

Collaborative Practice Forum

Outcomes Report 2026

Strengthening collaboration across mental health, alcohol and other drug,
and community services in Melbourne's north-east

June 2026



Forum Highlights

The North East Mental Health Service Coordination Alliance (NEMHSCA) Collaborative Practice Forum brought together practitioners, leaders, lived experience representatives and community service providers to explore practical approaches to collaboration and integrated care.

Practice Without Walls

Presented by Corinn Strating and Alana Istanto from the Whittlesea Mental Health and Wellbeing Local, this presentation highlighted a workforce-wide approach to improving responses to people experiencing co-occurring AOD and mental health needs.

Strengthening Overdose Response

Joby Philip from Northern Health shared a collaborative initiative between Northern Health and Uniting Vic. Tas focused on strengthening overdose response capability through cross-service training, workforce development and shared learning.

Consumers Can Ask

Dr Kevan Myers from Nexus Dual Diagnosis Service, St Vincent's Hospital, presented a lived experience-led redevelopment of a consumer resource designed to support engagement, self-advocacy and participation in care.

Continuing Care Service

Emily Alexander from Austin Health showcased a collaborative model that supports timely access to mental health services and coordinated care pathways for consumers requiring ongoing support.

Consumer Journey Discussion

A real-world consumer journey case study presented by Neeteesha Nilmadhub (Uniting Vic. Tas) and Kat Hanson (Darebin Mental Health and Wellbeing Local). The discussion highlighted the importance of coordinated responses across services, the challenges of navigating complex systems, and the value of strong inter-service relationships in supporting positive consumer outcomes.

Effective Partnerships Workshop

Interactive workshop facilitated by Sarah Jones from Uniting Vic. Tas. Drawing on the Uniting's Effective Partnerships Toolkit, participants reflected on their own experiences of collaboration and identified practical strategies for strengthening partnerships across the mental health, AOD and community services sectors.

Participating Agencies

Austin Health | Darebin MHWL | DFFH Complex Needs Program | healthAbility | Holstep Health | Mind | Neami National | Nexus Integrated Care Service St Vincent's | Northern Health | SHARC | Uniting Vic. Tas | Wellways | Whittlesea MHWL | Your Community Health

Forum held on 20 May 2026 | Austin Health Repatriation Centre | over 50 participants from 14 member agencies

Service Showcase & Networking

The showcase provided an opportunity for services to share information about programs, referral pathways, eligibility criteria and partnership opportunities, while enabling participants to build new connections and strengthen existing relationships across the Alliance.



Participating Services

- Austin Health Mental Health Division
- Darebin Mental Health and Wellbeing Local
- healthAbility
- Holstep Health – Stepped Care and Gamblers Help
- Northern Health Mental Health Division
- Uniting Vic. Tas
- Whittlesea Mental Health and Wellbeing Local
- Your Community Health

Key Outcomes

- ✓ Increased awareness of local services
- ✓ Improved understanding of referral pathways
- ✓ New professional connections established
- ✓ Opportunities for future collaboration
- ✓ Sharing of resources and expertise

What Participants Told Us

Most Valuable Aspects

- 41%** Networking and relationship building
- 25%** Learning about other services and programs
- 17%** Collaboration and partnership examples
- 17%** Information sharing and practical insights

Participant Comments

- "As always, the connections."
- "Wonderful forum."
- "Great networking opportunities."
- "Very informative and well organised."
- "Meeting new colleagues."
- "Relationship building."

Actions Participants Will Take

- Strengthen partnerships with other services
- Use the Effective Partnerships Toolkit
- Continue collaboration conversations
- Build and maintain professional networks
- Improve communication across organisations

Key Themes

Connection

Networking continues to be one of the most valued functions of the Alliance. Participants consistently highlight the importance of building and maintaining professional relationships across services to improve outcomes for consumers.

Integrated Care

Collaboration improves continuity of care and consumer outcomes. Integrated approaches ensure people don't fall through the gaps between services and can access the right support at the right time.

Lived Experience

Consumer perspectives strengthen service design and delivery. Lived experience leadership ensures services remain person-centred, responsive to real needs, and grounded in the voices of those with direct experience.

Partnerships

Strong relationships remain critical to supporting people with complex and co-occurring needs. Trust between services enables better coordinated care and more seamless transitions for consumers.

Workforce

Building knowledge and confidence is a shared responsibility across sectors. Workforce capability improves when we learn together, share expertise, and invest in professional development opportunities.

Thank you to all presenters, stall holders, participants and Working Group members who contributed to the success of the forum. Together we continue to strengthen collaboration and integrated care across Melbourne's north-east.