ACON Community Visitor Scheme

“Friends for older LGBTI people”

Home Care Package Provider’s Handbook

An Australian Government Initiative
About ACON

ACON is New South Wales’ leading health promotion organisation specialising in HIV and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) health.

Incorporated in 1985 as the AIDS Council of NSW, ACON has been widely recognised as an innovative, successful organisation which has adapted to changes in the HIV epidemic and responded early to emerging health issues among our communities.

ACON has been at the forefront of advocacy around issues relating to HIV and to LGBTI health, drawing on our close connections to community to identify emerging issues and create dialogue around these issues with policy makers and researchers. ACON has also worked alongside researchers and partners to build a stronger evidence base around HIV and gay men’s sexual behaviour and LGBTI health, much of which has subsequently affirmed the issues identified by our communities.

Contact us:

ACON Community Visitor Scheme
414 Elizabeth Street
Surry Hills NSW 2010

Phone: 02 9206 2028
Fax: 02 9206 2069
Email: communityvisitor@acon.org.au

W: www.acon.org.au/ageing
Dear Aged Care Provider,

ACON is pleased to welcome you to the Community Visitor Scheme (CVS). ACON commenced as an auspice of the CVS in the CVS Expansion Scheme in 2014.

The success of the CVS, while dependent on the commitment of the volunteer and the quality of the match of the recipient and the volunteer visitor, also relies on the partnership developed between ACON and the Aged Care Provider.

The purpose of this manual is to provide you with a clear understanding of the relevant roles, responsibilities and operational requirements. It is information for you to become familiar with and follow as your commitment to the program running effectively and meeting the needs of our older community members.

The goal of my team and I is to provide exceptional, person centred service ensuring the friendship developed between each volunteer and recipient adds value and makes a positive difference to the life of the recipient. We are confident that our volunteers’ lives will also be enriched by this unique friendship.

We look forward to working in partnership with you and welcome any feedback you may like to offer at:

Phone: 02 9202 2028
Fax: 02 9206 2069
Email: communityvisitor@acon.org.au

Sincerely,

Shane Campbell
Coordinator, ACON Community Visitor Scheme
About the Community Visitor Scheme

What is the Community Visitor Scheme?

The Community Visitor Scheme (CVS) commenced in 1992 and is a national program funded by the Australian Government. It provides companionship to socially or culturally isolated people living in Government subsidised Aged Care Homes or living in their own home, receiving a home care package. ACON is one of many organisations who are funded by the Australian Government to auspice the program – specifically, we are funded to provide one-on-one visits in a person’s own home.

The aims and objectives of the CVS

The aim of the CVS is to improve quality of life for older people who have limited contact with others and as a result are at risk of isolation and loneliness.

The objective of the CVS is to foster the development of companionship and friendship for individual recipients, by linking them with a regular volunteer visitor. Additionally, the development of the friendship assists in linking the recipient with their local community.

Potentially isolated and lonely recipients are referred to the CVS Coordinator by a nominated contact person from the Aged Care Provider.

Target group and eligibility

The CVS was developed to meet the needs of Aged Care recipients who for a variety of reasons are isolated and whose quality of life may be improved by regular visiting.

A number of reasons give rise to isolation and may include any or all the following:

- a lack of regular and reasonably frequent contact with friends or relatives
- a lack of friendships
- an indigenous, culturally or linguistically diverse background that results in isolation from culture and heritage
- frailty or impairment that prevents involvement or participation in social or leisure activities
- visits that do not enhance the quality of life of the recipient
- being different in some way.

Priority for linking with a community visitor should be given to the person where several factors are present or where the experience of isolation is particularly strong.

If the recipient is from a specific cultural or linguistic background, the CVS Coordinator may refer the recipient to an ethnic or culturally specific CVS auspice.
Special Needs Groups

The CVS targets special needs groups including:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Communities
- Culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) people
- People who live in rural or remote areas
- People who are financially or socially disadvantaged
- Veterans
- People who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless
- Care leavers (including Forgotten Australians, former child migrants and Stolen Generations)
- Parents separated from their children by forced adoption or removal
- Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) people

When an Aged Care Provider refers a recipient to the CVS, they will be asked whether the recipient identifies as being from one of these special needs groups. The information will be kept in the strictest of confidence. The ACON CVS is targeted at LGBTI people.

