



Sherburn Visiting Scheme

Dementia Support Policy

Purpose

Sherburn Visiting Scheme (SVS) is committed to supporting older people living with dementia to remain socially connected, active and involved in their local community.

We recognise that dementia affects people differently, and a diagnosis alone should not prevent someone from accessing SVS services and activities.

The purpose of this policy is to explain:

- the support SVS can provide to members living with dementia
- the limitations of the support SVS can provide
- the circumstances in which a member may require additional or alternative support
- the responsibilities of staff and volunteers when supporting members living with dementia
- how SVS will promote dignity, independence, choice and inclusion

SVS aims to provide a welcoming, inclusive and dementia-aware environment.

Where appropriate and where it is safe to do so, SVS will support members living with dementia to continue participating in our activities and services.

Our approach is based on:

- treating every member as an individual
- promoting dignity and respect
- maintaining independence wherever possible
- encouraging social connection and participation
- communicating clearly and patiently
- making reasonable adjustments to activities where practical
- recognising that dementia affects people differently
- working appropriately with families and carers, with the member's consent where required
- identifying when a member's needs are beyond the support SVS can safely provide
- safeguarding members, volunteers and staff from harm, neglect or abuse

A diagnosis of dementia does not automatically mean that a member cannot use SVS services. However, SVS must consider whether the member's individual needs can be safely supported within the services we provide.

Support SVS can provide:

SVS can provide social, community and practical support that falls within the normal activities and services of the organisation.

This may include:

Social activities and companionship

SVS can support members living with dementia to participate in appropriate social activities, including:

- Friendship Café
- Lady Popplewell afternoon
- Thursday lunch club

Staff and volunteers may provide conversation, reassurance, encouragement and social companionship as part of these activities.

Staff and volunteers may provide reasonable assistance to enable a member to participate in an activity.

This may include:

- explaining or demonstrating an activity
- repeating instructions
- helping a member understand what is happening
- offering encouragement
- providing additional time to complete an activity
- helping a member find their way around an activity venue
- adapting an activity where reasonably possible
- providing reassurance if a member becomes confused or anxious

Transport

Where transport is provided as part of an SVS service, SVS may transport members living with dementia where it has been established that the member can travel safely within the arrangements provided.

Staff and volunteers may:

- provide reassurance during the journey
- communicate information about the journey
- assist with normal boarding and alighting arrangements within the limits of their role

SVS does not provide specialist medical transport or transport requiring clinical or personal care.

Where a member cannot safely use SVS transport without a level of supervision or assistance that SVS cannot provide, alternative arrangements may need to be considered.

Meals and refreshments

SVS may provide meals and refreshments as part of its normal activities.

Staff and volunteers may:

- provide information about the food being served
- encourage members to eat and drink
- make reasonable adjustments to seating or the environment
- provide normal hospitality and assistance associated with the activity

SVS does not provide personal care or physically assist a member with eating or drinking.

Where a member requires assistance with eating or drinking because they are unable to do so independently, SVS will need to consider whether the activity remains suitable and whether the member requires support from a carer or appropriate care service.

Communication

SVS will aim to communicate with members living with dementia in an appropriate and respectful way.

This may include:

- speaking clearly and at an appropriate pace
- using simple and straightforward language
- allowing additional time for responses
- repeating information when necessary
- using visual or written information where helpful
- introducing staff and volunteers
- providing reassurance when someone appears confused
- avoiding unnecessary confrontation or correction

Staff and volunteers should focus on the person's needs rather than making assumptions based solely on their diagnosis.

General wellbeing and signposting

SVS can listen to members and their families and provide general information about services that may be able to offer additional support.

Where appropriate, SVS may signpost or refer members to relevant organisations or professionals, such as:

- the member's GP
- social services
- dementia support organisations
- carers' services
- local community services

- other appropriate health or social care services

SVS staff and volunteers must not provide medical advice, diagnose conditions or recommend changes to medication or treatment.

Individual action plans may be put in place to allow SVS to provide appropriate support.

What SVS does not provide

SVS does not provide regulated healthcare, personal care or social care services.

In particular, SVS staff and volunteers must not:

- provide medical treatment
- administer or manage medication
- undertake clinical procedures
- provide treatment under the direction or supervision of a healthcare professional
- provide nursing care
- give medical advice

Any healthcare needs must be managed by an appropriately qualified healthcare professional or service.

Personal care

SVS does not provide personal care.

This includes physically assisting or supervising a member with:

- eating or drinking where personal assistance is required
- toileting
- washing or bathing
- dressing or undressing
- oral care
- skin, hair or nail care
- other personal hygiene activities

SVS staff and volunteers must not undertake these activities, even where a member or family member asks them to do so.

Medication

SVS staff and volunteers must not:

- administer medication
- prompt a member to take medication
- handle medication on behalf of a member
- store medication for a member
- make decisions about medication

Members who require medication support must have appropriate arrangements in place with their family, carer or healthcare provider.

Financial assistance and household management

SVS staff and volunteers must not manage a member's personal finances.

This includes:

- managing cash on behalf of a member
- paying bills
- managing bank accounts
- handling financial documents
- making financial decisions
- undertaking financial transactions on behalf of a member

SVS may provide normal community services such as shopping activities where these fall within the organisation's established service, but staff and volunteers must not take responsibility for managing a member's finances.

Decision-making and legal/advocacy roles

SVS does not act as:

- an attorney under a Lasting Power of Attorney
- an Enduring Power of Attorney
- a Court of Protection appointee
- an advocate
- a representative for benefits
- a person appointed to make decisions on behalf of a member

SVS staff and volunteers must not make decisions about a member's care, finances, healthcare or other personal affairs on their behalf.

