



eFriend virtual peer support
Briefing and Communication pack

Dear Friends,

eFriend is a free virtual, planned peer support service for any Australian aged 18 and over, who is experiencing loneliness, anxiety, trauma or mental health issues and needs someone to listen.

We believe it is the first of its kind to combine:

- the planned process of speaking one-to-one to a single, consistent support person so you don't have to retell your story (similar to that typically used in telehealth or telepsychology)
- with the role and expertise of a Peer Worker who can share their own experience of mental health recovery
- using the Befriending model developed in the UK to combat loneliness, and
- delivered virtually using video calls.

Developed by Independent Community Living Australia (ICLA), eFriend was originally designed following investment by the Commonwealth Government in ICLA to undertake a co-design process with people with a lived experience of mental health difficulties and suicidality as the pre-stay component of ICLA's residential model of the Suicide Prevention and Recovery Centre (SPARC).

Given the opening of SPARC has been delayed due to COVID-19 and eFriend is being scaled up to a national service as part of the Australian Government's mental health response to the pandemic. eFriend builds on the existing history of consumer led care, peer support, warm lines and groups and is intended to reach a wide audience across Australia.

This investment in eFriend builds on the previous investment by the Commonwealth in SPARC, and utilise the skilled and trained workforce of Peer Workers with lived experience of mental health difficulties and suicidality who were in place and recruited for SPARC.

To help get the word out, and ensure those who need the eFriend service access it, ICLA is holding a virtual launch of eFriend on Tuesday 28 April with a wide range of mental health and social service providers, consumer groups and NGO's, including yourself.

We want to reach as many Australians as we can. We would really appreciate your support to promote this new free service across your networks to amplify awareness of the service, or to your existing clients and workforce who may be able to benefit from this additional peer support service.

Provided in this document is a brief overview of the service (pg. 2), and materials for both service providers (pg.3) and communications managers (pg. 4) to help spread the word amongst our shared networks – to ensure we reach Australian's who are struggling and could use an eFriend.

During these extraordinary times, we appreciate any support that you and your colleagues may be able to provide us with the announcement and launch of eFriend.

Personally speaking it's a very exciting time for me in launching this service, as well as for ICLA, an organisation founded out of the consumer rights movement in the 80's.

As a consumer myself I feel quite privileged to have been able to help design and launch this service, we could never have imagined consumers becoming CEOs and launching innovative services like eFriend 25 years ago.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you have any additional questions about eFriend. Hope to see you online on Tuesday!

Rachel Green

CEO, ICLA

About eFriend

eFriend is a first-of-its-kind planned virtual peer support service in Australia, developed by Independent Community Living Australia (ICLA), leveraging on ICLA's 30 years of expertise and experience in delivering in-community support for people with mental illness.

eFriend provides non-clinical, peer-based individual mental health support to people experiencing loneliness, isolation, distress, difficulty coping and the impact of trauma, anxiety, depression or thoughts of self-harm using a methodology known as 'befriending'.

eFriend is staffed by a trained team of Peer Support Workers who have a personal lived experience with mental health, trauma, suicidality or distress.

They 'get it', because they've been there too.

The skilled team of **eFriend Peers** are trained in Intentional Peer Support, ASIST (Suicide Prevention), Trauma Informed Care, Open Dialogue, Safe Storytelling and Befriending.

eFriend provides up to six sessions of virtual one-on-one peer support using a non-clinical 'befriending' methodology combined with the well-established role of mental health peer work to provide mental health support for people experiencing trauma, loneliness and distress via telephone or videoconference.

Goals of eFriend

- Provide a social connection and listening ear
- Assist participants to seek support from their local network, community groups and coach them to reach out for help if they wish
- Assist participants to engage in self-care and create individual safety plans when needed
- Reduce loneliness and isolation in the community aiming for a reduction in the need for intensive mental health services
- Guide those seeking clinical mental health services to appropriate pathways

Helpful information for service providers

How it works

- Links are provided through the social media campaign, via self-referral or referral by others will lead the person in need to our short web intake form.
- People are required to answer a small number of questions to gauge their need, urgency and situation.
- To attend your first *eFriend* Peer session, you will log in to the *eFriend* website and use the secure videoconferencing functionality.
- Your *eFriend* Peer will then book your future sessions with you and you will speak to the same person each time, avoiding the need to tell your story again.
- The attendance of the person in need is confirmed each day before, via text.
- Each session will be carried out over video link. For those not comfortable with video calls, we can treat it like a standard call without using video.
- During each session we incorporate practices from Open Dialogue, Intentional Peer Support, Trauma Informed Care, ASIST and Safe Storytelling.
- Each session seeks consent to capture some essential information which is documented within our secure CRM. This is to avoid people contacting eFriend having to reiterate parts of their story and helps a conversation pick up where it left off.
- Should a person in need be identified as 'At Risk' this can be escalated and our Mental Health Safety Policy will be activated however our eFriend Peers are comfortable and trained to discuss feelings of suicide and self-harm and do not refer away people who wish to discuss how they are feeling.
- In cases where the person contacting *eFriend* wishes, we can assist to connect them with alternate or additional services and supports, however our primary goal is to listen.
- If the person contacting eFriend wishes, we can support them to create a safety plan and/or self-care plan.
- Should the person in need require additional calls we are flexible in increasing the number of sessions available (up to 8).
- Calls can be spaced according to individual need – your interaction with eFriend might be once or twice a week over a brief period, or spaced out as a monthly check in over a longer period.
- Should a caller require eFriend at a later stage, the service can be recommenced.

