



Macedon Ranges
Shire Council

Aged Care Volunteer Visitors Scheme Handbook

Funded by the Australian Government



ACVVS



1 Contact Us

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2 Macedon Ranges Shire Council

2..1 Vision

With our unique regional identity, Macedon Ranges Shire embodies a caring, resilient approach to community through our robust local economy, protection of the natural environment and a collaborative commitment to inclusivity for all. See Council's [Community Vision](#).

2..2 Council's organisational structure

Macedon Ranges Shire Council (MRSC) services are provided by four directorates whose leaders report directly to the Chief Executive Officer:

- Assets and Operations
- Community
- Corporate
- Planning and Environment

The Aged Care Volunteer Visitor Scheme (ACVVS) sits within the Community Directorate.

To view the current organisational structure please refer to Council's website via the link below.

<https://www.mrsc.vic.gov.au/About-Council/Our-Council/Organisation-Structure>

2..3 Our values

We are committed to the core values of:

Working Together | Honesty | Accountability | Innovation | Respect

2..4 Shaping the Ranges 2025-2035

The 'Shaping the Ranges' Plan (the Plan outlines strategic directions and objectives that will guide what Macedon Ranges Council does over the next 10 years.

The ACVVS program strongly relates to strategy 4. of the Plan. Our People (Our community is safe, healthy and well), working towards priorities:

4.1.4 Deliver inclusive programs, partnerships and spaces that promote positive community attitudes and social connection, to build trust, challenge discrimination, and support belonging and safety for all.

4.2.2 Support and advocate for accessible, inclusive local programs and services that promote mental health and resilience and are tailored to the needs of different ages, abilities, identities and experiences. and

4.2.3 Support inclusive, community-led initiatives that reduce isolation and build connection, with attention to diversity and accessibility.

3 The Aged Care Volunteer Visitor Scheme

3.1 The Aged Care Volunteer Visitor Scheme (ACVVS)

The Aged Care Volunteer Visitor Scheme, known as 'ACVVS,' is an Australia wide program funded by the Australian Government. The scheme is, auspiced by various organisations including the MRSC. The scheme matches volunteers with recipients of aged care services to provide social support visits.

The objective of ACVVS is to support older people who are experiencing loneliness and socially isolation.

ACVVS is a free service that aims to improve quality of life for those participating in the scheme, shown by those people:

- feeling a greater sense of connection to their own community, culture, and identity
- reduced loneliness and isolation
- reeling more connected to those around them
- reduced feelings of depression and anxiety.

Residents are eligible for volunteer visits if they receive (or are on the waitlist) for any of the following services:

Service at Home (SaH)

- One-on-one in-person volunteer visits to recipients of an Australian Government subsidised home support services.

Residential aged care homes (RACH)

- One-on-one in-person volunteer visits to recipients of Australian Government subsidised residential aged care.
- In-person group visits for up to two recipients of Australian Government subsidised residential aged care at the same time, occurring in the residential aged care home.

3.2 Duties of ACVVS volunteers

As an ACVVS Volunteer Visitor, you have been provided with a position description outlining your role and what is expected of you. It is vital you adhere to the position description and not carry out any tasks outside this agreed role. If you are unsure, please always discuss your concerns with a member of the ACVVS staff.

As a volunteer you demonstrate genuine empathy, warmth and understanding and are committed to developing and sustaining an ongoing friendship with your match. The Position Description outlines

Council's values and details the tasks and responsibilities of your role. Please take some time to familiarise yourself with your position description and procedures.

See your Position Description for the full details. ([Appendix 3](#))

Without volunteers, like yourself, we could not provide this service. Your role, through regular visits, is to provide friendship, social support and companionship to the person you visit (client). Many older people feel isolated and lonely, and through your friendship you give them something to look forward to, a sense of connection and better quality of life.

Your visits at a minimum should be fortnightly, however you are welcome to visit more often. In fact, many older people do request weekly visits. The length of your visits is up to the needs of the person you visit (client) and your availability, and this has been considered by your ACVVS Officer prior to matching you.

3.3 Training

MRSC provides training for volunteers to undertake your role;

- safely and effectively
- with confidence
- so you are aware of your obligations and responsibilities.

Appropriate volunteer training also ensures Council is complying with the [National Standards for Volunteer Involvement](#) and [Australian Government ACVVS Guidelines](#).

Initial training can be done online. However, where possible volunteers are encouraged to attend the 'in-person' training sessions, as these sessions go into further detail, and offer you the chance to meet fellow volunteers and discuss your volunteering role with other volunteers.

Training will include information about:

- ACVVS and the aged care system
- Codes of Conduct
- Rights of the care recipient
- Rights & responsibilities as a volunteer
- Effective communication
- Privacy & confidentiality
- Duty of care & boundaries
- Loss & grief
- Infection control
- Reporting issues of concern
- Administration requirements
- Occupational health and safety (OH&S) requirements.



Other training will be offered throughout your volunteering time. If there is a particular topic which you would like to learn more about, please let your ACVVS Officer know.

3.4 Online training documents

Program policies and other useful guidelines can be found in our volunteer webpage or mobile phone app. (see Better Impact / My Impact in Section How to report my visits 4.12).

1. Log in via:
 - a. My Impact website <https://app.betterimpact.com/Login/Login>
 - b. Or My Impact app. <https://support.betterimpact.com/siteguide/my-impact-app/>
2. Enter your username and password
3. Click on the **My Profile** tab
 - a. On the Website



- b. In the App.



Within 'My Profile' 'Files' – all documents and policies

In My Impact you can also access documents, important news, training and more.

