

SANE'S SERVICES

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What services does SANE provide?

We have a range of support services for people with complex mental health issues available through SANE's website (sane.org/our-services) and support centre (1800 18 7263). They are free for you to use as you need them from anywhere in Australia. They consist of our counselling service, community forums, peer group chats, fact sheets and information, feature articles and blogs. Our services give you reliable information and expert support from qualified counsellors and people who have lived experience of complex mental health issues. Together they form a complete drop-in service for self-managing your mental health and finding an understanding community.

Who are the services for?

Our services target people over 18 years-of-age in Australia who want counselling, information and connection to help with their complex mental health and trauma issues. It is not a crisis service but designed for you to find the day-to-day help you need on your mental health journey. You might need to speak to a trained peer worker or counsellor about a specific issue or share your experiences in a chatroom with people who understand. Perhaps you need a fact sheet on a mental health topic or want to sign up for an art class. SANE's services offer you the help you need when you need it.

SANE also recognises that family members and carers of people with complex mental health issues often need counselling, support and reliable information to navigate the health care system. And the same supports are also in place for you.

Who is it not for?

It is not for you if you are experiencing an acute mental health crisis, especially if there is imminent harm or danger. (In this case, contact Lifeline on 13 11 14 or call 000). Nor are our services meant to replace your conventional psychiatric or medical care, but to deliver additional support to manage your complex mental health issues.

What are complex mental health issues?

Complex mental health issues are any that have a severe or complex impact on your day-to-day life, your relationships or your work. They include, but aren't restricted to, schizophrenia, complex trauma, psychosis, bipolar and borderline personality disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), and eating disorders. You may also be autistic or have an intellectual disability as well as having a mental health issue.

How much does the service cost and how often can I use it?

SANE's services are free. SANE is a long-established and respected not-for-profit organisation with services funded by the Commonwealth Government and private donation. We do not limit how or how often you use the service.

An exception is Studio Dax program at The Dax Centre that carry a fee for each term. However, you may be able to use your NDIS funding to take part in classes.

Do I have to sign-up to use the service?

Generally, no. Our drop-in services are free and do not require a registration or subscription. You can be anonymous if you wish.

Our guided service however, involves tailoring a support plan for you and setting up a participant login. You need to be referred or fill out a referral yourself and, since it is important, we understand your specific needs, anonymity is not possible. The Studio Dax program also requires registration.

THE SERVICES

What programs and activities can I access via the SANE website?

We have a range of programs and activities at SANE and you choose how and how often you use them to manage your mental wellbeing.

Our drop-in Service, available to you every weekday from 10am to 10pm by phone (**1800 18 7263**); webchat through the website; email enquiries at getsupport@sane.org), is where you can receive expert support, information and referral.

Our moderated community **Forums** are safe places to share your experience of living, or caring for someone, with complex mental health issues, with a range of topics you can contribute to and learn from. Go to saneforums.org

Peer Group Chats are webchats focused on a specific topic each week and are guided by peer support workers with lived experience of mental health issues. Go to sane.org/peer-support/peer-group-chat

Our Fact Sheets and Guides give you reliable information on mental health topics. Go to sane.org/information-stories

SANE Create is SANE's creativity space, with art classes, exhibitions, tours and more. Go to sane.org/about-sane/what-sane-does/sane-create

Our website (sane.org/information-stories) has feature articles, blogs and news to inform and inspire you.

Join our **social media** community on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn.

Throughout Australia we're rolling out our **guided service**, where you can work with a team of counsellors and peer support workers to identify your goals and tailor a support plan that's right for you. The guided service is designed for those who would benefit from a personalised plan and expert help to navigate their mental health journey. Go to sane.org/referral

What kind of counselling support is available at SANE?

Every weekday from 10am to 10pm, SANE's trained counsellors are available by phone (1800 18 7263) and webchat to give you support with your mental health and wellbeing. You can discuss your mental health issues, current problems, relationships, personal goals, challenges and self-care – anything that is important to you. Family, friends and carers are also welcome. Our counsellors use a strength-based approach that fosters connection and helps you build your personal and social skills, confidence and self-knowledge. They will draw on widely accepted evidence-based counselling techniques, such as cognitive behavioural therapy, motivational interviewing, mindfulness, open dialogue, and acceptance and commitment therapy.

Can I have face-to-face counselling sessions?

No, ours is a digital service, available nationally, with all counselling conducted by telephone (1800 18 7263). You can find out more by emailing (getsupport@sane.org).

What is peer support and how is it different from the counselling service?

One of SANE's strengths as a mental health organisation is that it is peer-led, which means the experience of people with complex mental health issues informs everything we do. Because SANE's peer support workers have lived experience of what you are going through, they have a personal perspective and empathy with your situation. Backed by their training, our peer support workers use this special insight to give you invaluable practical support. On our phone, webchat and email, in our community forums and chatrooms, they can help you by sharing their experiences of personal recovery and encouraging you in your next steps.

How can I contact a peer support worker?

Our peer support workers are available to deliver non-crisis related support on weekdays (**through chat or email getsupport@sane.org**). With their lived experience of the issues you might be facing, they will listen without judgement. Whether you are struggling with mental health issues, feeling isolated, or needing someone who understands what you are going through, you can connect with a peer support worker.

What are SANE's forums?

Our moderated online community forums are safe places to share your experience of living with complex mental health issues. Our Lived Experience Forum has a range of relevant topics for discussion. You can join in and share experiences, pass on information and tips, read stories, and explore issues of mental health and recovery. The forums are available 24 hours-a-day and are moderated by peer support workers, creating a safe and supportive community.

