health Services

Healthline

Capability: Health advice and information about what to do next

Channels: 0800 611 116 // www.healthline.govt.nz
facebook.com/HealthlineNewZealand // Healthline NZ App

Contacts*: ~432,800

Established: 1994

Clinical team: Nurses, paramedics and health advisors. Doctors are available 7am- 11pm



Immunisation Advice

Capability: Providing advice to the public (in partnership with the Immunisation Advisory Centre (IMAC))

Channels: 0800 IMMUNE (0800 466 863). Calls from the public are transferred to the Healthline team (that happens 24x7). Calls from Health professionals are answered by IMAC staff, (weekdays 9am - 4.30pm)

Contacts*: 1,750

Established: NTS involvement since November 2015

Clinical team: Immunisations-trained nurses



Live Kidney Donation

Capability: A 'front door' for people inquiring about being a kidney donor

Channels: 0800 LIVE DONOR (0800 5483 3666)

Contacts*: 80

Established: NTS involvement since November 2015

Clinical team: Nurses



Ohatata Whakaarotau // Emergency Triage

Ambulance Secondary Triage

Capability: Clinical telephone assessment for low acuity calls

Channels: 111 calls to St John and Wellington Free Ambulance

Contacts*: 42,200+

Established: July 2014

Clinical team: Nurses and paramedics

Ambulance Secondary Triage



Appendix A - Service Directory (continued)

Ratonga Paihana // National Poisons Centre

Poisons Advice

Capability: Information about poisons or support in case of poisoning.

Channels: 0800 POISON (0800 764 766)

Contacts*: 26,000+

Established: NTS involvement since Nov 2015

Clinical team: Poisons advisors



National Poisons Centre
Te Pokapū Mātauranga Tāoke

Hauora Hinengaro Me Ngā Waranga // Mental Health and Addictions

1737 need to talk?

Capability: Brief intervention counselling. People can talk through emotional and psychological issues and concerns

Channels: Phone or text 1737 // www.1737.org.nz
www.facebook.com/1737NeedToTalk

Contacts*: ~124,200

Established: June 2017

Clinical team: Counsellors, social workers, psychotherapists, psychologists

NEED TO TALK?



1737 need to talk? Peer Support

Capability: Callers have the option to talk with a 'peer' - a non-clinician with lived experience of mental health challenges. This provides 'support from someone who knows'

Channels: Call 1737 (2pm-10pm) // www.1737.org.nz

Contacts*: ~32,800

Established: August 2020

Clinical team: Trained peer support workers from Mind & Body



Alcohol Drug Helpline

Capability: Advice, information and support about drinking or drug use

Channels: 0800 787 797 // text 8681 // webchat www.alcoholdrughelp.org.nz
facebook.com/alcoholdrughelplinez // info@alcoholdrughelp.org.nz

Contacts*: 8,500+

Established: 1995 (alcohol focused), 2002 (extended to include drug).
With NTS from November 2015

Clinical team: Trained counsellors



Appendix A - Service Directory (continued)

Depression Helpline

Capability: Providing support, tools and information to people with depression and anxiety, and their whānau

Channels: 0800 111 757 // text 4202 // www.depression.org.nz

Contacts*: ~12,500

Established: 2006. With NTS from 2015

Clinical team: Counsellors and social workers

**Depression
Helpline**

Gambling Helpline

Capability: Support for those worried about gambling or the gambling of others

Channels: 0800 654 655 // text 8006 // webchat // www.gamblinghelpline.co.nz
info@gamblinghelpline.co.nz // facebook.com/GamblingHelplineNZ

Contacts*: ~2,600

Established: 2004. With NTS from November 2015

Clinical team: DAPAANZ fully registered and provisionally registered addiction practitioners

**Gambling
Helpline**
AOTEAROA

RecoverRing

Capability: Service for offenders (and whānau and families who are helping them) who want support with their alcohol or drug use

Channels: 0800 678 789

Contacts*: ~400

Established: May 2017

Clinical team: DAPAANZ fully registered and provisionally registered addiction practitioners

RecoverRing
Alcohol & drug support line

The Lowdown

Capability: Support to help young people recognise and understand depression or anxiety