The semi-structured approach to *eFriend* follows the dynamic of a social call, delivered by a trained Peer Support Worker, experienced in Open Dialogue, befriending, trauma informed care and safe story telling. The call is non-scripted but follows a guide which may include:

- how are you
- what is/has been happening for you
- what do you want to talk about?
- what support do you have around you?
- what support are you missing, and options do you have for more support
- what plans would you like to make to connect again within the program

Who is eFriend for?

eFriend is a free virtual, planned peer support service for any Australian aged 18 and over, who is experiencing loneliness, anxiety, trauma or mental health issues and needs someone to listen.

In particular, eFriend is for:

- People experiencing loneliness, social isolation and distress, impacted by trauma and recent major events such as the Australian bushfires and COVID-19 who are having difficulty coping
- People with mental health issues and those experiencing suicidality
- People who have a complex psychosocial disability and experience deep social isolation and loneliness who do not have friends or family and are supported by the NDIS

People who use eFriend can also include:

- People who are lonely or isolated
- People who are dealing with issues they are not comfortable discussing with their friends and family
- People who live with chronic physical, psychosocial or behavioural health conditions
- People who are experiencing life's challenges, such as grief, or unemployment
- People who have limited mobility, but want to remain connected to others
- People who are recovering from trauma and need support
- People who have an NDIS plan and supports, but who would like an eFriend to talk to for social connection. Most importantly, eFriend is for people who need someone to talk to who will listen, without judgement.

eFriend offers:

- Non-clinical, peer support to the wider community during a time of crisis and isolation, open to all demographics and needs.
- Hope and a listening ear, compassion and understanding to those who might otherwise be alone.
- Support for people experiencing loneliness, trauma or distress from a trained Peer Support team.
- During an eFriend journey, if the person in need would like, their eFriend can assist in creating a safety plan, self-care plan and assist them in getting in contact with other services within your community.

Further information:

FAQs and a fact sheet on eFriend can also be found on our website at www.efriend.org.au

Communication materials to help spread the word about eFriend

Key Messages

Below are some key messages to support engagement.

- eFriend is a first-of-its-kind planned virtual peer support service in Australia
- eFriend provides immediate non-clinical, peer-based mental health support to people experiencing loneliness, isolation, distress, difficulty coping and the impact of trauma, anxiety, depression or thoughts of self-harm.
- eFriend is staffed by a trained team of Peer Support Workers who have a personal lived experience with mental health, trauma or distress. They get it, because they've been there too.
- Our skilled team of **eFriend Peers** are trained in Intentional Peer Support, ASIST (Suicide Prevention), Trauma Informed Care, Open Dialogue, Safe Storytelling and Befriending.
- If you need to talk, if you are feeling alone, isolated or just in need of a person who will listen like a friend, we are here for you. We're not here to refer you away, we're here to listen.
- eFriend provides up to six sessions of virtual one-on-one peer support using a non-clinical 'befriending' methodology combined with the well-established role of mental health peer work to provide mental health support for people experiencing trauma, loneliness and distress via telephone or videoconference.
- ICLA has 30 years of expertise and experience in delivering in-community support for people living with mental illness and psychosocial disability.

Campaign Materials

You have been provided with a communication Pack (a Google Drive Link) that includes the below digital assets to help spread the word online for the launch and awareness raising of eFriend

DOWNLOAD [HERE](#) available for use from 11am Tuesday 28 April

Social Media Assets

- Please feel free to use the eFriend graphic designed animated elements highlighting designed to reach and resonate with target audiences who may benefit from eFriend support (in Facebook and Instagram format and story format)

Videos

- Launch video (90 sec)
- 30 second brief version of the launch video

Get Involved

We want to reach as many Australians as we can with information about this "first of its kind, new eFriend virtual peer support service, and we need your help! We would appreciate your support in any of the following ways:

- Letting your community and stakeholders know about eFriend
- Sharing or re-tweeting ICLA's posts about eFriend on social media
- Sharing the key messages from this pack on your social media channels, using the hashtags #eFriendsupport #youHAVEeFriend and the social media tiles and videos provided in the communication pack
- Tagging ICLA on Facebook (@independentcommunitylivingaustralia), Instagram (@independent_community_living) and Twitter (@LivingAus) in your social posts