

# Practical ideas for HACC Volunteers

## How can volunteers assist clients to stay active and independent?

Not so long ago, the role of volunteers in HACC was to 'look after' and 'do things for' people using services. Nowadays, with a better-informed view of healthy and active ageing, we encourage people to do as much as possible for themselves as possible.

### What roles can HACC volunteers take on?\*

While there is now less need to 'do for' clients, there will always be an important role for volunteers.

With direction from your supervisor and in keeping with the client's goals, there are many important roles for volunteers.



### The Encourager

With an approach in HACC services that says '*We want clients to do as much as they possibly can for themselves...*', there is lots of room for volunteers to be there as the person who encourages people to 'do for' themselves. Staff are as available as possible, but they will always have less time than they would like. Having a volunteer who can spend one-to-one time encouraging people to have a go is a great resource for organisations.

### The Facilitator

Volunteers often have more scope than staff to be 'beside' clients. Especially in a group setting, volunteers can keep an activity or a discussion going. You might be able to provide the right comment, help involve someone who is hard of hearing or just provide an arm for someone to take that will help them participate.

## The Monitor

Volunteers can be the 'eyes and ears' for a service. A vital part of their role is observing what is going on with clients. Volunteers delivering meals for example, may be the only person from the organisation who regularly sees the person at home. Whether volunteers are part of a group service, or working with clients individually, they can be great observers. Things to observe may be changes in a person that makes you think they may be struggling a little. Or listening out for client comments – *'I was able to do up my shoelaces today'* – something that makes you realise they have made a significant achievement. With volunteers' observations, staff have a lot more information at their fingertips to plan appropriate services for individuals.

## The Guide

People in HACC services may not be as quick as they once were, either mentally or physically. Often, just having someone there to gently and patiently talk someone through an activity can make the difference between them participating or not. Having you – the volunteer – there can give the person receiving services the confidence of knowing that they have a friend at their side.

## The Intergenerational connection

Volunteers of different ages can play a great role in HACC services. Younger volunteers can engage clients in stimulating conversations, comparing 'these days' to 'the old days'.

Young and old together can have fantastic conversations – it can be fascinating to hear older people's life stories. Similarly, older people may be very interested to hear about how different life is for young people – and the things that have stayed the same across the generations.

### For further discussion

- What approaches or roles do you see yourself taking on as a HACC volunteer?
- Does this vary much for volunteers – depending on whether you are volunteering in a group service, such as a Planned Activity Group or working with one client at a time, such as Delivered Meals?
- How do you think your approaches help the people you work with? Remember, people receiving HACC services each have their own goals, recorded in their care plans.

\* With thanks to Kim Repcak, independent HACC trainer for this concept.