Channels: 0800 654 655 // www.the lowdown.co.nz

Contacts*: ~2,700

Established: 2010. With NTS from November 2015

Clinical team: Counsellors

**THE
LOW
DOWN
.CO.NZ**

Appendix A - Service Director (continued)

Ngā Kaitaunaki Hauora Hinengaro // Earlier Mental Health Response

Earlier Mental Health Response

Capability: Clinical telephone assessment for selected 111 calls from Police and ambulance. Callers get a health response rather than a justice response

Channels: Referral from 111

Contacts*: 11,700+

Established: April 2016

Clinical team: Mental health nurses

EARLIER
MENTAL HEALTH
RESPONSE

Expert Advice Line

Capability: Support for government, community and social service professionals needing expert advice for their work with clients with mental health support needs or addiction challenges

Channels: 0800 811 767

Contacts*: ~40

Established: August 2017

Clinical team: Mental health nurses

EXPERT
ADVICE
LINE

Te Aukatinga Momi Paipa // Smoking Cessation

Quitline

Capability: Support for people wanting to quit smoking and stay smokefree, to Vape2Quit, as well as to quit vaping

Channels: 0800 778 778 // text 4006 // webchat // Quit blog // www.quit.org.nz facebook.com/quitlinenz // www.tiktok.com/@quitline

Contacts*: 56,800+

Established: May 1999. With NTS from November 2015

Clinical team: Trained quit advisors

Quitline
ME MUTU

Appendix B - Whakarongorau Journey Map

1994

Homecare Medical (NZ) Limited founded



2014

ProCare Health and Pegasus Health form a partnership and acquire Homecare Medical (NZ) Limited Partnership

2015

JUNE 2015 >

Homecare Medical announced as Ministry of Health's partner to develop and deliver a new National Telehealth Service

NOVEMBER 2015 >

National Telehealth Service go live

2016

APRIL 2016 >

Earlier Mental Health Response and Mental Health After Hours (MHAH) added

2017

APRIL 2017 >

Homecare Medical announced to deliver Coordination Centre for the National Bowel Screening Programme

MAY 2017 >

Department of Corrections RecoverRing service goes live for prisoners, offenders and their whānau

JUNE 2017 >

1737 Need to Talk service launches to provide multi-channel access to mental health

JUNE 2017 >

Launch Elder Abuse Response service

OCTOBER 2017 >

Whakarongorau receives ISO 9001 accreditation for first time

NOVEMBER 2017 >

Healthline consult notes now sent to caller's GP

2018

MARCH 2018 >

Employer Advice Line launched - to help employers support staff with health, mental health and disability issues

MAY 2018 >

Kupe prostate decision support tool and website launched

JUNE 2018 >

Launch Safe to Talk national service



OCTOBER 2018 >

Launch Puāwaitanga pilot with MSD to provide video counselling

2019

JANUARY 2019 >

Launch NZDF4U mental health service for New Zealand Defence Force

FEBRUARY 2019 >

Design new Piki website to support mental health pilot for 18-25 year olds

NZ Defence Force Mental Health Line



MARCH 2019 >

Paramedics join the Healthline team

MARCH 2019 >

Support 1737 psychosocial response to Christchurch Mosque attacks



APRIL 2019 >

Homecare Medical announced to deliver Coordination Centre for the National Cervical Screening Programme



JULY 2019 >

New healthy.org.nz website launched to share key health information

SEPTEMBER 2019 >

Healthline plays key role in supporting measles outbreak



OCTOBER 2019 >

New data platform, Lightfoot, goes live

OCTOBER 2019 >

Supported Hokonui Huanui Southern youth mental health project

NOVEMBER 2019 >

Complex Caller team established

NOVEMBER 2019 >

Misuse of Drugs referral pathway for Police established

2020

FEBRUARY 2020 >

Homecare Medical's COVID-19 pandemic response begins

FEBRUARY 2020 >

Launch Whiti Tauā mentor service



MARCH 2020 >

Launched COVID response services:

- COVID Healthline
- COVID Welfare
- Clinical Advice Line



MARCH 2020 >

Launched Family Violence service lines with Presbyterian Support/Shine

APRIL 2020 >

Launched Shielded Site capability with Women's Refuge to provide protected web activity

AUGUST 20 >

1737 Peer Support Service launched to provide lived experience mental health support



AUGUST 20 >

New Bowel Screening Register database goes live



OCTOBER 2020 >

Image Upload tool launched in Healthline

2021

FEBRUARY 2021 >

COVID Vaccination Healthline service established



APRIL 2021 >

Rebrand - changed name to Whakarongorau Aotearoa



Whakarongorau Aotearoa// New Zealand Telehealth Services//

JULY 2021 >

Family Violence National Portal launched, supporting local Women's Refuge centres after hours

SEPTEMBER 2021 >

Afghan Resettlement Healthline established

SEPTEMBER 2021 >

Disability Helpline established



OCTOBER 2021 >

Are you ok? Webchat channel launched

2022

FEBRUARY 2022 >

New Quitline "Vape 2 Quit" programme launched to help people quit smoking through vapes



JULY 2022 >

Doctor capability in place, supporting ambulance with telehealth consults



JULY 2022 >

EMHR proof of concept with a mental health nurse based in the Police Communications Centre

AUGUST 2022 >

Launched Taki o Autahi partnership

SEPTEMBER 2022 >

Investment in oVRcome virtual reality

OCTOBER 2022 >

Transformed the COVID Welfare service to the Care in the Community



DECEMBER 2022 >

Launched Ukrainian Refugee Helpline

DECEMBER 2022 >

Established pathway for 500+ GP practices to divert patients to Healthline

2023

JANUARY 2023 >

Healthline Māori pathway established

JANUARY 2023 >

Quitline Māori Pathway established

JANUARY 2023 >

Launched Healthline Online digital tools

JANUARY 2023 >

Established the dedicated MonkeyPox line

FEBRUARY 2023 >

Launched video upload in Healthline



JUNE 2023 >

Implemented telephony platform replacement

SEPTEMBER 2023 >

Healthline launch process to lodge ACC claims through new claim lodgment pathway

SEPTEMBER 2023 >

National HPV and Cervical Helpline go live

NOVEMBER 2023 >

Whakarongorau received ISO 9001 accreditation for the fourth consecutive time



NOVEMBER 2023 >

New Quitline programme launched for non-smoking vapers to quit



2024

FEBRUARY 2024 >

New service to support National Privacy Information Service



MAY 2024 >

National rollout of bowel screening programme to all eligible New Zealanders complete

Appendix C - NTS End of Year Performance

Answered Contacts by service line – 1 November 2015 to 30 June 2024

	FY16 Total	FY17 Total	FY18 Total	FY19 Total	FY20 Total	FY21 Total	FY22 Total	FY23 Total	FY24 Total	Since inception
Healthline	233,366	356,748	366,168	351,082	393,354	397,806	476,752	432,764	377,117	3,385,157
Mental health and addictions	50,128	86,684	131,731	161,643	200,493	206,278	184,550	172,012	150,874	1,344,393
- Depression	34,603	61,264	64,568	52,015	53,834	50,568	35,988	30,022	21,736	350,764
- Need to Talk / 1737	-	-	40,307	86,425	123,025	131,619	126,777	124,168	110,647	619,943
- Alcohol and other drugs	10,982	18,576	20,596	19,022	19,394	19,028	16,242	12,077	13,251	129,774
- Gambling	4,543	6,844	6,260	4,181	4,240	5,063	5,543	5,745	5,240	43,419
Quitline	65,364	78,999	51,004	51,192	49,614	46,253	57,372	56,800	54,195	510,793
National Poisons Centre	19,369	23,230	23,133	23,903	24,650	25,454	31,744	26,142	25,788	223,413
Emergency Triage	21,522	31,036	46,983	53,990	44,473	46,479	43,094	42,095	43,811	373,483
Earlier Mental Health Response	-	200	5,379	7,261	11,109	10,954	11,806	11,725	11,911	70,345
TOTAL	389,749	576,897	624,398	649,071	723,693	733,224	805,318	741,538	663,696	5,907,584

