

Frequently Asked Questions: Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme Webinar (ACVVS)

Version 1, 5 September 2023

This document contains Frequently Asked Questions about the Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme received from the webinar hosted by the Department of Health and Aged Care (the department) on 24 August 2023. Where appropriate, the department has simplified questions and consolidated similar ones.

For more information see the following resources:

- [Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme \(ACVVS\) website](#)
- [ACVVS National Guidelines](#)
- [ACVVS Promotional Flyer](#)

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1. ACVVS Definitions

What is the difference between the:

- **auspice and community organisation**
- **visitors and volunteer**
- **network member and the auspice**

ACVVS Activity 1 is the delivery of the ACVVS to Australian Government subsidised Residential Care and Home Care Package recipients. Activity 1 is delivered by Community Organisations (commonly known as auspices). The community organisations are required to nominate an 'auspice coordinator' (also known as 'ACVVS coordinator') who is responsible for recruiting, training and managing the volunteer visitors who will be matched to an appropriate aged care recipient.

ACVVS Activity 2: Network Members are appointed in every state and territory to support the community organisations (auspices).

Detailed role descriptions for the auspice coordinator, ACVVS volunteer and Network Member are available in the ACVVS National Guidelines, Section 5.

2. Is there an ACVVS funded service in each Aged Care Planning Region (ACPR)?

ACVVS providers are available in all APR with the exception of:

Kimberley – WA

Mid West – WA

Pilbara – WA

Wheatbelt – WA

Indian Ocean Territories - WA

Flinders & Far North – SA

Central West – QLD

North West - QLD

The Department is working to explore opportunities to provide service in these 5 ACPR's.

3. Can ACVVS Volunteers assist consumers with discussion with the Providers about the services they receive?

The ACVVS objectives are to provide friendship and companionship. Advocacy is not within the scope of the ACVVS volunteer role. ACVVS volunteers have access to training that provide an understanding of advocacy services available to the aged care recipient.

4. Can you please require providers to tell residents and HCP consumers about ACVVS?

The Department is undertaking an awareness marketing campaign which includes Residential Aged Care and Home Care Package Providers.

5. What is difference between ACVVS and the Care Finder program?

ACVVS objectives are to provide friendship and companionship by matching a suitable ACVVS volunteer with an eligible aged care recipient.

The care finder program provides support for vulnerable older people to interact with My Aged Care, access aged care services and access other relevant supports in the community which may include the ACVVS. More information about the care finder program can be found at:

www.health.gov.au/our-work/care-finder-program

6. Why restrict ACVVS to HCP recipients and not open it up to CHSP recipients?

In accordance with Subsection 82-1 of the *Aged Care Act 1997*, ACVVS is only available to recipients of an Australian Government subsidised home care package and recipients of an Australian Government subsidised residential aged care. Older people in these aged care settings have identified higher levels of need, are likely less able to participate in community social support and therefore may be at greater risk of social isolation.

7. Is ACVVS covered by the Code of Conduct?

ACVVS volunteers are managed by community organisations (or 'auspices'). These organisations which are also approved aged care providers are bound by the Code of Conduct for Aged Care. Guidance and resources for volunteers and volunteer managers on the Code of Conduct are available at: www.agedcarequality.gov.au/resources/volunteers-aged-care

8. If a recipient is not happy and/or there are concerns with the volunteer or the volunteer is not abiding by protocol, who should this be reported to?

Concerns should be raised at the earliest opportunity with the auspice coordinator who is responsible for recruiting, training and managing the volunteer visitors.

9. How will demand for volunteer visitors be met?

The Department has funded 141 organisations to provide an additional 4,000 ACVVS placements, totalling 18,163 nationally, each year for the life of the grant (1 July 2023 to 30 June 2026).

10. How will ACVVS manage requests for bilingual, remote and rural and hard of hearing clients?

Older people from particular linguistic, cultural and complex vulnerability backgrounds may be at greater risk of social isolation. These people include:

- people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities;
- people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds;
- people who live in rural or remote areas;
- people who are financially or socially disadvantaged;
- veterans (note: Veterans Home Care (VHC) or Community Nursing (CN) recipients must also receive Commonwealth funded Home Care Package service);
- people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless;
- care leavers;
- parents separated from their children by forced adoption or removal;
- lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and Intersex people;
- people living with a disability;
- people who are deaf or hearing impaired/hard of hearing;
- people living with cognitive impairment including dementia; and
- people experiencing mental health conditions; and/or who have been exposed to significant trauma.

