

## Fact Sheet 1 (Plain English)

This is the Plain English factsheet.

# Local Adult and Older Adult Mental Health and Wellbeing Services

The Victorian Government will launch up to 60 Local Adult and Older Adult Mental Health and Wellbeing Services (Local Services) across Victoria by the end of 2026. This is one of the flagship reforms recommended by the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System (Royal Commission).

The new network of Local Services will be an important part of Victoria's reformed mental health system, providing an easy way to get treatment and support. Other parts of the mental health system are also expanding and changing. Together, these changes will mean that people experiencing mental illness or psychological distress can get the support they need sooner, while staying in their community, close to their families, carers and supporters.

## Who can use Local Services?

Local Services will provide high quality treatment, care and support to people **26 years and over** who are experiencing mental illness or psychological distress, and who:

- need **more support** than what they can get from general practitioners, private psychologists and psychiatrists alone,
- may also have problems with substance use or addiction, but
- do **not** need the type of high-intensity and complex care provided by Area Mental Health and Wellbeing Services (such as inpatient care in hospital).

For people who have higher or different needs, Local Services will assist in connecting them to the right place.

## What support will Local Services provide?

In line with the Royal Commission's recommendations, Local Services will combine clinical and wellbeing mental health, which will be delivered by a multidisciplinary team. Services will include:

- **Clinical treatment and therapies** – such as mental health assessment and psychology services, including for alcohol and other drug issues
- **Wellbeing support** – such as support to recover, strengthen relationships, build life skills, get involved in the community and address issues like physical illness, homelessness and money problems
- **Education, peer support and self-help** – opportunities to connect with other people with lived experience of mental illness, families, carers and supporters to share experiences and ideas and learn from each other
- **Planning and coordination** – help to find, access and navigate other health and social support services.

The Local Services philosophy will be 'How can we help?'. Each Local Service will have the flexibility to respond to the unique needs of the local community.

## How will people access Local Services?

Local Services will be **free** and **easy to access**, with no referral needed. They will have longer opening hours. There will be a range of ways to access support, such as:

- going to a safe and welcoming place or environment
- having visits at home or somewhere else safe and convenient
- on your phone or a video call.

The Royal Commission recommended that care be consumer-led and person-centred. This means that people will be able to work with their Local Service to plan their own individual care. When they first contact their local service, they will be able to talk about what they need. After this, if necessary, there will be a holistic assessment of all of the person's needs. Based on their care plan, they will receive integrated clinical and wellbeing mental health care, including alcohol and other drug treatment and care, if appropriate.

## How will Local Services work with other parts of the reformed mental health system?

Local Services will be an important part of Victoria's reformed mental health and wellbeing system. The reformed system has six levels (see Figure 1). Local Services are the fourth level and the new 'front door' to the system. It will be easy for people to move around the system and receive the right care in the right place.

### Levels of the mental health and wellbeing system



Source: RCVMHS Final Report, vol. 1, p. 297

Figure 1 Levels of the mental health and wellbeing system

Local Services will work alongside general practitioners, private psychiatrists and psychologists and alcohol and other drug treatment providers in the local community (the third level). For example, a person may receive treatment from their general practitioner **and** wellbeing support from their Local Service. Supports may include help to build life skills or to address an important issue such as homelessness.

When a person's needs change and they require more or less intensive treatment, their care can be smoothly transferred to and from Area Services (the fifth level). People will be able to access Area Services with:

- a referral from their Local Service
- a referral from their general practitioner, or
- attending an Emergency Department.

The services at levels two, three and four all work together closely to provide treatment and care. For example, Local Services, general practitioners, psychologists and psychiatrists working in their communities will be able to access expert advice from acute mental health and addiction specialists. This will also build the skills and capability of Local Services.

## When will Local Services open?

By the end of 2022, the first six Local Services will be set up in:

- Benalla
- Brimbank
- Frankston
- Greater Geelong
- Latrobe Valley
- Whittlesea.

By the end of 2026, we plan to set up services for all Victorians.

## How can I have a say on the Local Services?

Based on the Royal Commission's final report, many features of the new Local Services are already decided. However, there will be opportunities to have a say on:

- what you want to experience when you use a Local Service.
- the design of the treatment, care and support model.

We will be consulting with people with lived experience, families, carers and supporters, workforce, service providers, peak bodies and advocacy groups. This will include local consultations to understand the specific needs of each community. For information about how to take part, visit the [Engage Victoria platform](https://engage.vic.gov.au/local-adult-older-adult-mental-health-wellbeing-services)  
<<https://engage.vic.gov.au/local-adult-older-adult-mental-health-wellbeing-services>>

## What was the Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health system?

The Royal Commission looked at how to create a mental health and wellbeing system that provides holistic treatment, care and support for all Victorians. The Royal Commission's final report was delivered in February 2021 and is available on the [Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System website](http://rcvmhs.archive.royalcommission.vic.gov.au/index.html)  
<<http://rcvmhs.archive.royalcommission.vic.gov.au/index.html>>

You can also read about how we are implementing the Royal Commission's recommendations on the [Health.Vic Mental Health Reform website](https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health/mental-health-reform) <https://www2.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health/mental-health-reform>.

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