



Improving social connectedness

The Accredited Visiting Service
(AVS)

Presented by Carol Andrews,
Age Concern New Zealand

Hands up!



Accredited Visiting Service

Known as **AVS**

- A social support and befriending service

Social connectedness affects health

- “Research has established beyond all reasonable doubt that social connectedness is one of the most powerful determinants of our well-being.”

Robert Putman, 2001

Social connectedness affects health

- The more integrated with our community – the less likely we are to experience colds, heart attacks, strokes, cancer, depression.....
- People who are socially disconnected are...2-5 times more likely to die from all causes

Robert Putman, 2001



AVS improves social connectedness

- An isolated or lonely older person
- Accredited volunteer visitor with similar interests

Friendly and supportive relationship

Rebuilding links

- Reconnect clients with their communities
 - Cultural events
 - Libraries
 - Local clubs
 - Church activities

How does AVS work?

- Mutually beneficial
- One-to-one
- Promotes independence and potential for self help

Who are AVS clients?

- 77% were female
- Average age was 83
- 92% referred because of loneliness / social isolation

Nelson study of 70 AVS clients

Links with health services

Of 474 new referrals:

- 23% from NASC services
- 14% from hospital services
- 6% from primary health services

Age Concern figures
6 months to 30 June 2006

- “Health professionals need more information on befriending services and the positive results they promote regarding enhanced social connectedness. This would help ensure the referral of those older people most at risk of social isolation, loneliness and depression”

Ministry of Health 2004



Links to health services

- Regular networking with health professionals
- Attending NASC or hospital discharge planning meetings

Primary care services

- Early warning of changes in clients' well-being
 - Dementia
 - Depression
 - Stress
 - Falls
- Visitors report concerns
- Co-ordinators alert primary health services

Ensuring quality

All visitors have –

- Interviews
 - Screening
 - Orientation training
 - Regular training
 - Contact with their Co-ordinator
- and meet national AVS standards

Funding

- National contract managed by Capital and Coast DHB
- Also locally derived funding such as philanthropic trusts, lotteries grants...

More information....

- Jayne McKendry –
Age Concern New Zealand

Jayne.mckendry@ageconcern.org.nz

Thank you

■ www.ageconcern.org.nz