Further training can be provided on how to navigate My Impact with the help of the ACVVS Team.

4 ACVVS Visiting Procedures

4.1 Before you start visiting

There are no set times ACVVS volunteers are required to visit clients. However, it can help to check your client's schedule, such as mealtimes, to determine the best times for visiting.

Always wear your ACVVS volunteer name badge when volunteering. Please let the ACVVS Team know if you have lost or misplaced your identification.

Visiting with children or pets. There must be prior agreement before bringing children or pets with you when volunteering. Your ACVVS team will discuss this option with you, the provider/ regional age care facility, and the client. Any children and animals attending the visit will be the sole responsibility of the volunteer.



You may not take other adults on your visits. Any persons over the age of 18 must be registered as an ACVVS Volunteer with Council (MRSC).

Bring your mobile phone; please always have a charged mobile phone with you (especially on home visits) and let someone know where you are going and what time to expect you back.

4.2 Your first visit

Residential Aged Care Homes (RACH): When visiting a residential aged care home for your first visit you will meet with your ACVVS Officer and the facility lifestyle coordinator to take you through an orientation and answer any questions you may have before meeting your resident match.

Any additional matches at that facility will not require an orientation, unless stated by staff, for example changes to emergency protocol.

Facilities may require visitors to undertake a COVID-19 test prior to entering. At times, a residential aged care facility may 'lockdown' the whole or a section of the facility due to COVID-19 or gastro outbreak. If your client is unaffected visits may go ahead if both parties agree.

Due to the speed at which COVID or gastro events develop, please check at reception before entering to determine if there is any health events, and contact the ACVVS team to ensure they also know. The ACVVS team will endeavour communicate to volunteers as soon as we become aware of any health events/ lockdowns.

You may be asked to wear appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), such as masks, under some circumstances. Contact a member of the ACVVS team if you need any masks, and always ensure you have sufficient supplies to meet your needs.

Home Visits (Service at Home – SaH): When visiting a client who lives in their own home for the first time, your ACVVS Officer will meet with you to introduce you both and answer any questions you both may have.

4.3 Duration

Your visit can be approximately an hour's duration each week, or at least once a fortnight. The minimum number of visits required for each client is 10 visits every 6 months.

If for any reason you think you may be late or unable to arrive to your visit within reasonable time, please contact your ACVVS Officer so they can notify the recipient of any changes.

Your visiting hours may differ from person to person as some older people may only cope with shorter visits, while others could be happier with more than an hour. *Any ongoing visits under 30 minutes duration should be discussed with the ACVVS Team.*

4.4 If a Residential Aged Care (RACH) client is not there:

- ask staff at facility
- contact ACVVS Officer and advise them of situation.

4.5 If a home based (Service at Home - SaH) client doesn't answer their door

If a visit has been organised for an SaH client and they do not answer the door:

1. Try to get their attention in other ways i.e. ring doorbell, knock or call out as they may not have heard you at the door.
2. Check to see if things appear out of character, e.g. morning paper still out, mail left in the mailbox, blinds down that are usually open. If you are worried they may be unwell and can't get their attention, please call the ACVVS office.
3. If you think the client may be out, wait 10-15 minutes to give them a chance to come home.
4. Contact the office and speak with the ACVVS Officer, who will advise you what to do.
5. Leave a signed Council notification slip giving the time and date of your visit ([Appendix 1](#)).

In cases of emergencies, call Triple '000'.

4.6 Cancellation and rescheduling

Any cancellations and rescheduling should initially be done through the ACVVS team. However, as you build relationships with the client you may reschedule visits yourself and report your visits as you would normally.

4..7 Outings

Some clients would like to go on social outings with you; such as going out for a coffee, for a walk, or other social activities. Outings can start once mutually agreed by you both and approved by your ACVVS team and the client's care teams.

Before outings:

- discuss with ACVVS staff
- the ACVVS team will determine with the service provider if we require an outing assessment for the client
- complete the ACVVS Volunteer Outing Agreement Form [\(Appendix 2\)](#).

Remember, any outing costs are at the expense of the volunteer and client themselves.

4..8 Emergencies

In Residential Aged Care Homes (RACH) - You would have received induction on your first day about what to do in an emergency.

Visiting private homes (SaH) - If you are visiting a client in the community, stick to a few simple steps.

- Ensure you are safe first and remove yourself from danger.
- If it is safe, help others.
- Call 000 and ask for the service required.
- Contact your ACVVS team to report the incident when it is safe to do so.

4..9 Accidental breakages

If you have broken an item, it is important to tell the client and your ACVVS Officer. The same rules apply for any damages at residential aged care facilities. Please advise a staff member of the issue and advise your ACVVS officer.

You will need report this to the ACVVS team as soon as possible.

4..10 Advocacy and ACVVS

We recognise as a volunteer you may find yourself in a position where you are asked for help. It is not the role of an ACVVS volunteer to advocate for the older person. If a client raises a concern with you, please acknowledge the situation and, if appropriate, you can ask them if you can share this with your ACVVS officer. You can also refer them to a service such as OPAN (Older Persons Advocacy Network) or Seniors Rights Victoria.

Don't forget you have a duty of care to share any concerns you may have regarding the client's or other's safety.

For more information on how to discuss concerns and advocacy with a care recipient talk to your ACVVS team and visit [OPAN - Support for older people](#) where you can access a training and factsheet on this topic.

4..11 Reporting your visits

After each visit, you are required to report your visits, including the following:

- Date.
- Duration.
- A few short sentences about the visit.

These reports are a mandatory part of the ACVVS funding requirements.