The information is important as it will be used to better direct the care recipient to services and is requested by the Department of Social Services.

Anticipated outcomes of the CVS

The anticipated improvements in the quality of life for recipients include:

- Increased self-esteem or feelings of general well-being.
- Increased sense of purpose.
- Diminished feelings of loneliness and isolation, depression and anxiety.
- Maintenance or increase in independence.
- Feeling cared for and connected to the community.
- Sense of achievement through the development of a new friendship.

For the volunteer, there is also a sense of achievement in developing a new friendship, of being valued and having the opportunity to give back to the community.

How to refer a recipient to the CVS

You can refer a recipient to the CVS by completing an ACON CVS Recipient Referral form. The information you provide will help us to match the recipient with an appropriate community visitor.

You are not required to provide detailed medical information about the recipient unless it will impact on the community visitor and the time they will spend with the recipient.

The information you provide will be kept in the strictest of confidence and only relevant information will be shared with the volunteer visitor.

Don’t have the ACON CVS Recipient Referral form? Contact us on: communityvisitor@acon.org.au or 9206 2028 and ask for the ACON CVS Coordinator.
The first visit

This will be arranged in consultation with the relevant Aged Care Provider staff. The ACON CVS Coordinator will accompany the Volunteer Community Visitor who is often excited but nervous on the initial visit with the Aged Care Provider staff member.

At this time, the ACON CVS Coordinator will provide the Aged Care Provider with:

✓ duplicate copies of the community visitor's contact details (these must be securely stored)
✓ an updated copy of the ACON CVS Database of Matched Recipients and Community Visitors.
✓ The Police Check Assessment Letter providing reference number and date of police check and approving the volunteer as a community visitor.

At this time, the key contact person at the Aged Care Provider will provide the community visitor with orientation information about the location, e.g. Orientation to home, emergency procedures, and next of kin contact details if applicable.

What do the visits involve?

Once a community visitor has been matched with a recipient, they will visit that recipient at least once per fortnight. The days and times of the visit can be negotiated between the visitor, the recipient and, if appropriate, the Aged Care Provider staff.

The length of visits may vary from one visit to the next. There is no minimum or maximum amount of time the visitor must stay.

The community visitor volunteer does not try to replace nursing, activities, personal care or therapy staff. If the recipient requires these things, they will be available through their Aged Care Provider. A community visitor is a friend and companion.

The visits may involve talking, sharing a warm drink, reading or playing a card or board-game together. Activities should include anything that the recipient and the volunteer enjoy.

Key Stakeholders

The five key stakeholders in the CVS are: the Australian Government, ACON, Aged Care Providers, Volunteer Community Visitors and the CVS Recipients.

The success of the CVS depends on auspices, visitors and aged care providers working together.

The purpose of this section is to provide an overview of what each group is responsible for.

Australian Government

The CVS is an initiative of and is funded by the Australian Federal Government. It currently is the responsibility of the Department of Social Services and operates in all States and Territories of Australia.
The Australian Government is responsible for the legislative framework, the overall development of policy and guidelines, advice on funding and the regular review and evaluation of the CVS.

**ACON**

ACON has entered into an agreement with the Federal Government to provide CVS places throughout most of Metropolitan Sydney (apart from the Inner West), the Central Coast, the Nepean, Illawarra and Hunter Regions. We are one of many organisations who auspice the CVS program.

Our role is to:

✓ Recruit, interview and screen potential volunteer visitors including police checks every 3 years.
✓ Match volunteers to recipients of the services based on the referral Aged Care Providers submit.
✓ Provide training to ensure our volunteers feel prepared and volunteer within the framework of this program.
✓ Support our volunteers with resources, review, ongoing contact, recognition, advice and celebration.
✓ Liaise with the Aged Care Provider on a regular basis.
✓ Maintain visit statistics and provide for reporting requirements.
✓ Keep accurate records and relevant information to ensure a high standard of service and management of the CVS.
✓ Provide regular reports to ACON management and Department of Social Services
✓ Network with other auspice organisations to maintain consistency and best practise
✓ Other support as required.

