

Connections: Preventing social isolation amongst older people in Bankstown

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Clients

Socially isolated clients who have Benevolent Society
Case Managers
Residents in the Benevolent Society Independent Living
Villages at Little Bay and Allambie

How we keep older people socially connected

- Volunteers one on one matching
- Volunteers working with groups
- Clients being volunteers
- Corporate volunteer
- Intergenerational activities
- Special projects

One on one matches

- going to the movies
- walks around their neighbourhood
- visiting their spouses grave
- going shopping
- gardening with them
- watching the football
- taking them to a social activity and linking them with their community centre
- sharing a meal with them

Clients feedback



- “Nice to have someone different to chat with”
- “Having someone visit as I don't have many visitors and I have to go out almost everyday”
- “I wouldn't be able to garden”
- “They would pick me up and take me out for a coffee or to go to the library. They now come once a week and bring me coffee because of my immobility”
- “I look forward to visits as it gives me a bit of a boost”
- “She can share things and asks my opinion”
- “I am pretty independent but I have a progressive disease and things were becoming harder... I can't express to the Benevolent Society enough for introducing and matching my volunteer”

- “Even though Sue has care workers attend to her every day, they are always focused on their tasks and have time constraints. A volunteer is able to focus just on Sue and give the time to talk and listen”

Case Manager

Volunteers working with groups

- laughter workshop
- gentle exercise classes
- music appreciation group
- dog visits
- word games
- hand massages and manicures
- Easy to follow activity manual for volunteers to follow

Clients being volunteers

- Helping on the reading recovery program in the local primary school
- Volunteering in an Aged Hostel
- Phone Buddies
- Local kindergarten off site work
- Fixing puzzles and sharpening pencils

- “I was so nervous before calling them but we ended up talking for ever. It was great. We had so much in common”

client as a phone buddy

Corporate Volunteers

- Running a Day event for clients – Singalong, lunch, manicures, gentle exercise bringing clients together to mingle with each other. Planning to do this in the different regions that we work in
- Small groups doing gardening for clients going from house to house
- Running a picnic between different generations

Intergenerational Activities

- Reading recovery program
- Children putting on performance and then reading to older people
- Computer training
- Attending the HSC drama and recital performances
- Oral history interviews to be used in the local schools



“we have found that because the tutors have the time and compassion to listen, even the most challenging student has responded. The program has turned failing students’ attitude and progress around.”

Principal

Working with the challenges

- Core funding
- Training of staff around social inclusion
- The benefits of having volunteers work with clients on social inclusion activities
- Important to document what the clients say about this to feed back to staff