Report your visit via the 'My Impact' website or application (see Section 4.12). You will receive a friendly reminder from us at the beginning of the month, to make sure you have submitted all your visit updates for the previous month.

A key role for you as a volunteer is to inform the ACVVS team of any issues and concerns. Your feedback helps us to improve how clients are supported by us, and their other care providers.

It is easier to remember things if you do your reports on the day of your visit.

You are encouraged to provide:

- positive feedback (i.e. the client is more active or happier)
- negative feedback (i.e. the client's health has deteriorated, or they seem unusually anxious or upset)
- Other feedback, such as advising about a safety issue or event, for example, a broken step or electrical leads across the floor.



4..12 How to report your visits:



1. Log in via:
 - a. My Impact website <https://app.betterimpact.com/Login/Login>
 - b. Or My Impact app. <https://support.betterimpact.com/siteguide/my-impact-app/>
2. Enter your username and password
3. Click on the **Hours** tab
 - a. On the Website this is at the top of the screen.



- b. In the App the Hours tab is under the 3 lines at the top right corner.



4. Under “Activity,” select the person you visited.
5. Select the date, duration of visit and type in feedback on how the visit went.

In My Impact you can also access documents, important news, training and more.

Further training can be provided on how to navigate My Impact with the help of the ACVVS Team.

(For incidents, accidents and urgent concerns please call the ACVVS team directly, as soon as practical.)

4..13 Duty of care

Duty of care is your legal and ethical obligation to act in a way that ensures the safety and wellbeing of yourself and others. You have a ‘duty of care’ to the client you are matched with, other volunteers and staff members. In simple terms, you must always act in a safe manner and immediately report any concerns about the welfare of yourself or others.

What to report to your ACVVS Team under Duty of Care:

- concerns about wellbeing, behaviour, or safety (physical or emotional)
- memory changes – more disorientated or confused than usual.
- mobility changes
- any witnessed or unwitnessed (advised by older person) falls.
- pain
- changes in personal grooming, health, or family circumstances.

4..14 Illness of a client

The aged care service provider will usually contact ACVVS when a client is unable to receive a visitor due to illness. If your client is in hospital or transition care and can receive a visitor, visits are encouraged to continue where appropriate.

4..15 Death of a client

The aged care service provider will advise the ACCVS team when a client has passed away. The ACVVS officer and MRSC will provide support to you during this time.

Including:

- supporting your attendance to the funeral service where possible or appropriate
- access to counselling support through our EAP service.

See the '[Support](#)' section in this handbook.

4..16 Leave

Please inform your ACVVS officer of any leave or holidays as soon as practical.

Please contact your ACVVS officer or team leader if you need unanticipated leave, as soon as possible. We understand that these situations occur, and you can advise us of when you feel comfortable to return.



4..17 If you become unwell

It is important that you only visit when you are well. You will be interacting with people who are particularly vulnerable to contracting illness, so if you are unwell, including having a cold, or are suffering from a mild ailment please do not volunteer. In these instances, you are encouraged to arrange a phone call or video call instead.

Always check with a team member prior to any visits with clients if you are at all unsure whether you should be volunteering. You should report to a member of the ACVVS team as soon as possible if you have been actively volunteering during a period you may have been infectious for COVID-19.

Please also consider your mental health and use the EAP counselling service Acacia Connect for support when needed and let ACVVS Officers know if you need to take some time off from volunteering.

4..18 Respecting privacy and confidentiality

To ensure the utmost confidentiality and respect for the older people you are matched with, please adhere to the following guidelines:

Confidentiality: Refrain from discussing visits with any third-party, identifying details, issues or matters raised by the people you interact with while volunteering. It is crucial to maintain their privacy and uphold the trust they place in us.

Duty of Care: There may be instances where you feel a sense of responsibility to raise concerns for the well-being or safety of client. In such cases, it is your duty to report the concern to your ACVVS Officer, ensuring that it is on a strictly 'need to know' basis to protect the individual's confidentiality. Unless reporting to your ACVVS Officer under a duty of care (see below) or the Serious Incident Response Scheme (SIRS) sirs@agedcarequality.gov.au, any private information shared with you during your volunteering experience must remain strictly confidential.

Social media: It is strictly prohibited to share any information or post photos related to the older people you are matched with on any social media platforms. Respecting their privacy means refraining from disclosing any details that could potentially compromise their confidentiality or dignity.

By maintaining these privacy standards, you contribute to creating a safe and secure environment where the confidentiality and well-being of the older individuals remain paramount.

See: Council's Privacy Policy, which is in accordance with the **Privacy and Data Protection Act 2014** and the **Health Records Act 2001**. (refer to **Appendix 3**)



5 MRSC Volunteer Policies & Procedures



Being a volunteer at MRSC

Our commitment to you includes:

- Providing training so you can do your role well
- Ongoing support in your role
- Clarification of your role (through your Position Description) and advice from ACVVS where necessary
- Agreement about hours and conditions (through your Position Description & Volunteer Agreement)
- Information and consultation on matters directly or indirectly affecting you and your duties
- Providing adequate insurance cover
- Respecting your privacy and ensuring we request only information we require, your information is kept in a secure manner and only shared with your permission
- Providing access to relevant information, such as volunteer policies and procedures.

Your commitment to us entails:

- carry out the duties listed in your volunteer Position Description
- adhere to the Volunteer Agreement
- maintain boundaries as provided in the training and volunteer handbook
- adhere to our policies and procedures
- carry out the mandatory requirements of reporting all your visits so Council can meet the ACVVS government funding requirements
- respect the rights and privacy of others
- ensure no conflict of interest compromises your volunteer role
- ensure you maintain regular and open communication with the ACVVS officers

- report your visits
- accept responsibility for your actions and behaviour
- give as much advance notice as possible before leaving the role.