Individual users by service line – 1 November 2015 to 30 June 2024

	FY16 Total	FY17 Total	FY18 Total	FY19 Total	FY20 Total	FY21 Total	FY22 Total	FY23 Total	FY24 Total
Healthline	213,832	327,056	330,233	317,763	331,800	312,317	305,400	322,102	284,041
Mental health and addictions	25,968	50,586	79,435	102,970	118,821	110,701	84,449	66,263	55,999
- Depression	14,207	31,530	36,575	34,131	33,670	29,131	25,526	12,583	10,023
- Need to Talk / 1737	-	-	21,467	48,779	65,251	63,275	47,802	42,593	34,736
- Alcohol and other drugs	8,392	14,271	17,033	16,555	16,610	14,894	13,846	8,509	8,799
- Gambling	3,369	4,785	4,360	3,505	3,290	3,401	3,077	2,578	2,441
Quitline	48,324	59,796	36,359	33,421	30,890	27,929	17,561	16,815	16,196
National Poisons Centre	19,246	23,096	22,436	21,625	24,182	24,880	24,366	23,648	24,425
Emergency Triage	21,048	30,324	45,897	52,540	43,248	45,127	43,002	39,582	40,545
Earlier Mental Health Response	-	157	3,589	5,026	8,106	7,504	5,990	6,345	6,358
TOTAL	328,418	491,015	517,949	533,345	557,047	528,458	480,768	474,755	427,564

* The total number of individual people in the year is the sum of unique service users each month, so may include users who have contacted the service in multiple months.

Appendix D - 2024-26 Work Programme and Innovation Fund Initiatives

POU: Equitable health	Te Pae Tata Priority	Funding
OUTCOME: Health inequities for priority populations are reduced through increased access to and engagement with equity-centred services		
Extend pathways for priority populations (specific focus on Māori / Pacific / Disability) across mental health and social services*	Place whānau at the heart of the system to improve equity and outcomes	Innovation Fund
Establish focused capability and capacity to support youth mental health, both internally and through sector partnerships		Existing funding
Empower disabled communities through extending services to better support accessibility and engagement across physical, mental and social telehealth services		New funding required

POU: Connect the system	Te Pae Tata Priority	Funding
OUTCOME: Optimise innovation and technology to connect people and increase digital enablement across the ecosystem and empower tāngata whai ora to access healthcare digitally		
Leverage AI and omni channel pathways to enable faster, more efficient access to the care they need*	Improve digital access to primary care as an option to improve access and choice	Innovation Fund
Build Healthline integration with My Health Account to provide direct access to user details and health information*		Innovation Fund
Leverage new Whakarongorau systems to reimagine our data intelligence and system integration to drive improved user outcomes and innovation, including linking with national APIs and using AI to support digital channels as well as data capture*	Improve the interoperability of data and digital systems	Innovation Fund
Support centralised digital initiatives by enabling local providers to deliver regionally funded services by leveraging our platform and technical capabilities		New funding required
Accelerate workforce mobility for the Emergency Triage team, with stable and secure access to the Ambulance CAD system outside of the Comms Centres*		Innovation Fund

POU: Timely access to quality care	Te Pae Tata Priority	Funding
OUTCOME: Improve access and choice by making it easier for consumers to access the right advice and the right care, at the right time and through the right channel		
Develop navigation pathways to providing telehealth GP consultations, particularly for the unenrolled, our priority communities, and those with limited access / engagement with healthcare	Keep people well in their communities	Existing funding
Develop and optimise digital platforms to improve experience and first call resolution for accessing, navigating and booking health and immunisation services*	Improve digital access to primary care as an option to improve access and choice	Innovation Fund
Identify opportunities with ACC to leverage telehealth solutions to enable local providers to better support ACC clients as well as the provide capacity work 'top of scope'. This could include developing self-serve options for low value / high volume claims or perioperative support (follow ups / DNAs etc) to optimise capacity		New funding required

