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| Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals  |
| Information for community service organisations |
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# A new level of the mental health and wellbeing system

The Royal Commission into Victoria’s Mental Health System recommended the establishment of Local Adult and Older Adult Mental Health and Wellbeing Services across Victoria.

The new service stream, now known as Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals (Local Services), are an important part of Victoria’s reformed mental health and wellbeing system.

Local Services are designed to deliver integrated mental health and wellbeing treatment, care and support for people aged 26 years and over, who:

* need more support than they can get from primary and secondary mental health and related services (for example, general practitioners and private psychologists and psychiatrists)
* do not need the type and intensity of treatment, care and support delivered by Area Adult and Older Adult Mental Health and Wellbeing Services (Area Services).

A network of Local Services across Victoria provides a wide front door to the reformed mental health and wellbeing system, meaning people can access treatment, care and support closer to home. They provide a welcoming and inclusive service that meets the diverse needs of our communities. These services are free of charge to consumers.

Local Services are intended for people aged 26 years and over, however people under 26 years old will be supported to access age-appropriate services.

# What are Local Services?

Local Services are free, voluntary, easy to access and delivered with a philosophy of ‘*how can we help?*’ and a ‘*no wrong door’* approach.

They offer:

* treatment and therapies
* person-centred wellbeing supports
* education, peer support and self-help
* consumer-led care planning and care coordination.

Local Services also provide integrated treatment, care and support for people with mental illness and co-occurring substance use, co-existing disability and trauma.

Priority is given to people who experience barriers to access and/or people who face the greatest barriers to good health and wellbeing.

Local Services are delivered by a multidisciplinary workforce including consumer and family peer workers, mental health clinicians and wellbeing support workers.

# Are the Local Services a free service?

Yes, the service is free for everyone, including people who don’t have a Medicare card.

# Is a referral from a health professional needed to access a Local Service?

A referral from a GP, or any other health professional, is not required to access a Local Service. However, if you are supporting a person to access a Local Service, a warm referral will help facilitate a smooth transition and continuity of care for the consumer.

# How do we contact a Local Service?

Local Services will be progressively introduced across Victoria from now until the end of 2026.

Please visit the [Mental Health and Wellbeing Local website on the Better Health Channel](https://www.betterhealth.vic.gov.au/mhwlocal) for information on how to contact the relevant Local Service.

For the most up to date information on the Local Services rollout, please visit the [Local Services page on the Department of Health website](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-reform/local-adult-and-older-adult-mental-health-and-wellbeing-services%20for%20the%20latest%20information) <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-reform/local-adult-and-older-adult-mental-health-and-wellbeing-services>.

It will take time for each Local Service to be able to offer the full range of services, including face-to-face, telehealth and outreach services provided individually and in group-based settings.

Consumers can access Mental Health and Wellbeing Hubs, Partners in Wellbeing, Head to Health Services and other existing services while Local Services get up and running.

Victorian Head to Health services and the Victorian Government’s Mental Health and Wellbeing Hubs will be progressively decommissioned as Local Services are established across Victoria.[[1]](#footnote-2)

# How are Local Services different to other mental health services?

Mental Health and Wellbeing Locals care for people who need more support than a general practitioner (GP) or private mental health practitioner can offer, but who do not need higher-intensity services, such as hospital-based support services.

These new services will not replace existing services already available. They work closely with GPs, private mental health practitioners, alcohol and other drug treatment providers and other community-based health and social services, to ensure consumer support needs are being met.

# How will Local Services work with community services?

The reformed mental health and wellbeing system has **six levels** of care, with the intensity of supports and services provided progressively increasing with each level.

* Level 1 comprises of social supports - families, carers and supporters, informal supports, virtual communities and communities of place, identity and interest.
* Level 2 is the broad range of government and community services outside the mental health system.
* Level 3 is primary and secondary mental health and related services.
* Level 4 is Local Mental Health and Wellbeing Services.
* Level 5 is Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Services.
* Level 6 is statewide services.

Mental health care coordination, system navigation and linkagesare a core function of Local Services.

Local Service providers have a current understanding of local needs and the delivery environment in the geographical area where the Local Service operates.

They offer supported referral and/or practical supports to help consumers navigate and connect to Area Mental Health and Wellbeing services, Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) services, as well as a wide range of other community-based health and social support services as appropriate.

Care coordinators within Local Services work across mental health, social support and welfare services and NDIS funded disability support to help consumers get the right supports at the right time and address barriers to access.

Local Services also provide information and advice about mental health and illness to health and social support services. This builds their capability to respond to the needs of people with a mental illness.

Physical health care will be integrated into the service offer including (but not limited to) screening, preventative health care (such as smoking cessation), nutrition and diabetes education in partnership with a referring GP or a community health service.

A social prescribing trial will be delivered by the first six Local Services which includes:

* developing the knowledge of, and pathways to local community activities and providers to address social isolation and loneliness, particularly for older people.
* community activities which could include walking groups, Men’s Sheds and Neighbourhood Houses, sport and art classes, group-based exercise, intergenerational programs, recreation activities, volunteering, education short courses, TAFE courses, and other diverse community-specific supports.

# Local Services Service Framework

The full intent and functions of Local Services is described in the [Service Framework](https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-reform/recommendation-3) available on the Department of Health's website <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health-reform/recommendation-3>.

The Service Framework reflects the vision and findings of the Royal Commission. It was developed with valuable and diverse input from people with a lived and living experience of mental illness, as well as technical and clinical advice from the mental health and wellbeing sector.

The Service Framework also provides a list of potential referrers to Local Services.

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1. With the exception of the Geelong Head to Health site which will continue to operate. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)