5..1 MRSC Code of Conduct

The Council's workforce, including volunteers, are required to abide by the Code of Conduct.

The Code of Conduct applies when you are volunteering and at any time when your behavior would impact negatively on Council's reputation or represent a risk to Council.

We expect that during your volunteering you will:

- act impartially
- act ethically and with integrity, including avoiding real or apparent conflicts of interest
- perform your duties to the best of your ability
- treat others with respect and courtesy
- accept accountability for results
- provide responsive service (respond quickly and thoughtfully)

See the full MRSC Code of Conduct (*refer to [Appendix 3](#)*).

Checks and Compliance

5..1 Police check

Council undertakes Police Checks for all volunteers prior to registration and then every three years.

If you are convicted or charged with an offence whilst you are a volunteer with Council, you are required to advise Council as soon as possible and not continue to volunteer until the matter has been discussed further.

See Council's National Police Check Policy (*refer to [Appendix 3](#)*).

5..2 Statutory declaration

Statutory Declarations are required if you have been a citizen or a permanent resident of another country other than Australia, for 12 months or longer after the age of 16. You will be required to provide a statutory declaration stating in your own words if true, that you have never, in Australia or another country, been convicted of murder or sexual assault, or convicted of and sentenced to imprisonment for any other form of assault.

Anyone who makes a false statement in a statutory declaration is guilty of an offence under the Declaration Act (*Commonwealth Statutory Declaration Act 1959*)

5.3 Child Safe Standards

Council is committed to creating and maintaining a child safe organisation in accordance with the [Victorian Government Child Safe Standards](#). Protecting children and preventing and responding to child abuse is an organisation-wide responsibility. Council's Child Safe Organisation Policy applies to all Council's staff and volunteers.



(Refer to [Appendix 3](#))

Council has a Child Safety Reporting Process in accordance with the Commission for Children and Young People Guidelines. This process does not override the legal obligations of all adults to protect children from sexual abuse where a known substantial risk occurs, or to report information about suspected child sexual abuse to police. Failure to protect and failure to disclose are criminal offences.

5.4 Vaccinations

To support your own health and the clients you will be interacting with, we encourage you to have up to date COVID-19 and annual flu vaccinations. You may choose to access Council's annual flu vaccination schedule. You will be advised of dates and times by a member of the ACVVS team.

Visiting Residential Aged Care Homes (RACH); all visitors must adhere to state-wide medical directions with regards to vaccinations including but not limited to: Influenza and COVID-19. Volunteers visiting residential age care facilities must abide by rules of the facility at the time of visit.

Visiting Service at Home (SaH) clients; volunteers should adhere to Council's Staff Vaccination Policy and Staff COVID-19 Vaccination Policy ([Appendix 3](#)).

Safety & Wellbeing

5.5 Occupational Health and Safety

Council recognises its moral and legal responsibility to provide a safe and healthy work environment for employees, volunteers, residents, contractors, and Councillors. Health and safety in the workplace is everybody's responsibility. Managers, supervisors, and workers (including volunteers) all have individual legal obligations to ensure a safe workplace. Council's Occupational Health and Safety (OH&S) Policy applies to you as a volunteer, both within Council facilities and off-site whilst undertaking your volunteering role.

As a volunteer, you have a duty of care to undertake your volunteer duties in a manner that is not harmful to your own health and safety and the health and safety of others. This includes the following responsibilities:

- Following all health and safety policies and procedures.
- Reporting all incidents and hazards to the ACVVS team or another staff member of MRSC.
- Participating in relevant training and inductions.
- Supporting and promoting improvements in work processes to help to reduce or eliminate risks.

See Council's Occupational Health and Safety Policy (*refer to [Appendix 3](#)*).



5.6 Incident reporting & SIRS

If you become aware of an incident, you should do the following

- Ensure everyone is safe and call for help if needed.
- Follow the site procedures for incident management.
- Tell the ACVVS team as soon as you become aware.
- Let the person who is impacted know who they can reach out to, such as
 - a staff member at the service,
 - the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission
 - advocacy services such as the Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN).

All near misses, injuries and property damage must be reported to a member of the ACVVS team as soon as it is safe to do so. If you are unsure about whether to report an incident, check with ACVVS staff.

A near miss is when an occurrence, event or omission happens that does not result in harm (such as injury, illness or danger to health) to a (client) or another person but had potential to do so. For example, where a client trips and nearly falls over an undetected extension cord or equipment left in a blind spot in a poorly lit area;

Under no circumstances should liability be admitted for third party injury or damage until relevant investigations have been completed.

SIRS – the Serious Incident Reporting Scheme

The Serious Incident Response Scheme (SIRS) is a government initiative to help reduce the risk of abuse and neglect for people living or staying in a residential aged care home.

While you should report all incidents, accidents and near misses, under the SIRS, there are 8 types of incidents involving older people that MUST be reported to the Commission of Aged Care Quality & Safety.

These are:

- unreasonable use of force
- unlawful sexual contact or inappropriate sexual conduct
- unexplained absence or missing person
- neglect
- psychological or emotional abuse
- unexpected Death
- stealing or financial coercion by a staff member
- inappropriate use of restrictive practices.

If you witness or someone discloses an incident, you need to report it to the aged care staff or manager immediately. For more information, chat to the ACVVS team, the Council staff or the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission. There is no wrong way to speak up. As a volunteer in aged care, you play an important role.