As an auspice of the CVS, ACON is responsible for administering the CVS in accordance with Australian Government’s requirements and grant conditions. We pride ourselves on our person centred approach and our objective to do the best we can to match each older community member referral we receive as soon as possible.

We will provide the Aged Care Provider with the following:

✓ A Police Check Assessment Letter.

A police check indicates the community visitor has been assessed as suitable to visit. The letter will include the date the police check was conducted and the date on which it will expire. A police check is conducted every 3 years. A police check does not include information about a person’s criminal record in a country other than Australia. As such, if a community visitor has been a citizen or a permanent resident of a country other than Australia since the age of sixteen, they will be required to sign a Statutory Declaration stating that they have never been convicted of an offence overseas. The Police Check Assessment Letter will state if the community visitor has signed a Statutory Declaration.

✓ A copy of the ACON CVS Database of Matched Recipients and Community Visitors for that particular Aged Care Provider.

✓ Duplicate copies of the Community Visitor’s Contact Details and Information which includes emergency’s contact details. One copy is to be filed in the recipient’s care file and the other copy to be filed in the ACON CVS Aged Care Providers Manual.

✓ CVS stickers for the spine and the front cover of the recipient’s file to indicate to Aged Care Provider staff that the recipient has a community visitor.
Aged Care Providers

The recipient of the ACON CVS will be a person living in their own home, receiving a Home Care Package and the Aged Care Provider would be the Home Care Package Provider.

The Aged Care Provider has a range of responsibilities and plays a key role in the successful operation of the CVS. These responsibilities include:

- Adopting this Manual, which sets out the agreed roles and expectations of ACON and the Home Care Package Provider.
- Referring potential recipients who fit the CVS criteria to receive the service.
- Providing appropriate information regarding the recipient at all times to the CVS Coordinator and the Community Visitor.
- Ensuring the Community Visitor is welcomed and appropriately oriented to the Aged Care Provider’s policies and procedures.
- Advise ACON if withdrawing the referral for any reasons.

Volunteer Community Visitors

The role of the volunteer community visitor is to visit their matched or designated recipient on a regular (at least fortnightly) basis, for the purpose of developing companionship and friendship with the recipient.

The community visitor will be required to:

- Undergo a National Criminal History Record Check (NCHRC) prior to commencing on the program.
- Complete training before commencing in the role.
- Sign a Confidentiality Agreement and Volunteer Visitor Agreement Form. There are restrictions on the community visitor's role and these are detailed in these Agreements.
- Adhere to the policies and procedures of ACON, CVS and the Aged Care Provider.

ACON CVS will also provide all volunteers with a Volunteer Handbook and relevant information required for their role including position description, key people contact details, relevant procedures such as emergency and ongoing support.

CVS Recipients

The recipient, or a person authorised to speak on their behalf, must agree to participate in the CVS and has the right to withdraw at any time.

Our Volunteer Community Visitors

How we recruit Volunteer Community Visitors

Before the Volunteer Community Visitor first meets you (and the recipient) they have been through a robust recruitment process. Our Volunteer Community Visitors have a position description which includes their rights and responsibilities as a volunteer. This position description requests the following skill set:
• A commitment to building and sustaining a friendship with an older isolated person over an extended period of time
• A demonstrated genuine empathy, understanding and enjoyment of older people
• Demonstrated reliability and flexibility
• Effective communication and listening skills
• Ability to work independently
• Willing to seek advice, as appropriate

Our key stakeholder is the recipient. We make sure our recruitment process ensures the highest standard of commitment and ethics in our wonderful volunteers.

Volunteers’ induction training
Volunteer Community Visitors are required to complete an Induction Training course before they commence in their role. Aged Care Providers can be confident that the Volunteer Community Visitor has been inducted, and prepared for their important role.

The Induction Training includes training on:

• About the Community Visitors Scheme
• Aged Care Providers
• Privacy and Confidentiality
• Duty of Care
• Volunteer Rights and Responsibilities
• Boundaries
• Dealing with Grief & Loss
• Communication strategies with older people
• LGBTI awareness and sensitivity

If you would like to undertake our Induction Training, and see what it’s all about, just contact us on communityvisitor@acon.org.au or the ACON CVS Coordinator and we will happily provide you with access to our training.

