

# VOLUNTEER FACT SHEET:

## Reducing social isolation through volunteering



## Why this matters



Strong social connections help people maintain wellbeing, confidence, independence, and a sense of belonging.

For some older people, a volunteer may be one of the few regular points of contact they have with their community. Every interaction presents an opportunity to support connection and inclusion.



### The volunteer's role

Volunteers are not responsible for solving loneliness. However, they can help create opportunities for meaningful connection and community participation. Small actions can have a significant impact.

### Practical ways volunteers can help

#### *Build genuine relationships:*

Take the time to:

- Listen actively.
- Learn about a person's interests and experiences.
- Remember details from previous conversations.
- Show warmth, respect, and genuine curiosity.

Feeling heard and valued can strengthen a person's sense of connection.

#### *Encourage community participation*

Where appropriate:

- Talk about local activities and groups.
- Encourage participation in community events.
- Support confidence to reconnect with existing interests.
- Share information about available opportunities.

#### *Support independence*

*Good volunteer support:*

Focus on what a person can do rather than what they cannot. This:

- Encourages choice and decision-making.
- Builds confidence.
- Promotes participation.
- Respects personal preferences and boundaries.



*Have meaningful conversations:*  
Meaningful conversations help build trust and connection

Questions might include:

- What activities do you enjoy?
- What groups or organisations have been important in your life?
- What would you like to do more of?
- Who do you enjoy spending time with?
- What helps you feel connected to your community?



### What good practice looks like

Good volunteer support:

- ✓ Creates opportunities for connection
- ✓ Encourages participation
- ✓ Builds confidence
- ✓ Supports independence
- ✓ Respects dignity and choice
- ✓ Recognises strengths and capabilities

### Reflection questions

- How do I help people feel valued and included?
- Am I encouraging independence as well as providing support?
- What opportunities for connection exist in my local community?
- How might I help someone take the next step towards greater participation?



### Key message

Reducing social isolation is not about doing more for people. It is about helping people maintain the relationships, confidence, independence, and community connections that contribute to a good quality of life.

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## For more information regarding volunteering opportunities in Ballarat contact:

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The Ballarat Foundation acknowledges the Wadawurrung people, the traditional owners of the lands and waterways in our region. We recognise their diversity, resilience, and the ongoing place that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people hold in our communities. We pay our respects to the Elders, both past and present, and commit to working together in the spirit of mutual understanding, respect and reconciliation.