Serious Incident Response Scheme (SIRS) <https://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/providers/serious-incident-response-scheme> or info@agedcarequality.gov.au

5.7 Under the influence

You must not put any recipients, staff, or other members of the public at risk by being under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or any other substances during volunteer work hours. Individuals must not attend the workplace or perform duties of their role if under the influence.

Refer to Employee Code of Conduct – [\(Appendix 3\)](#)

5.8 Bullying prevention

Council has a Bullying Prevention Policy to ensure staff and volunteers are aware of their rights and responsibilities in the workplace regarding bullying and acceptable workplace behaviour. As a Council volunteer, you have a legal responsibility to care for your own health and safety and that of fellow staff and volunteers by doing the following:

- Comply with all relevant Council policies.
- Model positive and constructive behaviour in your treatment of others.
- Report any acts or behaviours that constitute bullying.
- Participate in applicable training.
- Report any breaches of the Bullying Prevention Policy to a member of the ACVVS team.
- Fully cooperate in any investigation if required whilst maintaining confidentiality.

Refer to the Bullying Prevention Policy ([Appendix 3](#))

5.9 Occupational violence and aggression

Council takes all reasonable steps to prevent violence and aggression in the workplace, and to manage situations which may arise. As such, Council has adopted a zero-tolerance approach to workplace violence and aggression. Workplace violence can be physical or verbal and includes, but is not limited to:

- pushing, shoving, tripping, and grabbing
- biting, spitting, scratching, hitting, kicking
- verbal threats
- threatening someone with a weapon
- any form of indecent physical contact.

As a Council volunteer, you have responsibility for your own health and safety and that of other people in the workplace. You are required to promptly remove yourself from harm, when possible, and report all occurrences of workplace violence and aggression to a member of the ACVVS team.

See Council's Occupational Violence and Aggression Policy (*refer to [Appendix 3](#)*)

5.10 Addressing conflicts of interest

A conflict of interest arises when an individual's personal affiliations, such as family, friendships, financial considerations, or social factors, have the potential to compromise their objectivity, decision-making or actions within the workplace.

To uphold the integrity of your volunteering role, it is of utmost importance that you consciously set aside any personal biases or interests. This helps reduce any potential conflicts of interest. By remaining impartial and prioritising the well-being and needs of the individuals we serve, you contribute to a transparent and trustworthy environment where the best interests of all parties involved are upheld.

See Council's Code of Conduct (*refer to [Appendix 3](#)*)

5.11 Equal opportunity

Council developed an Equal Opportunity Policy to confirm their commitment to promoting a culture that is inclusive, respectful, free from discrimination and ensures everyone has equal opportunities within the workplace.

As a Council volunteer you must:

- Ensure you do not engage (or aid, abet or encourage others) in any unlawful conduct towards those you encounter through your volunteering.
- Read and understand Council's Equal Opportunity Policy and Procedures.
- Report any unlawful conduct you see occurring to others.

If you believe you have been discriminated against, bullied, harassed, sexually harassed, vilified, or victimised, Council strongly encourages you not to ignore talk with the ACVVS team or council staff.

5.12 Fire danger days and other high-risk weather events

Council understands the high bushfire and weather event risk within the shire. Council supports the Country Fire Authority’s (CFA’s) advice for people living in high bushfire risk areas to have bushfire plans and be proactive when enforcing those plans. On occasions you may be unable to attend visits due to clients residing in high fire danger areas.

The following procedures must be undertaken in during high bushfire risk instances:

- If you are unavailable to visit due to the conditions on the day, call the ACVVS team as early as possible. If unable to contact anyone from Council, call the client or their representative to inform them, i.e. staff at aged care or care manager.
- Virtual visits may occur on these days where appropriate for you and the recipient.
- Council will advise all volunteers via email when Extreme and Catastrophic fire danger days are expected. Face-to-face visits will not occur on Catastrophic days. Visits can be rescheduled, or alternatively you can arrange virtual visit.
- It is not only up to Council to inform of high danger fire days. Staff and volunteers should always be prepared for and aware of the risks when traveling and visiting.

These ratings will be shown in townships during the fire season, as per the diagram below:



See: Staffing and Service Provision on Fire Danger Days Policy (refer to [Appendix 3](#)).

Support

5.13 Volunteer performance support

The ACVVS team will ensure you are familiar with the expectations of your role. The types of feedback you can expect include:

- positive feedback and recognition of your contribution
- concerns, issues, or questions about your performance.

Volunteers are encouraged to contact the ACVVS team anytime if you:

- are unsure of how to undertake your role or aspects of your role
- need further information about your role, working with elderly or the aged care system
- need to clarify your responsibilities and expectations.

Volunteers should be aware that if you are performing below the requirements of the role or are putting yourself, or others at risk, then you will be given constructive feedback and coached on how to improve.

See Volunteer Position Description, for details of your role expectations ([Appendix 3](#))

5.14 Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

As a Council volunteer, you are provided with access to the Council's Employee Assistance Program. Our EAP is a personal coaching and counselling service that offers confidential, short-term support for a variety of problems that may be affecting you while volunteering, at work or at home. Each session (face-to-face, telephone, video, or live chat options) is provided independently of Council by an external provider, [Acacia Connect](#), who are specialists in psychology, mental health, and wellbeing.

Acacia Connect are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, ensuring individuals have access to support when they need it most. Their dedicated team ensure that you are connected with timely assistance, that aligns with your needs and circumstances.

Your details will not be passed on to anyone at Council.

