

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

## Can I choose who I visit?

ACVVS team members attempt to make a good match for you by taking into consideration your preferences for visiting someone in aged care, or in their own home, where you live, your interests and life experiences, and your personality. We often try to match people from similar cultures or who share a common language.

## What if I don't have a connection with the person I am visiting?

Friendships are not made overnight, and it can take a few of visits before you feel a real connection with your recipient like any new friendship. However, after a few visits if for whatever reason you don't connect with your person let us know and we will try to find you someone else to visit. Your recipient may also request another visitor or withdraw from the program at any time.

## Can I visit whenever I like?

We find that our older aged adults prefer consistency and regularity, so we do encourage our volunteer visitors to visit on the same day at the same time each week/fortnight as this gives the recipient something to look forward to and reduces any confusion. It also means that you are more likely to visit if it is a regular part of your schedule, rather than something you try to fit in around your other activities.

People living in their own homes will have home care providers during the week to help with domestic tasks or personal care so they may have less flexibility, whereas people living in a residential aged care facility tend to be more flexible. Most residential aged care facilities encourage visiting between 10-4pm, not at mealtimes. You can also visit on weekends if that works for your recipient.

## Can I bring my dog to visit?

Yes, many older people love it when our volunteers bring their dogs to visit. You may bring your dog to visit in aged care providing your dog is well trained and it has been approved by the facility and by your recipient.

## I've heard that I need to record my visits, how important is this?

After each visit we ask you to record the details of the visit using a link. It takes about a minute to do and includes the date, who you visited and for how long. It also has a section for comments so that you can let us know if you have any concerns about your person or anything special you would like to share. These visits reports are important so we can support you in your role and ensure we continue to receive funding so we can assist more people.

## Is it okay to miss visits if I get busy?

We know that sometimes life gets busy with family, study and work commitments, and that there are times when you just can't visit. We ask that you communicate with us, send your person a card or a letter, or make a phone call and then try to squeeze in a couple of extra visits to make up the time missed. Remember, for some of our recipients your visits may be the highlight of their week!

## What are the benefits of being a volunteer visitor with LWA?

At Lifeline WA we really value our volunteers and we are here to support you throughout your volunteering journey with us. We provide you with a dedicated coordinator, ongoing professional development and training, and social gatherings and events to say thank you. We have a quarterly newsletter, a Facebook page and access to other volunteering opportunities. You can get involved as little or as much as you want. Our volunteer visitors consistently report very high rates of satisfaction with their volunteering experience with us. Best of all you are part of a passionate and value-driven team committed to reducing loneliness in our community.

## How long do the visits need to be?

Visits are typically between 30 minutes to 2 hours, depending on the nature of your relationship with the person, and what activity you are doing together. Most visits are about an hour.

## Are people living in aged care really lonely? They have people around them all the time.

Staff in aged care are often busy and may not have time to sit with someone for an hour to chat. Families are working and looking after their own children so may also not have the time to visit as often as they would like. Sometimes families are still visiting, but having a new friend is a different type of connection. Think about the differences in your own relationships. Recipients sometimes report feeling like they can't really connect with some of the other residents, and this is when our volunteer visitors are so important.

## Can I visit more than one person?

Yes, some of our volunteers enjoy it so much they visit two people.

## Is the person I am matched with likely to have a cognitive impairment?

Some of our recipients will be experiencing some memory loss commonly associated with ageing, whereas some will be experiencing more significant cognitive decline associated with Dementia. Even with cognitive or communication challenges our recipients enjoy and benefit from human connection.

## Can I bring a family member or friend to visit?

You may bring children to visit your recipient in aged care only and only on some occasions with the permission of your recipient. The purpose of the visits is for them to have one on one time with one person.

## What happens if I get sick?

If you get sick, please stay home. Inform your recipient or the facility and let us know.

## What happens when my recipient dies?

Sadly, some of our recipients do get sick and pass away and that can be very sad. At Lifeline WA we offer all our volunteers access to a FREE Employee Assistance Program and the ACVVS team are always around for debriefs and cups of tea. We support you while grieving and encourage you to return to visiting again only when you are ready.

## What happens if I need to stop visiting?

When you apply, we ask for a minimum commitment of six months. However, we acknowledge that there are times when life happens, you become unwell, change jobs, or you go on an extended holiday, and you need to reduce your volunteering commitments for a while. We just ask that you communicate with us so we can find another visitor for your recipient and organise a last visit to say goodbye. It can be hard for them when their person stops visiting and they don't know why.