Many Community Organisations (auspices) provide services that cater to care recipients from particular linguistic, cultural and complex vulnerability backgrounds. These services are delivered by those with experience and expertise in such areas. Please feel free to contact the State Network Member in your jurisdiction to identify a specific diversity service.

11. We are a community organisation, how do we apply to be part of the program and is there another grant round?

The grant round for ACVVS funding for the period 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2026 has closed.

12. Can Home and Community Care Program for Younger People (HACC PYP) recipients receive ACVVS services?

People who are not receiving Australian Government subsidised residential aged care services or home care packages are not eligible for ACVVS.

13. Can we utilise ACVVS volunteers for our Home Care clients? Some home care providers pay for community visiting out of their clients' home care package funding versus referring to ACVVS?

Home Care Package clients are eligible for ACVVS and can be receiving individual community supports from their Home Care Package provider and be matched to an ACVVS Volunteer.

Please note Home Care Package recipients who participate in social support group services funded by a Commonwealth subsidised aged care program are not eligible for ACVVS.

14. If someone is working as both a volunteer and a support worker for 1 client, how would a client know which role is being provided?

The person providing support worker services to the care recipient would not be able to be matched as an ACVVS volunteer to provide friendship to said care recipient.

15. Does ACVVS require the HCP care plans and documentation?

The ACVVS Coordinator will discuss with the referrer the individual aged care recipient request, requirements and the preferences to ensure that the best possible match and suitable services are provided.

16. Can ACVVS volunteers be used for interpreting services if required?

ACVVS objectives are to provide friendship and companionship by matching a suitable ACVVS volunteer and an eligible aged care recipient. This may include matching a volunteer who speaks the same language as the care recipient to facilitate a deeper, more relatable friendship. ACVVS volunteers do not however undertake the role of interpreters.

17. Can the requirement for 20 visits per ACVVS participant be spread across two volunteers and can a participant have more than 1 volunteer visitor?

To ensure the development of a quality friendship and companionship, the aged care recipient is matched to a single volunteer, who is required to provide a minimum of 20 visits per annum.

18. Can a volunteer visit more than one person in a facility?

An ACVVS volunteer can be matched to two separate persons in:

- the same residential aged care homes
- two separate residential aged care homes
- two home care package recipients.

Additionally, an ACVVS volunteer can be matched to a group of residents (applicable to aged care residential homes recipients only), noting the maximum recommended group ratio is 1 volunteer to 3 recipients.

19. What is the approximate time frame between submitting a referral to having a volunteer assigned?

Auspice coordinators are required to contact a potential ACVVS recipient within seven (7) calendar days of receipt of referral. The timeframe for assigning matched volunteer will depend on the recipient's requirements and the identification of a suitable volunteer.

20. Do ACVVS volunteers require NDIS screening?

ACVVS volunteers who only visit aged care residents in an aged care facility (regardless of whether it also has NDIS participants) are not required to hold an NDIS Worker Screening clearance. This is because their volunteer role does not meet the criteria for a risk assessed role and providers should not be asking to view an NDIS Worker Screening clearance.

An NDIS Worker Screening clearance is only required for those in risk assessed roles where the provider is a registered NDIS provider. This may affect ACVVS volunteers in some circumstances. Under NDIS legislation, a risk assessed role:

- is a key personnel role of a person or an entity as defined in s 11A of the *National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013* (for example, a CEO or a Board Member)
- involves the direct delivery of [specified supports or services](#) to a person with disability
- is likely to require 'more than incidental contact' with people with disability, which includes:
 - physically touching a person with disability; or
 - building a rapport with a person with disability as an integral and ordinary part of the performance of normal duties; or
 - having contact with multiple people with disability as part of the direct delivery of a specialist disability support or service, or in a specialist disability accommodation setting.

Based on that definition, ACVVS volunteers who visit NDIS participants in an aged care facility may need an NDIS Worker Screening clearance. This is because they have 'more than incidental contact' with a person with disability.

If providers have further questions about what is considered a risk assessed role, please direct them to contact the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission on [1800 035 544](tel:1800035544).

For those volunteers who may fall into this definition, we acknowledge it may take additional time for the NDIS Worker Screening Check to be obtained.

