



Housing LIN

Connecting people, ideas and resources

What is the impact of volunteering on older people living in residential care and supported housing settings? Does Volunteering in later life deliver positive outcomes?

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Abbeyfield is a registered charity, company limited by guarantee and registered social landlord (Registered Provider) that provides housing, support and care for people at different stages of later life. We have one mission: *to enhance the quality of life for older people*. We believe that older people have intrinsic value and worth and should be supported in their desire to live in dignity and with respect. We encourage social inclusion and an independent life within a supportive and enabling environment, offering a range of accommodation designed to support the different stages of later life: assisted living, care homes, and specialist dementia care homes - all of which encourage independence, choice and dignity.

As part of the National Lottery's Big Lottery Fund, The Abbeyfield Society, has been awarded a grant of £264,944. The Big Lottery 'Accelerating Ideas' initiative, which will take place across a network of residential homes to run the 'Residents as Volunteers' Project provided by the Abbeyfield Society (TAS) and evaluated in partnership with the Institute for Volunteering Research.

Abbeyfield is committed to active ageing and we plan use the practical and research learning from this project to develop a sustainable shift change in our own supported living and residential care home settings as well as influence other housing and residential care providers to do the same.

The charity is using the grant to finance this thirty month project that aims to develop and measure volunteering opportunities for the 'older old' – those aged 75 and over inside or outside their homes.

The project will develop volunteering opportunities for 100 people aged 75+ and living within The Abbeyfield Society (TAS) care and housing facilities across England and Wales. During the course of this project, TAS will explore the positive health and mental well being aspects of volunteering, encouraging active ageing and living healthier for longer, in the older old age group (75+). The project beneficiaries will all have a range of

long term health conditions including diabetes, arthritis, hypertension, asthma, visual impairment, mobility issues and dementia.

The project will explore and share good practice on how we can grow the number of volunteering opportunities available for the older old and embed volunteering as part of growing older in a residential care and supported housing settings.

As an organisation volunteering is crucial to the delivery of our services and we believe volunteering is good for the individual and the communities they live in. It gives people a sense of purpose and a feeling of giving something back. But, research shows us that there is a significant decline in the number of people who volunteer after the age of 75. Why?

Our 'Residents as Volunteers' project aims to understand and then begin to overcome some of the reasons why as we age we begin to stop volunteering in the traditional sense. At Abbeyfield, we strongly believe that age should not be a barrier to volunteering and any instance of 'making time' for others counts, from laying the table to teaching children to read.

As the project develops we will share our findings in two main ways:

- A good practice guide, aimed at practitioners to support more people in later, later life to volunteer
- A report (undertaken by the [Institute for Volunteering Research](#)) measuring the impact of volunteering on the well-being and quality of life of our residents as they volunteer

TAS will use the learning from this project to improve the support offered within their own supported living and residential care home settings across the UK, whilst also influencing other housing and residential care providers to do the same.

The development of the good practice guide alongside the evaluation will enable Abbeyfield and other housing and care providers, the opportunity to develop the infrastructure to support current and future residents to volunteer, embedding the health and mental wellbeing benefits associated with volunteering into the mainstream service offer for older old people in supported living and residential care settings.

With the first stage (Year 1) of the project coming to an end the evaluation and findings of our 30 residents as volunteers will be shared at our conference in June 2017. These findings will influence the delivery for Year 2 where a further 70 residents will be evaluated.

This half day conference will share mid project findings from our innovative Big Lottery funded project 'Residents as Volunteers', encouraging residents over 75 years old to reap the health and well-being benefits of volunteering.

Working in conjunction with the Institute of Volunteer Research (part of NVCO) the conference will draw out the key learning from the mid-project impact evaluation, alongside practical advice to overcome barriers and challenges to encourage more people in later, later life to volunteer both inside and outside residential care settings. These findings will be used to plan for Stage 2 Year 2 of the project and how we will tackle any challenges and barriers that we found in Year 1. We look forward to sharing these with the Housing LIN next year.

Want to find out more?

We invite you to our free event 'Impact of Volunteering in Later Life 75+' on Wednesday 28th June at The Holiday Inn, Deane Gate Avenue, Taunton TA1 2UA

Timings: 9.30am start, close at 12.30pm with a buffet lunch.

Please sign up using Eventbrite: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/the-impact-of-volunteering-in-later-life-tickets-33658059161>

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