Volunteers’ ongoing training and support
At ACON we offer our Volunteer Community Visitors ongoing information sessions, face to face support and peer group meetings and training opportunities. We also provide support through a newsletter and we are only ever an email or phone call away!

Contact details
When the Volunteer Community Visitor commences, the Aged Care Provider will be provided with the volunteer’s contact details, and the details of their emergency contact person.

As the Home Care Package Provider, you will be asked to provide us with the details of who the volunteer is to contact in an emergency and your emergency procedure. To ensure we provide an exceptional level of service, we do not want to complicate or overlay our procedures onto yours. We will follow your emergency procedures and provide as little or as much information as you require. We are dedicated to a person centred approach and look forward to working with you to add value to the lives of many older community members.
Volunteer Handbook
All Volunteer Community Visitors are provided with a Volunteer Handbook before commencing their role. The Volunteer Handbook provides the volunteer with relevant information to their role. We are happy to provide you with a copy of the Volunteer Handbook for your information, on request.

Volunteers’ monthly reports
It is a requirement of the funding that we collect data and statistics. Therefore we require our Volunteer Community Visitors to submit monthly reports, detailing the dates on which they have visited their recipient. If you have any questions or concerns about the frequency of the visits your recipient has been receiving, contact the ACON CVS Coordinator.

Confidentiality, privacy and dignity
The confidentiality, privacy and dignity of the recipient are of upmost importance. This subject is covered in our Induction Training, and is emphasised as a crucial part of the Volunteer Community Visitor’s role.

Confidentiality includes the avoidance of discussion regarding personal details with other visitors, family and the wider community.

Privacy includes both maintaining confidentiality and respecting the recipient’s right to maintain control of issues they consider to be personal and may include personal care needs or the discussion of related issues.

Dignity includes supporting the recipient to maintain their self-esteem by allowing, for example, the recipient to determine the level of assistance they may or may not require.

Duty of care
The Volunteer Community Visitor is expected to exercise a duty of care at all times. This subject is covered in our Induction Training, and is emphasised as a crucial part of the Volunteer Community Visitor’s role.

This simply means taking reasonable care to avoid injury to another person or damage to property because of action or inaction. This means not behaving in a way that is careless or negligent.

Sign-in book
CVS volunteers are required to sign a CVS Sign-in book when they arrive at the recipient’s home. The ACON CVS Coordinator will provide you with this Sign-in book.

Please advise us if you have your own sign-in procedures, which the CVS volunteer will follow as per your instructions.

Other visitors including children and pets
Volunteer Community Visitors are not permitted to take other people to visit recipients without seeking permission from the Aged Care Provider and informing the ACON CVS Coordinator. These additional visitors ARE NOT considered Community Visitors and are outside the CVS guidelines.

Children and pets may be taken on visits and indeed may enhance the visits with the recipients. Permission prior to visit must be approved by the Aged Care Provider. Children and pets must remain with Volunteer Community Visitor at all times. The Volunteer Community Visitor is solely responsible for any additional visitors including pets.
Limitations
As part of their role, Volunteer Community Visitors agree NOT to do any of the following things:

- Monitor standards provided by the Home Care Package Provider.
- Be involved in investigating or follow up complaints.
- Displace relationships between the recipient and their family, staff or other relationships.
- Have access to the recipient’s personal records, or become involved in their financial affairs.
- Provide nursing or personal care.
- Interfere with or have any involvement in the day-to-day management of the Home Care Package
- Replace nursing, activities, or therapy staff in the home environment.
- Visit other residents without the approval of the ACON CVS Coordinator.

Volunteer Community Visitors are NOT encouraged to take recipients on an outing in their own car or on public transport or to otherwise leave the recipient’s home.

Volunteer Community Visitors are not permitted, UNDER ANY CIRCUMSTANCES to take the recipient to their own home.

Visiting in the recipient’s own home

The Home Care Package Provider
People living in their own home and receiving a Home Care Package can be referred to the CVS by the Home Care Package Provider.

