1. Introduction

1.1. The Community Visitors Scheme

The Community Visitors Scheme (CVS) was implemented by the Commonwealth Department of Health (the Department) in 1992 to recruit volunteers to provide friendship and companionship to consumers of Australian Government-subsidised aged care services who are socially isolated or are at risk of social isolation and loneliness.

The Australian Government funds organisations (known as CVS auspices) to recruit and train volunteer visitors, who are subsequently matched with aged care consumers (referred by aged care service providers). The CVS volunteers set aside time, at least once a fortnight, to visit and provide friendship to the care recipient.

Following its expansion in 2013 (as part of the Aged Care Reform Agenda), the CVS now provides three types of visits:

- One-on-one visits in residential care
- Group visits in residential care
- One-on-one visits to consumers of home care packages.

The CVS aims to enhance the lives of aged care consumers through the contact they have with CVS volunteers, with benefits such as increased self-esteem or general feeling of wellbeing, feeling cared for and/or connected to the community, and reduced feelings of loneliness or isolation.

1.2. Review objectives

Australian Healthcare Associates (AHA) is reviewing the CVS to inform the Department on how it can continue to effectively provide appropriate support to consumers of residential and home care services who are socially isolated or at risk of social isolation, in the context of ongoing reforms to the aged care system.

The scope of the CVS Review is to:

- Explore the extent to which the program aligns with current aged care reforms
- Explore the potential to increase the role of volunteers to provide additional support to consumers
- Consider options for delivering CVS services to home care and residential care consumers, in the context of potential ongoing reforms to home care
- Explore how the uptake of the CVS in the home care setting could be enhanced
- Explore the extent to which the CVS is meeting the needs of special needs groups (as identified under the Aged Care Act 1997) and identify models of good practice
1. Introduction

- Identify and compare other community visitor services and programs promoting social connectedness to address social isolation of older people, within the Commonwealth Home Support Program and across related sectors both domestically and internationally
- Identify areas for streamlining program management, funding allocation and service structure with a view to reducing red tape for both providers and the Department.

The findings of the Review will enable the development of options for a future volunteer service delivery model, for consideration by the Department.

1.3. This consultation paper

This consultation paper has been developed to explore and seek stakeholder feedback on a range of themes relevant to the future of the CVS. It is available on the websites of the Australian Government Department of Health and AHA, and promoted to relevant stakeholders to provide an opportunity for input to the review process.

1.4. Have your say

We would like to invite you to respond to this consultation paper.

You are welcome to respond to this consultation paper anonymously. However, if you feel comfortable doing so, it would be appreciated if you could provide some background on your role and organisation in Section 2 of this paper. Consultation questions are listed under each heading in Section 3. Please respond to these questions using the spaces provided. Note that not all questions may be relevant to all stakeholders.

Please email your responses to cvs@ahaconsulting.com.au or send to:

CVS Review
Australian Healthcare Associates
Locked Bag 32005, Collins Street East
Victoria 8003

The closing date for submissions is 2 December 2016.
1. Introduction

If you:

- have any questions about the consultation paper or the feedback process
- would like to receive a paper copy of the consultation paper and feedback form
- would prefer to provide feedback via telephone

please contact Jill Waddell or Greer Edsall at Australian Healthcare Associates on 03 9663 1950 or cvs@ahaconsulting.com.au.

1.5. Summary and next steps

This consultation paper highlights the objectives of the CVS Review.

Stakeholder responses to this consultation paper will be analysed and incorporated into a final report to be provided to the Department.

In addition, a brief summary report of key findings and themes will be produced and sent to all respondents who provide their name/email address for this purpose.

AHA thanks all stakeholders for their contribution to this Review.
2. Response form

2.1. About you

While you are welcome to respond to this consultation paper anonymously, please provide as much information as you feel comfortable to, in order to clarify your interest in and perspectives on the CVS.

Name: Your Name

Position: Your position

Organisation: Your organisation

Are you a representative of (please tick all that apply):

- [ ] A CVS auspice
- [ ] A CVS network member
- [ ] A peak body
  
  Please specify the group you represent: Group

- [ ] An aged care service provider (please specify type and setting below):
  
  - [ ] residential
  - [ ] community-based
  - [ ] metropolitan
  - [ ] regional
  - [ ] rural

- [ ] A CVS volunteer
- [ ] Other – please specify: Group or person

Please provide an overview of your organisation’s role and/or your personal role in relation to the CVS.

Role in relation to the CVS

Would you like to receive a summary of feedback received from this discussion paper?

- [ ] Yes – please provide your email address: email
- [ ] No
2. Response form

2.2. Consultation questions

2.2.1. Current operation of the CVS

Background to the CVS is provided in Section 1 of this document. The current operation of the CVS is guided by the CVS Policy Guide (2013-2016). For more information you can access Frequently Asked Questions that are available online at the Department of Health website.