To access EAP counselling Acacia Connect

- Call 24/7: [1300 364 273](tel:1300364273)
- Text: [0480 087 020](tel:0480087020)
- Website: [Acacia EAP](#) select 'Request an Appointment' use domain name: *mrrsc.vic.gov.au*
- Email: info@acaciaconnection.com
- Portal access: [Acacia's Wellbeing Portal](#)

log-in details:

Username: **MacedonCouncil**

Password: **Acacia2025!**

5.15 Grievance procedure

A grievance is any matter of concern to you that may affect morale and teamwork. For example, in relation to your role, conditions or relationships with other volunteers or council staff. Please raise grievances as soon as possible so they can be resolved quickly and appropriately. Grievances may be verbal or written and should be addressed to any of the following:

- ACVVS Officers
- Coordinator Community Connections
- a member of Council's People and Culture team.

In the first instance, every effort will be made to resolve a grievance between the individuals at the point at which it occurs.

Insurance and volunteering

5.16 Insurance

As a registered Council volunteer you are covered by insurance while you are undertaking clearly defined activities outlined in your Position Description. Your registration as a Council volunteer is subject to the completion of a Police Check every three years, a Working with Children Check and the satisfactory performance of your role(s).

5.17 Public liability insurance

Volunteers with Council are covered within the terms and conditions of Council's Public Liability Insurance Policy. The Policy covers personal injuries caused to a third party or damage to third party property occurring directly as a result of undertaking your authorised duties as a volunteer. Only registered Council volunteers will be covered by this public liability insurance.

5.18 Motor vehicle insurance

Volunteers using their own vehicle to take clients on outings must provide their own insurance coverage in relation to the use of private motor vehicles. It is therefore a requirement that you maintain your own comprehensive motor vehicle insurance that provides protection for both damage to your own vehicle and the property of others and provide evidence that it is current by completing a Volunteer Outing Agreement. Current motor vehicle registration must also be maintained to ensure that Transport Accident Commission Insurance is in place should you or another person suffer an injury in a road accident.

See *Volunteer Outing Policy & Agreement* (refer to [Appendix 3](#)).

5.19 Personal accident insurance

Council provides a limited personal accident insurance cover to volunteers under the age of 90 for death and permanent disability if you are injured in the course of your duties. This policy may also address loss of income and non-Medicare out-of-pocket expenses should a serious injury occur.

Volunteer parents who choose to have their children accompany them whilst undertaking their role do so at their own risk and only by agreement with the client and the ACVVS team. Parents must be vigilant and remain fully responsible for the care and supervision of their children.

Representing ACVVS and MRSC



5.20 Talking with the media

If you are directly approached by media outlets in relation to your role with us, you must redirect enquiries to a member of the ACVVS team who will refer it to Council's Communications Unit.

You are not authorised to make any public statement in relation to your role or the work of the organisation. If a volunteer statement is appropriate, the Communications Unit will then coordinate a response in consultation with relevant Council officers.

If you become aware of an issue relevant to your role that has the potential to impact upon Council and reach the media, you should bring it to the attention of a member of the ACVVS team.



5.21 Social media

Council's social media Policy is a guide to the appropriate use of social media platforms by staff and volunteers. This policy applies when using social media as part of your Council role and personal use.

Volunteers must not use social media in a way that may adversely impact Council or bring the organisation into disrepute.

Social Media Policy (refer to [Appendix 3](#))

5..22 Use of Information and Communications Technology (ICT)

Volunteers are required to use Council's Information and Communications Technology (ICT) systems in an effective, safe, ethical, and lawful manner. Council's ICT Acceptable Use Policy and Procedure provides guidance on what is and is not acceptable use of Council managed websites and applications, including Better Impact and My Impact.

Council ICT systems and services are not to be used for personal business activity, including social networking accounts. The ICT Acceptable Use Policy and Procedure (*refer to [Appendix 3](#)*)

Other information

5..23 Change of your details; let us know

It is essential that we can contact you. It is your responsibility to inform us of any changes to your details or anything else that may impact your role including:

- personal details
- contact details (e.g. phone, mail, email)
- emergency or medical contacts
- health status that may affect your ability to undertake your role (even temporarily)
- your availability, holidays etc.
- if you use your vehicle for your volunteer role, any changes in the conditions of your driver's license, vehicle details and comprehensive insurance.



6 Supporting Older People

Effective communication with an older person

Avoid treating an older person differently due to any preconceived notions about older adults or people from diverse backgrounds; assume that they have had full lives with rich experiences.

6.1 Tips to get started.

Getting started takes time.

- Listen attentively and be 'present.' Put your mobile phone on silent.
- Ensure you are in a quiet spot, if possible, without distractions and background noise.
- Ask if they are comfortable.
- Smile and laugh freely.
- Use positive body language like nodding, leaning forward and making eye contact.
- **Don't be afraid of silences.** Sometimes people need a few moments to gather their thoughts.
- **Be patient.** To have a valuable conversation, please give an older person plenty of time to respond.
- You might encounter old-fashioned views. Culture changes fast. If the older person has opinions that are outdated, try to remember that those opinions were considered acceptable for much of their lives. This is not to say you should accept racism, sexism, or anything offensive, this should be discussed with your ACVVS officer.



Suggestions of what you could ask about:

- their past – where they were born, whether they had siblings, or their favourite belonging
- their family of choice, friends, or pets
- careers, first jobs, volunteering
- look around their room for ideas. Are there photos or objects you can talk to them about?
- the food, music, movies, books, pastimes they enjoy
- memories, holidays, or experiences in their life
- things they are proud of
- what they might be looking forward to in the future.