21. How will the aged care home be able to identify someone as an ACVVS volunteer?

The auspice coordinator's role includes maintaining high level of communication and positive relationships with aged care providers. The auspice coordinators will provide the residential aged care home notice of the ACVVS volunteers National Police Check stats prior to visits commencing. Auspice coordinators will also advise the residential aged care home who the volunteer is matched to.

22. What is the maximum number of hours of support a volunteer can provide per week/fortnight?

An ACVVS volunteer will generally visit their matched aged care recipient once a fortnight, for an hour each time. This will be subject to the aged care recipient's needs.

23. Are ACVVS volunteers remunerated for kilometres travelled, allowed to accept gifts from the recipient and/or take recipients on outings to a local coffee shop/park?

The reimbursement of volunteer travel is at the discretion of the auspice and must be clearly documented in the auspice policies and procedures. Section 4.1.1 of the ACVVS National Guidelines allows for the reimbursement of volunteer visitors out of pocket expenses, such as travel, at the discretion of the ACVVS auspice.

Further, as per Section 3.6.5 of the ACVVS National Guidelines, Volunteer visitors must be aware of the policies in place and any potential risks associated with giving or receiving gifts from aged care recipients. Gifts of significant monetary or sentimental value may be considered inappropriate, create a feeling of offensiveness, create conflict with family members and could be reconsidered or denied by an aged care recipient. Care must always be taken not to offend families/ significant others, contravene dietary requirements, or trigger a bad memory for the recipient.

The giving of gifts must be discussed prior with the ACVVS auspice coordinator and/or aged care service provider to ensure the gift is appropriate.

Volunteer visitors should discuss all situations involving the receipt of gifts (particularly if the gift is of monetary / sentimental significance) with their ACVVS auspice/coordinator and/or the aged care provider and in almost all circumstances; the offer of gifts ought not to be accepted.

The ACVVS volunteer visitor and aged care recipient outings are at the discretion of the auspice and must be clearly documented in the auspice policies and procedures with the appropriate insurances held.

24. Do ACVVS volunteers complete Residential Aged Care Home documentation about the interaction with their matched recipient?

ACVVS volunteers as per any visitor to an aged care residential home are required to adhere to the conditions of entry. Each ACVVS volunteer provides reports on the visit undertaken to their auspice coordinator.

25. Is there a tool or specific/criteria used to assess social isolation/loneliness or is a person able to simply articulate they are lonely/socially isolated?

Potential ACVVS recipients/referral providers can articulate the loneliness/social isolation circumstances. This information will also be used to identify the best possible friendship match.

26. We were previously partnering with Red Cross Community Visitor Scheme, what happens to the Volunteers who were recruited under the CVS Scheme and are currently visiting clients in Aged Care Homes?

Australian Red Cross is a ACVVS provider but does not provide ACVVS in every Aged Care Planning Region. All CVS volunteers and recipients have been grandfathered to ACVVS and a ACVVS community organisation (auspice). Please contact the State Network Member in your jurisdiction for any issues relating to CVS volunteers or CVS recipients requiring ACVVS support.

27. What if a volunteer is encouraged to become a support worker to provide companionship and get paid via HCP, would that be allowed?

Companionship activities provided by HCP employed workers are not within the scope of ACVVS.

28. Do Veterans getting aged care home support from DVA have access to ACVVS?

Veterans receiving Veterans Home Care (VHC) or Community Nursing (CN) recipients must also receive Commonwealth funded Home Care Package service to be eligible for ACVVS.

29. Does the client need to be receiving the HCP to be eligible? Or can they have been approved and be waiting for their HCP to be assigned?

The ACVVS is available to recipients of Australian Government subsidised residential aged care services or home care packages. This includes care recipients approved and on a waiting list/National Priority System for residential care or home care packages.

30. If a client is in receipt of CHSP services whilst waiting for a Home Care packaged to be assigned then they can access ACVVS?

The ACVVS is available to recipients of Australian Government subsidised residential aged care services or home care packages. This includes care recipients approved and on a waiting list/National Priority System for residential care or home care packages.

31. How do we locate the areas that the volunteers operate in? For example is this service available on Phillip Island?

To identify areas of operation, please contact the State Network Member in your jurisdiction. All the State Network Members contact details are available on the [ACVVS website - contacts](#).