POU: Strengthen our foundations	Te Pae Tata Priority	Funding
Excellence in clinical leadership, sector and technology integration, and workforce diversity has made NTS services more innovative, relevant, and responsive to current and future needs		
Review engagement pathways and end-to-end mental health model of care (currently designed for brief intervention) to better support the increasing trend of at risk tāngata whai ora and increase access to support	Place whānau at the heart of the system to improve equity and outcomes	Existing funding
Implement and deliver service improvement plan for Addictions services (including Quitline), including reviewing 'fit for purpose' of service, channel engagement, as well as sector and community engagement with Addiction providers		Existing funding
Review Earlier Mental Health Response model and processes, in partnership with Police and Ambulance, to deliver enhanced and integrated pathways for mental health calls into 111		Existing funding
Identify continuous improvement and innovation opportunities with service delivery partners (e.g. St John, Plunket, Poisons, Healthpoint) to reflect and support the changing needs of tāngata whai ora and the wider sector		Existing / New funding required

*Note: A total of \$600k has been approved for Innovation Fund initiatives in FY24-26, with funding to be released in phases aligned with the delivery of key milestones.

Appendix E – 2024-26 Considerations

Risk/ Challenge	Whakarongorau Aotearoa action plan	Health New Zealand support required
<p>Workforce pressures</p> <p>The initial National Telehealth Service (NTS) funding model was based on employing staff on higher remuneration levels compared to the DHBs. Sector wide pay parity increases, individual DHB negotiations along with nurse pay equity disputes are all putting pressure on NTS being able to maintain pay parity rates, amplifying recruitment and retention challenges.</p> <p>Challenges to meet workforce pay expectations continues to put pressure on bargaining negotiations with unions, with this resulting in industrial action taken by frontline kaimahi in the last 12 months and may be an ongoing risk given the limitations within the current funding envelope.</p> <p>Sector-wide workforce shortages continue to be a challenge, particularly in recruitment for qualified nurses and mental health professionals. Given the limited pool of resources and increasing need across the sector, the market is highly competitive with pay rates, working environment, and professional development opportunities being key negotiation points.</p> <p>The greatest risk of not addressing these workforce pressures is that the calibre of our clinicians will erode, increasing our clinical risk and ability to meet our contractual terms, including decreasing service performance.</p>	<p>Workforce cost pressures will be managed through reprioritisation and service efficiencies. Retention strategies are also key to retaining the existing quality kaimahi within the organisation.</p>	<p>Health New Zealand works with NTS to address pay parity issues and NTS is included in any Pay Equity Act changes or future Budget bids.</p> <p>Provide support and guidance to help inform our industrial relations approach to ensure we are aligned to the sector.</p> <p>Expedite change and funding contracts for rapid and ongoing resource uplifts and provide early indications of changes or extensions to these contracts.</p> <p>Support utilising alternative workforces across NTS services to help meet increasing demand, support capacity, and empower clinicians to work top of scope.</p>

Appendix E – 2024-26 Considerations (continued)

Risk/ Challenge	Whakarongorau Aotearoa action plan	Health New Zealand support required
<p>Sector / Policy risk</p> <p>Multiple factors have the potential to influence both the sector and the landscape NTS will operate in over the next 6-12 months. The outcome from the Telehealth Review could significantly change the shape of the future telehealth sector and both the role and priorities of NTS in the coming year.</p> <p>The Telehealth Review will also determine the procurement process for the NTS contract beyond 2025, which is currently unknown and could create internal and external uncertainty for the future of NTS and the organisation.</p> <p>Additionally, changes to the Health New Zealand structure as well as the pending update of the Pae Ora Health Strategy could result in a change in priorities and policies for the wider health sector. These changes could also result in delays or extensions to planned procurement processes, which could create further instability and uncertainty for NTS and our kaimahi.</p> <p>Capacity and demand pressures across the sector may also drive change in policy approach for some agencies, e.g. Police supporting non-emergency mental health calls, which could require reshaping of service delivery models to support any policy changes.</p>	<p>The NTS pou and workplan defines our desired future outcomes to continue to deliver quality services and accessibility for tāngata whai ora. Whakarongorau has proven ability to pivot and respond to the changing needs of the sector and tāngata whai ora.</p> <p>Maintaining</p> <p>Our close and collaborative relationship with Health New Zealand has provided strong visibility, contribution, and engagement throughout the Telehealth Review and NTS procurement processes. This has helped manage expectations, provide early insights and engagement with proposed direction, as well as prepare the team and market responses to potential changes or announcements.</p> <p>Similarly, maintaining closely relationships with the Mental Health team and our Police partners has provided early visibility of potential changes and allowed for a collaborative approach on how NTS may support any future requirements.</p> <p>Our close relationship with the Ministry, Health New Zealand, other key agencies and partners also means any priority changes can be identified early and responded to quickly.</p>	<p>Ongoing support and guidance from Health New Zealand and key partners for early identification and engagement of any potential government activities, policy and strategic direction changes, or reprioritisations that could cause potential organisational, market and/or media risks.</p> <p>Collaboration and collective design of comprehensive plans to front-foot our response and potential changes to NTS services.</p> <p>Continuing to provide strong governance cadence through the Health New Zealand Senior Reporting Officer and funders to drive priorities, strategic direction, and future opportunity identification.</p>