What NOT to do:

- If there is a topic that the person does not wish to talk about or that seems to upset them, do not push them to discuss it.
- Avoid giving unwanted advice; this may come across as unsupportive and belittling.
- Be mindful to avoid condescending language.
- Listen respectfully and always use clear and appropriate tone and language.
- Speak at a normal level. Sometimes it's tempting to speak too loudly or exaggerate your pronunciations to someone with hearing loss, but this can distort the words. However, you may need to speak a little slower and more clearly, especially if you are a fast talker.

6..2 'Doing with,' rather than 'doing for'

As a volunteer, you may feel that you need to look after your clients, however it is better for their health and wellbeing if clients do as much as possible for themselves. Rather than 'doing for' your clients, wherever possible your role is to:

- **Encourage** – Take the time to encourage the client to do the task themselves, enable them to build their confidence and their capacity.
- **Facilitate** – From your knowledge of the client, suggest different ways they might be able to complete the task, even if it takes a bit longer.
- **Monitor** – By talking, observing and listening to the client you will see changes or issues they may encounter. Please let us know if there have been changes for the client or if you identify any issues.



Report issues and feedback when you log your hours via My Impact.

6..3 Embracing diversity

During your volunteering experience, you will have the privilege of engaging in conversations with older people who come from diverse backgrounds. These older people will encompass a wide range of cultural and ethnic origins, educational backgrounds, values, beliefs, sexual orientations, gender diversity and worldviews.

Here are some key points to keep in mind:

Embrace Listening: Approach each conversation with an open mind and be attentive to their stories and experiences. It is crucial to maintain a non-critical and non-judgmental stance. This opportunity presents a chance to expand your worldview and gain insights into how others think, live, and feel.

Avoid Stereotyping: It is important to recognise that not everyone within a particular culture, religion, or community shares the same perspectives or behaviours. Stereotyping individuals based on their background can lead to unfair assumptions. Instead, appreciate the unique qualities of each person you encounter and treat them as individuals. Avoid making assumptions about their thoughts and emotions based on preconceived notions.

By respecting and celebrating diversity, you will foster a more inclusive environment that promotes understanding, empathy, and mutual respect among all individuals involved.



Boundaries

It is not easy setting and maintaining clear boundaries when you volunteer in a community role such as the ACVVS. You will develop a rapport with and fondness for the people you visit.

Keeping clear boundaries in this role is vital. It is up to you to set your emotional and personal boundaries around how much of your personal life you are willing to share. You can still have genuine and warm engagement whilst maintaining your personal boundaries.

Council suggests keeping your boundaries high until you have determined the nature of the dynamics between you and the person you visit. It's easier to relax boundaries as you get to know someone, than trying to pull away when you feel 'burnt out' from doing or giving more than you can sustain. *Here is an example of what could happen: 'Rose' initially visited 'Marie' every week for up to two hours. After 3 months she found this was getting too much for her but felt guilty about making her visits shorter after all this time.*

Maintaining boundaries can ensure that you don't 'burn out' or get 'compassion fatigue'.

As tempting as it may be, please don't try and 'fix' any problems that may be discussed with you or give advice even if it is in line with your profession e.g., you are a doctor, and they inform you they have a sore knee. If it is matter linked to the services they receive, ask them if they would like you to pass the concern on. If they give you permission, please pass on to your ACVVS officer.

Examples of requests that would break the boundaries of this role.

- Can you help me understand this legal letter I received?
- Can you help me open a bank account?
- Could you advocate for me with my aged care provider?

If you feel uncomfortable, or client is inappropriate, abusive, or aggressive etc., stay calm, let the them know that it would be a suitable time to leave and thank them for their time. Please report this to your ACVVS officer as soon as possible.

If you are concerned regarding physical, emotional, or domestic circumstances – ask them if they are safe and that you would like to offer further support by escalating the concern to the ACVVS officer as soon as possible. Even if they says no – you must report your concerns as a duty of care.

6..1 Things not to do:

- loan/give money to the client or accept money from the client
- socialise with your client friend outside the specified volunteer arrangement
- share your own personal grief or challenges e.g. loss of a job or family conflict
- establish a romantic or intimate relationship with the client
- give or receive gifts more than token value e.g. flowers or chocolates
- offer advice or counsel
- carry out personal care or household tasks such as cleaning.

Receiving or giving gifts

Please be aware of the potential risks associated with giving or receiving gifts or money from ACVVS recipients. Volunteers should discuss all situations involving gifts (particularly if the gift is of monetary / sentimental significance) with the ACVVS team and in almost all circumstances; the offer of gifts must not be accepted.



Reasons for avoiding giving/ receiving gifts:

- Something that is a gift today may be interpreted as a something you have stolen the following week (consider those with dementia).
- You could be seen to be taking advantage of your position, responsibility, and trust.
- Family may have concerns with their family member gifting possessions.
- Food gifts may contravene dietary requirements.

In most, if not all circumstances, costs occurring during outing visits are confined to the individual. For example, food and beverages cannot be reimbursed by Council and can be considered a form of gift if offered to the opposite party.

Refer to Councils gift policy for further information (*refer to [Appendix 3](#)*)



Summary

Reducing risk during your visits...

Older people are considered vulnerable members of our society, even if they are physically well, and an important aspect of this scheme is not to increase any risk to them.

There are a few things you can do to support this.