A key contact person at the Home Care Package Provider (often the Case Manager) is required to be present at the Volunteer Community Visitor’s first visit, along with the ACON CVS Coordinator.

Risk assessment
The Home Care Package Provider is required to provide ACON CVS with risk assessment documentation of the home where the visits will take place prior to commencement of visits. This risk assessment should include an assessment of any challenging behaviours the recipient may have, which may affect the Volunteer Community Visitor.

If a Volunteer Community Visitor identifies a hazard, they will complete ACON’s Incident and Injury Form, which forms part of ACON’s Workplace Health and Safety Policy. This will be communicated to the Home Care Provider as soon as possible.

Operational Practices and Procedures for the Aged Care Provider

Nomination and role of a Key Contact Person
The Manager of the Aged Care Provider needs to have an oversight of the operation of the CVS within their organisation, but will need to nominate a Key Contact Person for the ACON CVS Coordinator to work with on a regular basis. The Key Contact Person will be responsible for liaison with the Volunteer Community Visitor and the ACON CVS Coordinator regarding the CVS and any issues if/when they arise.
Home Care Package Providers.
Volunteer Community Visitors may visit any day of the week including evenings or weekends. An out of hours contact person or procedure needs to be informed to the Volunteer Community Visitor and ACON CVS Coordinator on commencement of the match and at any time contact details change.

Referral of prospective recipients
The referral of recipients using the ACON CVS Referral form, in accordance with the eligibility criteria, is critical to the success of this program.

In order to make an appropriate match the ACON CVS Referral form should be completed thoughtfully and in full. The ACON CVS Coordinator will discuss the referral with the Key Contact Person and may choose to meet with the recipient as well. We do our best to recruit a volunteer to commence visitor the recipient as soon as possible but there are no guarantees. If a match cannot be made the recipient’s name will remain on a waiting list in the hope that a match can be made at a later stage or if appropriate we will forward to another auspice e.g. CALD auspice, with your permission.

Introduction and orientation for the Volunteer Community Visitor
Once a match has been made, the ACON CVS Coordinator and the Aged Care Provider staff will introduce the Volunteer Community Visitor to the recipient.

ACON will endeavour to ensure every chance of success for the match. To support this, we ask that you:

- Ensure that key Aged Care Provider personnel are aware of the continuing presence and purpose of the CVS visits.
- Provide information about routines that are specifically applicable to the recipient concerned. This information is additional to that contained in the Recipient Referral form and the Aged Care Provider Contact Details and Information.
- Provide information about access during the evenings and weekends, should it differ from that of other times of the day.
- Provide an orientation to the recipient’s home.
- Provide any other site specific Occupational Health and Safety information including, fire evacuation procedures and relevant sign in registers if applicable.
- Provide other information that would assist the volunteer in meeting their duty of care obligations.

We encourage you to provide any additional information that you believe is important for the visitor to be made aware of.

Basic training in the use of equipment or communication strategies
Where the recipient has special needs that involve the use of equipment such as a walking frame or wheelchair, or the recipient has specific communication strategies, it is the responsibility of the Aged Care Provider to train the Volunteer Community Visitor in the use of such equipment or communication strategies. This should occur shortly after the match has been made as it will greatly assist the development of the relationship between the Volunteer Community Visitor and recipient.

Informing the Recipient’s family
Depending upon the recipient’s situation, it may be appropriate for the Manager or Key Contact Person to discuss the role of the Volunteer Community Visitor with the recipient’s family.
In some instances the family may not be aware that a Volunteer Community Visitor has been requested and the need for sensitivity must be exercised. The Key Contact Person and ACON CVS Coordinator will need to discuss this situation should it arise.

**Regular communication of changes**

It is imperative that the Aged Care Provider staff notify the ACON CVS Coordinator or Volunteer Community Visitor immediately should the following occur:

- The recipient is unwell or is unavailable to receive visitors.
- The recipient has moved to a different address.
- There is an outbreak of an infectious disease such as gastroenteritis (gastro).
- **The recipient is seriously ill or dies** - This should be afforded the highest priority. The name of the Volunteer Community Visitor should be listed with ‘significant others’ and informed in these circumstances.