Appendix E – 2024-26 Considerations (continued)

Risk/ Challenge	Whakarongorau Aotearoa action plan	Health New Zealand support required
<p>Execution risk</p> <p>Our key challenge in achieving sustainable growth this year will be our continued ability and agility to strengthen service line innovations and achieve efficiencies to drive performance improvements.</p> <p>Our ability to achieve these improvements in the timeframes relies on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • business capacity to adopt and implement new projects and technologies, given reduced resources and a tight funding envelope • third parties to prioritise and improve integrations into their systems • minimising programme interdependencies, including resource conflicts • our ability to define and deliver long term measures of success. <p>Successful delivery of key programmes may also be impacted / disrupted by the outcome of sector reviews and the refreshed Health Strategy, and any change in priority.</p>	<p>The NTS workplan has been defined and agreed in partnership with Health New Zealand to prioritise focus, and is monitored as part of the NTS Quality Service Monitoring and Reporting forum.</p> <p>Our Programme Management team and cadence provides regular oversight of the capacity, capability and prioritisation required to meet key deliverables, mitigate potential risks, and manage business distraction and / or resource conflicts to keep critical deliverables on track.</p> <p>Maintain strong relationships and collaboration with key partners, iwi and providers to identify opportunities and deliver seamless, integrated solutions.</p>	<p>Ongoing engagement and prioritisation from Health New Zealand to build clear, forward-focused service expectations and outcomes, including providing scope and scale for future work programmes.</p> <p>Creating opportunities and opening doors to for cross-sector collaboration and system integration.</p> <p>Continuing to provide strong governance cadence through the Health New Zealand Senior Reporting Officer and funders to drive priorities, strategic direction, and future opportunity identification.</p>

Appendix E – 2024-26 Considerations (continued)

Risk/ Challenge	Whakarongorau Aotearoa action plan	Health New Zealand support required
<p>Transition</p> <p>The upcoming contract renewal process represents a significant period of transition for the National Telehealth Service. As we move towards 2025, managing the RFP process while maintaining service quality and workforce stability becomes paramount.</p> <p>This occurs against a backdrop of broader sector changes, including evolving health system structures and commissioning approaches. Workforce pressures across the health sector continue to affect recruitment and retention, while growing service demand adds complexity to maintaining consistent care delivery.</p> <p>The distributed workforce model requires careful management of both operational and digital security demands during this transition period.</p>	<p>The upcoming contract renewal process represents a significant period of transition for the National Telehealth Service.</p> <p>As we move towards 2025, managing the RFP process while maintaining service quality and workforce stability becomes paramount. This occurs against a backdrop of broader sector changes, including evolving health system structures and commissioning approaches.</p> <p>Workforce pressures across the health sector continue to affect recruitment and retention, while growing service demand adds complexity to maintaining consistent care delivery. The distributed workforce model requires careful management of both operational and digital security demands during this transition period.</p>	<p>Success requires clear and early communication about the procurement process and timeline, coupled with a collaborative approach to managing the transition period. Maintaining operational stability during procurement requires ongoing engagement to ensure alignment with broader health system changes, while supporting workforce certainty.</p> <p>A partnership approach to stakeholder communications helps maintain sector confidence in service continuity. Clear pathways for addressing emerging service pressures during the transition period will help maintain quality and accessibility for tāngata whai ora.</p> <p>This coordinated approach helps ensure essential health services remain accessible and effective throughout the contract transition process.</p>