And for family, friends and carers of a person with complex mental health issues, there is a moderated community forum dedicated to you and your concerns, where you can find good advice, connection and community.

Go to our website (saneforums.org) for a list of topics and to join in.

What is a Peer Group Chat?

Held online every Thursday from 7pm – 8.30pm SANE's Peer Group Chats focus on a specific topic and are guided by peer support workers with lived experience of mental health issues. You can chat in real-time with others living with complex mental health issues, as well as family, friends and carers. Counsellors are in the background to make sure chats are safe for you. Peer Group Chats are free. Go to our website (sane.org/peer-support/peer-group-chat) to find out the date, time and topic of the next one.

What other resources are available to me on the website?

SANE's website hosts a wealth of relevant and up-to-date information for people with complex mental health issues and their families, friends and carers. Our factsheets and guides cover diagnoses, treatments, dealing with crises, and tips on living better. You can read them online or download to print. Go to sane.org/information-stories

Reading about other people's experiences of complex mental health can be heartening and SANE's People Like You page tells personal stories of experience and recovery. Go to sane.org/information-stories

For greater involvement in your community, you can subscribe to our Facebook, Instagram or LinkedIn pages, or follow us on Twitter. Or you can subscribe SANE Express, our news briefing on mental health stories from Australia and overseas.

Since art can be a great source of creation, recreation and social connection, learn more about what is available to develop your arts practice, connect with others and express yourself. For more information, go to sane.org/sane-create.

How does using SANE's drop-in services differ from being part of the guided service?

Our services have been designed for people to drop in as they need them as a key part of self-managing their mental health. Our guided service offers an intensive period of personalised online support from a dedicated team. The guided service offers many of the same services but delivers them as part of a tailored plan.

For many people with complex mental health issues, our suite of drop-in services gives them the level of support they need: occasional counselling, the community and connection of a community forum or chatgroup, and some helpful information. Unlike those in the more tailored guided service, you can be anonymous and choose if, when and how you engage with our separate services.

For more information about the guided service, go to sane.org/referral

How can I be sure these services will be beneficial?

SANE designs our services through extensive consultations with people with complex mental health issues, SANE's experienced counsellors, Peer Ambassadors and peer support workers, and many experts and organisations in the mental health sector. Over the years, we have drawn on their feedback and on evidence-based research to improve our services for you.

All SANE services follow the CHIME framework, whose acronym stands for the five optimal components for mental health programs: Connectedness, Hope and optimism, Identity, Meaning and purpose, and Empowerment. Every aspect of SANE's services has been created with these attributes in mind.

I have been using SANE's services for a while now. Can I be referred to the guided service?

Yes, if you have been using our services and have reached a point where you feel the need for a more personalised and structured management of your mental health issues, you can be referred to the guided service. Or perhaps you feel you are missing opportunities in accessing health services and need to better navigate the system – the guided service can help.

And, after completing your period in the guided service, you can continue managing your health through our other services.

CARERS AND FAMILY MEMBERS

I am a carer of someone with complex mental health issues and finding it difficult to cope and find reliable information. I need support. Can I speak to a counsellor at SANE?

Yes, SANE supports families, friends and carers with counselling and information. As well as counselling support, you can connect and share your experience with other family members and carers on our dedicated community forum.

PRIVACY CONCERNS

How can I be sure that what I tell you in counselling is kept safe and confidential?

Confidentiality is important to us and keeping your information safe is our priority. We have a strict privacy policy in which all our staff are trained. All personal and identifying information provided to SANE will be kept private and confidential. All data is kept safe on secure systems and is available to no one outside SANE. Go to our privacy policy: sane.org/privacy

When contacting our services, whether it is for counselling, Peer Group Chat or community forum, you always have the option of being anonymous or posting under a pseudonym.

Do you share any information with outside parties?

Rarely and in very limited circumstances. For example, if there is imminent risk of harm to someone, there may be a legal requirement to share information with a government authority, such as a local health authority or police.

And SANE shares service information with our research partners at Australian universities, who are evaluating our services and researching ways to improve them. But this information is of a statistical nature and will not identify you, nor will information you gave our support team in confidence be passed on.

Do you keep my information forever?

No, after keeping it secure for a time, we will destroy any identifying information in accordance with our data and information management policies. See here:

sane.org/data-and-information-management

I still have some questions about SANE Services. Who do I speak to?

Just call SANE on 1800 18 7263 (Monday to Friday, 10am to 10pm) and speak to one of our counsellors. Or contact us by email (getsupport@sane.org). We'll be glad to answer your questions.

If I have some feedback, concerns or complaints about this service, who do I speak to?

Feedback is always welcome, and complaints help us improve the service. If you wish to comment or complain about SANE's services just email us at feedback@sane.org.

We have a feedback and complaints policy that you can read [here](#).

We will always try to resolve your complaint, but if you are not satisfied by our response, you can contact AHPRA below.

For other issues:

If you have privacy or security issues, contact the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) at oaic.gov.au/privacy/privacy-complaints.

For concerns or complaints about a health service, contact your state or territory health complaints organisation; the contact details can be found on the Australian Health Practitioners Regulatory Authority (AHPRA) website: ahpra.gov.au/notifications/further-information/health-complaints.

For concerns or complaints about a registered health professional, go to AHPRA's webpage: [ahpra.gov.au/notifications/raise a concern](https://ahpra.gov.au/notifications/raise-a-concern).

For concerns and complaints about misleading claims, contact Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCAC): acc.gov.au/consumers/complaints-problems/make-a-consumer-complaint.