Where a member requires advocacy or formal decision-making support, SVS will aim to signpost them to the appropriate service.

Social work or formal care management

Staff and volunteers must not undertake assessments of a member's care needs or determine what health or social care services they require.

SVS may, however, identify concerns and encourage or assist a member or member's family to contact an appropriate professional service.

Support from family members or carers

SVS recognises that some people living with dementia may attend activities with support from a family member, friend or formal carer.

Where a member requires support that SVS cannot provide, SVS may require an appropriate person to accompany them.

The responsibility for providing personal care, medication support, specialist supervision or other regulated care remains with the member's family, carer or appropriate care provider and does not transfer to SVS staff or volunteers.

SVS will discuss this with the member and/or their representative where concerns arise. All costs incurred by the volunteer during the activity should be covered by the member.

Assessing whether SVS services remain suitable

SVS will consider each member individually.

A member may be unable to safely participate in an SVS activity where, for example:

- they require personal care that SVS cannot provide
- they require continuous one-to-one supervision that SVS cannot reasonably provide
- they are at significant risk of becoming lost or leaving an activity unsafely
- they are unable to safely use SVS transport without additional support
- their behaviour presents a significant risk to themselves, other members, volunteers or staff
- their needs have increased beyond what SVS can reasonably accommodate
- an appropriate level of support cannot be provided within the normal SVS service

This does not mean that a member will automatically be excluded.

Where concerns arise, SVS will seek to understand the member's needs and consider whether reasonable adjustments or additional support arrangements could enable continued participation.

Increasing needs

Dementia is progressive and a member's needs may change over time.

SVS staff and volunteers should report concerns to the Operations Manager where they notice significant changes, including:

- increased confusion
- repeated disorientation
- difficulty safely participating in activities
- changes in behaviour
- increasing difficulty using transport
- repeated falls or other safety concerns
- difficulty eating or drinking independently
- increasing dependence on staff or volunteers
- concerns about a member's ability to return home safely
- any other significant change in the member's presentation or ability to manage independently

The Operations Manager will consider whether further discussion with the member, family member, carer or appropriate professional is required.

Safeguarding

SVS has a responsibility to safeguard all members, including those living with dementia.

Staff and volunteers must report safeguarding concerns in accordance with the SVS Safeguarding Policy.

Particular attention should be given to potential risks involving:

- neglect
- financial abuse
- physical abuse
- emotional abuse
- sexual abuse
- domestic abuse
- exploitation
- inappropriate care
- a member being placed at risk because they are unable to protect themselves

A member's dementia must never be used as a reason to dismiss or minimise a safeguarding concern.

Consent, confidentiality and information sharing

SVS will respect a member's right to make their own decisions wherever they are able to do so.

Staff and volunteers should not assume that a person lacks capacity simply because they have dementia.

Information about a member should be treated confidentially and handled in accordance with SVS's confidentiality and data protection procedures.

Where information needs to be shared because of a safeguarding concern, immediate risk or another lawful reason, this should be managed in accordance with SVS policies and applicable legislation.

Where appropriate, SVS will seek the member's consent before involving family members or other people in discussions about their support.

Role of volunteers

SVS volunteers play an important role in providing companionship, social interaction and community support.

Volunteers should:

- treat members with dignity and respect
- communicate patiently and appropriately
- encourage participation and independence
- report concerns to a member of staff
- maintain appropriate boundaries
- follow SVS safeguarding procedures
- only undertake tasks that they have been asked and authorised to undertake

Volunteers must not provide personal care, healthcare, medication support, financial management or other regulated services.

Volunteers should never feel that they have to undertake a task that falls outside their role, nor should they undertake a task that they personally feel uncomfortable with.

If a member requires support SVS cannot provide

If SVS identifies that a member requires support outside the organisation's remit, the Operations Manager will, where appropriate:

1. discuss the concern with the member
2. involve a family member, carer or representative where appropriate and lawful
3. identify whether reasonable adjustments could allow the member to continue accessing SVS
4. signpost or refer the member to an appropriate professional or service
5. consider whether the member requires additional support to attend SVS activities
6. where necessary, make arrangements for the member to stop using a particular SVS service if it cannot be provided safely

Any decision to restrict or end a service should be handled sensitively, respectfully and on the basis of the member's individual circumstances.

Emergency situations

SVS staff and volunteers are not expected to provide medical care.

If a member becomes seriously unwell, is injured, becomes lost, or is believed to be at immediate risk, staff and volunteers should follow SVS emergency and safeguarding procedures and contact the appropriate emergency service where necessary.

Staff and volunteers should provide reasonable assistance within their level of competence while waiting for appropriate professional help.

Training and awareness

SVS will seek to ensure that staff and volunteers who regularly support members living with dementia have an appropriate understanding of dementia and dementia-friendly communication.

Training does not authorise staff or volunteers to undertake regulated healthcare or personal care activities.

Policy boundaries

The following principle should be applied whenever a member requests assistance:

If the assistance involves providing healthcare, personal care, formal social work, managing a member's finances or making decisions on a member's behalf, it is outside the role of SVS.

SVS's role is to provide social, community and practical support, not regulated care.

Where there is uncertainty about whether a task falls within the SVS role, staff and volunteers should not undertake the task until they have discussed it with the Operations Manager.

Review

This policy will be reviewed regularly and whenever there are significant changes to SVS services, relevant legislation or guidance.

Policy owner: Operations Manager

Approved by:

Date approved:

Review date:

Document History

Date	Issue Number	Updated By	Reason for New Version

Approved For Release

SVS policies are reviewed in line with the Policy Document Log and their effectiveness is measured during day to day monitoring of SVS operations. Any changes are made and communicated as necessary.