Appendix E – 2024-26 Considerations (continued)

Risk/ Challenge	Whakarongorau Aotearoa action plan	Health New Zealand support required
<p>Cyber risk</p> <p>With the volume of personal health data captured across NTS services and the increasing volume of (successful) cyber-attacks both domestically and globally, keeping in front of the exponential growth in cyber security and digital asset management is a key priority for the IT team.</p> <p>Our established remote working capability, which has been progressively expanded and strengthened to support our distributed workforce model. Any outages to risk service users being able to access services when required, particularly during surges, and could potentially risk clinical safety.</p>	<p>Security and information controls is key to mitigating futureproofing against cyber risks. Our annual penetration audit is completed by independent specialist agency, while additional support from our IT partners helps mitigate any short-term risks. Continuous improvements in capability and cloud-based infrastructure will deliver strength and stability to our IT and security practices.</p> <p>These mitigants complement our quality management platform and supported by oversight from both our risk and clinical governance committees, which regular review our policies, procedures, compliance, and clinical safety.</p>	<p>Strong partnership with the Health New Zealand's Data and Digital team to leverage nationwide platforms and insights and identify opportunities for integration.</p>

Risk/ Challenge	Whakarongorau Aotearoa action plan	Health New Zealand support required
<p>Economic and financial sustainability</p> <p>Fiscal and economic conditions are having a substantial impact on financial sustainability across the sector, with restricted Vote Health budgets resulting in reduction of both resources and opportunities for growth</p> <p>Additionally, increasing cost pressures and pay parity continue to outstrip baseline inflationary allowances agreed within the 10-year NTS contract.</p> <p>While operational efficiencies continue to be identified and optimised to reduce pressure on service delivery, resource reductions and prioritisation decisions continue to be made to manage service delivery within the current funding envelope.</p>	<p>Strong financial controls and management tools are in place to manage economic and cost pressures, where possible.</p> <p>Early communication and engagement with funders, stakeholders, and suppliers to identify where emerging cost pressures may be likely, or where active management may be required.</p>	<p>Early engagement in Budget proposals and funding uplift opportunities.</p> <p>Expedite change and funding contracts for rapid and ongoing resource uplifts and provide early indications of changes or extensions to these contracts.</p>

Appendix F – Our Partners

Funding Partners:

Health New Zealand Te Whatu Ora



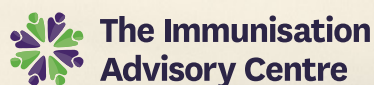
**MINISTRY OF SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**
TE MANATŪ WHAKAHIATO ORA



He Kaupare. He Manaaki.
He Whakaora.
prevention. care. recovery.



Service Partners:



Glossary of Terms

Call	A contact from tāngata whai ora made by phone.
Call transfer	A call that is transferred to another staff member (e.g. from Healthline to Depression) or to another service (e.g. emergency services, GP practice).
Conversation	A contact made via digital channels – SMS email or webchat. Often leads to a series of exchanges between tāngata whai ora and NTS kaimahi, but the single contact is counted as a ‘conversation’.
Contact	A contact via any channel – phone, SMS, email or webchat. There may be multiple contacts from one individual.
Frequent user	A individual who contacts one or more than one NTS service on multiple occasions, usually more than 20 times a month.
Interaction	An inbound or outbound message or communication that forms part of an email, chat or SMS conversation. An email conversation may include more than 10 email interactions, and an SMS conversation may contain more than 20 interactions.
Kaimahi	NTS staff members.
Outbound call	A phone call made by kaimahi to tāngata whai ora as part of service provision.
Tāngata whai ora	A person who has used an NTS service in a given time period. May have used the service more than once in that time period.