- If you are unwell in any way, please do not conduct face to face visits.
- You are covered by Council insurance as long as you work within the boundaries of your role. (See your position description, this handbook and the ACVVS guidelines).
- Please only accept gifts of token value e.g., flowers, chocolates. Your older friend may try to give you a gift of either monetary and/or sentimental value. Decline kindly and ask instead for a favourite recipe, flowers from the garden or just a cup of tea.
- This service is free, and clients should not make any financial contribution.
- Outings are very popular and going out for a coffee with your older friend may be the highlight of their day. Please ensure if you go on an outing, you have an Outing Agreement and you comply with any requirements from the ACVVS program.
- Like all good friendships, respecting privacy is vital and shows respect and genuine care. This includes not discussing any personal information from the person you visit with other volunteers, family, or friends. You may also overhear conversations or see issues relating to other older people in the aged care home or client's own home. Please also respect the confidential nature of this in the same way.
- Young children and pets are popular with many older people and can really enhance a visit if your client has agreed to this. You are responsible for any young children or pets you take with you. Again, please ensure you have agreement from the ACVVS team, aged care facility staff/ or care manager. Unfortunately, you may not take other adults on your visits. Please remember children, and animals coming with you are your responsibility and must always be under your direction, be fully supervised and never left alone.

7 Appendices

Appendix 1: Acronyms

Acronyms

ACVVS = Aged Care Volunteer Visitor Scheme

MRSC = Macedon Ranges Shire Council

RACH = Residential Aged Care Home

SaH = Service at Home

Appendix 2: Forms

These are all available in the Better Impact website or the 'My Impact' App under your PROFILE. If you would like a printed copy of the ACVVS Procedures Guide, contact the ACVVS team.

The following forms can be found in My Impact under 'MY PROFILE' > 'Files'

- Client Feedback Form
- Gift Disclosure Form
- Client Not at Home Slip

Appendix 3: Relevant Policies and Procedures

These policies and procedures are all available in the Better Impact website or the 'My Impact' App under your PROFILE. If you would like a printed copy of the ACVVS Procedures Guide, contact the ACVVS team.

ACVVS Volunteer Position Description

Occupational Violence and Aggression Procedure

Child Safety and Wellbeing Policy

Customer Service Charter

Employee Code of Conduct

Equal Opportunity Policy – Changed to...

Fraud and corruption control Policy

ICT Acceptable Use Policy and Procedure

Media Policy

National Police Check Policy

Occupational Violence & Aggression Policy

Privacy Policy

Resolution Procedure for Sexual Harassment, Bullying and Equal Opportunity

Social Media Policy

Staff COVID-19 Vaccination Policy

Staff Vaccination Policy

Staffing and Service Provision on Fire Danger Days Policy

Sexual Harassment Policy

Position Description – Aged Care Volunteer Visitor Scheme - Volunteer

Professional Indemnity and Public Liability Certificate of Currency

Volunteer Outing Policy & Agreement

Appendix 4: Better Impact

Better Impact is the data management system Council uses for all volunteer programs. This is also where you report your visits to clients.

Volunteers access Better Impact using the volunteer website, or My Impact mobile phone app.

Website app.betterimpact.com/Login/Login

Mobile App support.betterimpact.com/siteguide/my-impact-app

Better Impact training will be provided by MRSC. You may also go to the Better Impact website and watch videos to understand how to use the website or set up the app on your mobile device. For information see the website here. support.betterimpact.com/siteguide

Appendix 4: Resources

Macedon Ranges Shire Council – Occupational Health & Safety Team - OH&S

OHS@mrsc.vic.gov.au

To access EAP counselling

Call Acacia Connect: 1300 364 273

or visit: acaciaconnection.com

ACVVS National Guidelines:

Aged Care Volunteer Visitor Scheme Guideline www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/aged-care-volunteer-visitors-scheme-national-guidelines

Advocacy Services

OPAN Older Persons Advocacy Network (National Service) open.org.au

Elder Rights Advocacy (Vic) - (Victorian Service) elderrights.org.au

Seniors Rights Vic Elder (for abuse related matters (not abuse from a paid carer or institution – refer these to Elder Rights Advocacy) seniorsrights.org.au

Carer Support

Carers Victoria www.carersvictoria.org.au

Carer Gateway Victoria www.carergateway.gov.au

Crisis and Support Services

Emergency & Police: **000**

Lifeline: **13 11 14** www.lifeline.org.au

Beyond Blue: **1300 224 636** www.beyondblue.org.au

Suicide Call Back Service: **1800 659 467** www.suicidecallbackservice.org.au

Nurse-On-Call: **1300 606 624** www.healthdirect.gov.au/nurse-on-call

Victoria 24-Hour Statewide Homelessness Assistance: **1800 825 955** www.housing.vic.gov.au

Salvation Army: **13 72 58** www.salvationarmy.org.au

Family Drug and Gambling Help: **1300 660 068** www.sharc.org.au

Q Life (LGBTIQA+): **1800 184 527** qlife.org.au

Family Violence Services

Seniors Rights Victoria: **1300 368 821** seniorsrights.org.au

Elder Help: **1800 353 347** www.health.vic.gov.au/wellbeing-and-participation/preventing-elder-abuse

Orange Door: **1800 512 359** www.orangedoor.vic.gov.au

24hr Sexual Assault Crisis Line: **1800 806 292** www.sacl.com.au

Centre for Non-Violence (women and children experiencing violence) 24hr: **1800 015 188** www.cnv.org.au

1800RESPECT 24hr: **1800 737 732** www.1800respect.org.au

Men's Helpline 24hr: **1300 78 99 78** mensline.org.au

Family Relationships Advice Line: **1800 050 321** www.fral.org.au

Emergency Relief

Salvation Army Bendigo: **5440 8410** www.salvationarmy.org.au/bendigo

Catholic Care: **5438 1334** www.catholiccarevic.org.au

Vic Emergency **1800 226 226** www.emergency.vic.gov.au/respond



**Macedon
Ranges**
Shire Council



Aged Care
Volunteer

Visitors Scheme

Funded by the Australian Government