1. From your perspective, how is the CVS currently operating?
   - How is it promoted (to potential consumers, potential volunteers and the broader community)?
   - How is it accessed (e.g. what is the process for referral)?

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2. Are there any issues in matching volunteers and aged care consumers? If yes, please provide details.

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2.2.2. How does the CVS support aged care consumers?

The CVS is designed to provide friendship and companionship for recipients of Australian government-subsidised aged care who are socially isolated or are at risk of social isolation and loneliness. It was expanded in 2013 in line with the Aged Care Reform Agenda, which aimed to create a seamless and flexible aged care system in which consumers could exercise choice and control in the way they access and use a broad range of services.

3. What are the benefits of the CVS for consumers?

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4. Is demand for visitors being met? If not, please provide details.

Click here to enter text

5. Does the CVS currently support aged care consumers to exercise choice and control? If so, how? If not, why?

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6. Does the CVS support consumers as they transition through the aged care system (e.g. from home care packages to residential aged care)? How is this achieved?

Click here to enter text
2. Response form

7. **What interactions occur between the CVS and other sectors and organisations to support aged care consumers (e.g. health sector and other service providers)?**

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2.2.3. **CVS in residential and home care settings**

Following its expansion in 2013, the CVS currently delivers one-to-one and group visits in residential aged care settings and one-to-one visits to consumers of Commonwealth-funded home care packages.

8. **What are the key differences in delivering CVS services to home care and residential aged care?**

- What are the barriers to effective implementation of the CVS in each of these settings?
- What are the barriers and facilitators to uptake of CVS services in each of these settings?
- Do you have any concerns about how the CVS is functioning in either of these settings? If so, please provide details.

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2.2.4. **CVS volunteers’ role**

There are a number of community visitor models in place, both in Australia and overseas, with different objectives and modes of service delivery. In some models, the role of the volunteer extends beyond simple companionship to broader efforts at encouraging social inclusion – for example, supporting aged care consumers “to increase their social activity in their own way, at their own pace” (Age Concern New Zealand 2015) or providing information about and referrals to other relevant services and events. In other models, visitors might assist with daily activities (e.g. shopping, cooking, transportation), provide advocacy or act as ‘independent community observers’ to uphold service standards. In the CVS, the primary role of the volunteer is intended to be as a friend or companion for the consumer.

9. **What is your understanding of the type of support provided to aged care consumers through the CVS?**

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10. **What type or level of additional support for aged care consumers could reasonably be expected of volunteers delivering the CVS?**

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11. **What support do volunteers need to provide this additional support in residential aged care and home care settings?**

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12. **What barriers exist to volunteers providing additional support?**

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2. Response form

2.2.5. Meeting the needs of special needs groups

There is a connection between increased experience of loneliness and belonging to a special needs group, in particular for migrant and refugee populations, older lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people, people living in rural and remote areas and those in residential care (Pate 2014).

More broadly, special needs groups (as identified in the Aged Care Act 1997) include:
- people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities
- people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds
- people who live in rural or remote areas
- people who are financially or socially disadvantaged
- veterans
- people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless
- care-leavers
- parents separated from their children by forced adoption or removal
- LGBTI people
- people of a kind (if any) specified in the Allocation Principles.

The current Funding Agreement between the Australian Government and CVS auspices mandates a minimum percentage of services to be delivered to individuals from the identified special needs groups.

13. How are individuals from special needs groups identified and/or targeted?

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14. How well does the CVS support individuals from special needs groups?

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15. How could the CVS better support individuals from special needs groups?

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16. Are there other vulnerable groups that are, or should be, catered for through the CVS (e.g. those with cognitive or other impairment)?

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2.2.6. Exploring other community visitor models

A large number of community visitor programs exist (both in Australia and overseas) targeting social isolation in older people and other groups such as those living with disability or mental illness. These include group models, those that are delivered remotely (via telephone or online), or those that cater to specific populations (e.g. special needs groups).
2. Response form

The CVS may benefit from good practice examples and/or lessons learned through the implementation and delivery of these programs.

17. Are you aware of any other community visitor services in Australia or overseas that aim to reduce social isolation or support social connectedness?

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18. Can you identify any particular ‘good practice’ examples?
   - What are the key benefits of the model?
   - What are the key elements contributing to the model’s success?
   - How do they meet the needs of special needs groups?

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19. Are there other models for providing support to aged care consumers to address social isolation that the Department could, or should, consider? Please provide details.

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2.2.7. Summary

Please provide any other information or views you feel are relevant to the review of the CVS.

20. In your view, what could be done to improve the CVS (in terms of promotion, efficiency, governance and reporting, communication and networking or other aspects)?

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21. Do you have any other comments or suggestions you want included in the review of the CVS? Please provide details.

Click here to enter text

Thank you for providing your feedback on this discussion paper.
3. References
