

THE CADDY PROJECT

meaningful community
participation for people
living with memory loss



KEY MESSAGES

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Jeffrey Fuller—Evaluator, Elizabeth Cleland—Evaluator, Michelle Fuller—Project Officer Positive Ageing Taskforce

Context

Consultation in the Southern Fleurieu region by the Positive Ageing Taskforce identified withdrawal from community activity and social isolation as an issue for people living with memory loss. The Taskforce secured an Age Friendly SA grant from Office for Ageing Well, SA Health to trial and evaluate a dementia support initiative during 2018 called the Caddy Project. Based on a golfing analogy, the Caddy Project recognises that the person living with memory loss is the expert of their own life with strengths and capacities. When matched with a volunteer trained in the role of a ‘caddy’ to offer enabling resources, the person is supported to maintain meaningful engagement with their chosen social or community activities thereby reducing the risk of social isolation.

The Caddy Project was embedded into the existing infrastructure of two community engagement programs; the City of Victor Harbor’s Caring Neighbourhood Program, and Alexandrina Council’s Community Connect program. The main objective of the Caddy Project was to trial a prototype volunteer model to support ongoing participation in meaningful social and community activities and contribute to resilience and wellbeing of older people with memory loss living in the Victor Harbor and Alexandrina council regions.

Six clients were matched and worked with a caddy during the project trial. The average frequency of interaction was two hours per week, with the number of sessions ranging from two to twenty sessions per client. Clients, their carers, caddies and program staff were interviewed individually to evaluate the Project.

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Key messages

- ◆ With structured support from program staff and relevant training, volunteer caddies can develop **working relationships** with people living with memory loss that enhance wellbeing and social engagement.
- ◆ **Preferred volunteers**, as caddies, are those who can understand the concept of enabling (doing with), rather than helping (doing for).
- ◆ **Relevant training** for caddies includes information about dementia as well as training in **enabling strategies** to facilitate wellness and social re-engagement.
- ◆ Caddies were most effectively **recruited from an existing volunteer pool**. The training and experience provided by this model of engagement could be transferred to work with other clients using existing volunteers thus increasing the capacity of programs to embed a wellness approach.
- ◆ **Suitable clients** that may benefit from this approach are those that are not currently engaged in meaningful social/community activity (or are at risk of becoming disengaged), have some insight (that is, a recognition of early stage memory loss), and have desire and motivation to identify a meaningful social/community activity and are willing to try to engage in this with the support of a caddy.
- ◆ A **meaningful profile** which identifies the **client's strengths and capacities** provides a first step in the development of a **wellbeing plan**. Program coordinators play a key role in facilitating clients to create their own wellbeing goals which are meaningful to them. Goals should be specific and clear to all involved, and regularly reviewed and adjusted to ensure they remain relevant and achievable, particularly in the context of the effects of cognitive decline for the person living with memory loss. A wellbeing plan which outlines enabling strategies can be a useful guide for client-caddy interactions.
- ◆ A **journal** with input from the client, their carer, and the caddy can serve as a valuable tool to reflect on client-caddy interactions and review progress towards the established goals.
- ◆ The caddy model could be considered by **other programmes** and for different client groups, providing an option to develop volunteer capacity in line with principles of wellness and/or reablement. While time-limited reablement goals may not be realistic for people with deteriorating memory loss, wellness goals remain appropriate.