**VERY IMPORTANT**

In many cases, a significant and important relationship has been established between the Recipient and the Volunteer Community Visitor. The Volunteer Community Visitor has become a ‘significant other’. For the Volunteer Community Visitor, in the event of the Recipient passing away, they have lost a good friend. The process of grieving can be quite pronounced and the opportunity to say goodbye or to attend the funeral must be made available to them.

**Supporting and recognising the role of the Volunteer Community Visitor**

It is very important that the Volunteer Community Visitor always feels welcomed when visiting their recipient and feels able to ask for assistance, should it be required. Another way of supporting the volunteer is offering them a copy of the Aged Care Provider’s newsletter or similar publication. Volunteer Community Visitors make a significant contribution to the well-being of their matched recipient and it is hoped that the Aged Care Provider will appropriately recognise this contribution, as it would with other volunteers.

**Veto rights of the Aged Care Provider**

The Manager of the Aged Care Provider has the right to veto, at any time, a Volunteer Community Visitor they consider unsuitable, should the recipient be unable to make an informed decision for themselves. If this situation arises, it should be discussed with the ACON CVS Coordinator prior to any action being undertaken.

**Raising concerns and issues**

Should there be any concerns or issues about the ACON CVS program or the Volunteer Community Visitor, the Manager or Key Contact Person needs to contact the ACON CVS Coordinator. The ACON CVS Coordinator will discuss the issue with those concerned and if concerns are not resolved, the ACON CVS Coordinator will refer the matter onto the Director, Community Health and Regional Services. The ACON Grievance and Dispute Procedure will then commence. If the concern or issue requires the involvement of the Director, Community Health and Regional Services, please contact 02 9206 2119 or swright@acon.org.au.

**Your Accreditation**

The engagement of the Community Visitors Scheme can be a great contributor to your Accreditation process. Accreditors may ask to see your CVS folder. If additional information is required, you or your accreditors are welcome to contact the ACON CVS Coordinator directly.
Restrictions to the role of the Volunteer Community Visitor
The restrictions to the role of the Volunteer Community Visitor are outlined in detail in the Confidentiality Agreement, Volunteer Visitor Agreement Form and Position Description. It is imperative that the Volunteer Community Visitor does not undertake any personal care, replace nursing, activities or therapy staff; or act as an activity volunteer.

Review and evaluation of CVS
The ACON CVS Coordinator will undertake regular reviews and evaluation of the match and the operation of the CVS at the Aged Care Provider with the Manager or Key Contact Person.

The CVS is free of charge to the person being visited and to the Aged Care Provider.
ACON Community Visitors Scheme (CVS)
Quick Reference Guide

- The CVS is **free of charge** to the person being visited and to the Aged Care Provider.
- All recipients of Home Care Packages who are at risk of isolation and loneliness are eligible for this service.
- We are funded to provide one on one visitors for those who live at home receiving Home Care Packages. The ACON Community Visitors must not replace an activity leader, run a recreational group, support groups of residents during an activity or visit other residents they have not been matched to.
- To make a referral use the ACON CVS Referral Form provided to you or contact us.
- Volunteer Community Visitors undergone a Police Check before commencement in the role and every 3 years. You are provided with the reference number and date of their police check.
- Volunteer Community Visitors sign a Memorandum of Understanding which includes specific confidentiality agreements.

Please **do not** request the ACON Volunteer Community Visitor to:

- Undergo a separate Police Check or sign a Statutory Declaration.
- Sign separate confidentiality agreements or paperwork.

- Volunteer Community Visitors have undergone thorough induction training which prepares them fully for their role.
- If the recipient is seriously ill or dies contact the Volunteer Community Visitor **AS SOON AS POSSIBLE PLEASE**. You have been provided with the volunteer’s contact details.
- If your accreditors want more information about the program, they can contact the ACON CVS Coordinator directly.

**Contact Details:**

ACON Community Visitor Scheme
414 Elizabeth Street
Surry Hills NSW 2010

Phone: 02 9202 2028
Fax: 02 9206 2069

Email: communityvisitor@acon.org.au

Further information about the ACON Community Visitor Scheme can be found at: