

TE WHAI COMMUNITY TRUST MANGAWHAI

REVISED 2020

TE WHAI SAGES BOUNDARIES TRAINING MANUAL



TE WHAI COMMUNITY TRUST
MANGAWHAI

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Welcome! Haere Mai!

Visitors are the core of our service. Without you the service cannot function. We will do all that we can to ensure that you are happy, safe and supported in your role. Thank you for volunteering.

Volunteering

It is one of the most beautiful compensations of this life that no man can sincerely try to help another without helping himself.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

We make a living by what we get: we make a life by what we give.

Winston Churchill

Te Whai Community Trust Mangawhai

Te Whai Community Trust Mangawhai, established in 2015, aims to act as your first point of contact giving you easy access to the social services and support you need. We work in partnership, creating opportunities for improving safety & wellbeing & promoting independence of all the people of the wider Mangawhai community.

MISSION

- To act as the first point of contact guiding people with specific needs to the services they require
- To endeavour to provide a facility to allow local and regional support services to deliver their services in Mangawhai
- To provide Educational and Support programmes
- To partner with and work alongside existing organisations
- To bring our wider communities together

AIMS

- To provide an easy conduit between approved services and the people of the community through coordinated access, a meeting space in the area, and networking with providers.
- To advocate and facilitate collaboration in the delivery of safe and effective services
- To identify the needs of the community and develop appropriate and responsive services and programmes
- To provide appropriate Social Support Services, Family Court Services, Advocacy Services, Education Services, Natural Health Services, Information Services and Practical Assistance to the wider Mangawhai Community
- To promote environmental change, education and support around sustainable living and care for our animals, land, waterways and oceans.

TE WHAI SAGES SENIOR & WHĀNAU SUPPORT & SAGE CALL SERVICE

Te Whai Sages Senior and Whānau Support and the Sage Call are volunteer services that provides free regular visits or calls to anyone living in isolation, older people and families with young children living in the Mangawhai area who would like more company.

The overall goal of this service is:

To decrease levels of social isolation and loneliness and increase social participation for those at risk, living in our community.

Te Whai Sages volunteer services in context

Te Whai Community Trust manages this service and monitors and responds to research, trends and changes to government policy. TWCT provides co-ordination, standards and guidelines, training and resources to the Te Whai Sages programme and their volunteers who deliver the service.

Te Whai Community Trust employs a Project Manager and supports a Volunteer Coordinator. In addition, they provide and collaborate with other services including Grandparents parenting Grandchildren, the Coast to Coast Scope Nurse, St John, and many other organisations to provide information on services and activities for at risk people in the area.

Project Manager, Volunteer Coordinators & Supervisors

- Recruit and screen Te Whai Sages (volunteers)
- Orientate Sages to their role
- Match Clients (where possible) with compatible Sages
- Provide ongoing training and support for Sages
- Monitor matched Clients and Sages
- Address any issues for either party
- Ensure the local service meets national standards
- Help to maintain funding levels by providing regular reports to Funders

Te Whai Sages provide extra company and peace of mind to those experiencing isolation, including seniors and families with young children complementing, but not replacing, the existing network of family and friends. The Sage may also support their Client to participate in activities and to make connections in the community.

Te Whai Sages also keep in regular contact with their Supervisor, reporting any issues or concerns related to their role or their Client's well-being, and provide regular records of their visiting. These records are vital to maintain funding for the service.

Te Whai Clients are often isolated older people and families with young children who would like more company. They contribute to reciprocal relationships with their Sages by sharing stories, experience and wisdom, skills, hobbies and activities.

Loneliness and Health

Why should we try to reduce loneliness and social isolation?

Most of us have felt lonely at some time in our lives, and know that it can be a deeply painful experience, which is reason enough to do something about it.

In addition, research now shows that having weak social connections carries a similar health risk to being an alcoholic, or smoking 15 cigarettes a day. So if you provide regular visits, and develop a friendship with an older person or families that need extra support, you can make a real difference to their health.

New Zealand research has also shown that an older person who is socially isolated or depressed is almost twice as likely to go into a rest home. This means that by reducing loneliness, services like Te Whai Sages can help older people to stay in their homes for longer.

So your work as a Te Whai Sage volunteer is important. It can relieve pain and suffering, contribute to the health and well-being of individuals, and benefit your wider community by reducing spending on chronic health conditions and residential care.

How does loneliness affect health?

Lonely people have higher levels of the hormone cortisol. Raised cortisol is a response to stress, and is useful in situations where fight or flight are necessary,

but can cause health problems if the stress doesn't go away. Loneliness causes stress because, as humans evolved, those in a group were more likely to survive than those who were alone. If loneliness isn't relieved, it increases the risk of physical and mental health problems, such as:

- raised blood pressure and heart disease
- lowered immune response (especially to viral infections)
- disrupted sleep and daytime fatigue cognitive decline and dementia
- depression and thoughts of suicide

As with other risk factors, the effects develop over time, so may become more evident in older people. Older people also often experience losses which can cause or increase loneliness and isolation, such as bereavement, retirement and decreased sight, hearing or mobility.

Rights of Te Whai Clients, Sages and Supervisors

Te Whai Clients have the right to:

- Respect; understanding and appreciation of their individuality, including their beliefs, values and culture
- Self-determination including the right to refuse a particular Sages, or to have service discontinued at any point
- Privacy, confidentiality and trust
- Safety and freedom from abuse and neglect in their homes and in residential settings
- Accurate, comprehensive information about the Te Whai Sages
- Make a complaint about their Sage or any aspect of the Service

Te Whai Sages (volunteers) have the right to:

- Respect; understanding and appreciation of their individuality, including their beliefs, values and culture
- Privacy, confidentiality and trust
- Safety and freedom from abuse while carrying out their work
- Professional development and ongoing support
- Withdraw from the service at any point by informing their co-ordinator
- Accurate and up-to-date information on any developments in the Service
- Make a complaint about their Client, Supervisor or any aspect of the Service

Te Whai Sages Supervisors include our Projects Manager, and Volunteer Coordinators. They have the right to:

- Respect; understanding and appreciation of their individuality, including their beliefs, values and culture
- Safety and freedom from abuse while carrying out their work
- Accept or refuse volunteers according to the standards and guidelines for the Service
- Monitor the effectiveness of Sages
- Remove a volunteer from the list of Te Whai Sages if the supervisor judges that he or she is not meeting the standard for delivery of the service, and is not able or willing or able do so with the supervisors support
- Refuse or discontinue service to a Client who does not meet the criteria for receiving the Service

Volunteering and the Te Whai Sages service

Te Whai Sage volunteers form the backbone of Te Whai Sages service. Without them the service could not function.

The following codes of practice developed by Volunteering New Zealand express firstly the commitment we ask of you when you volunteer for the service and secondly our commitment to you as a volunteer within the service.

Code of Practice for Volunteers

To promote excellence in service and maximize the quality of my experience as a volunteer, I will:

- Recognise my own motives for being a volunteer and ensure the organization is aware of these
- Be committed to give high quality service
- Carry out all work I agree to do responsibly and ethically
- Speak out about any concerns that might affect my work relationships or quality of service
- Value and support other team members

Code of Practice for Volunteer Involving Organisations

To promote excellence in service and maximize the quality of volunteer's experience, this organization will:

- Empower volunteers to meet their own and the organisation's needs
- Provide volunteers with clear duty statements and orientation to their work and the organization
- Offer training and support for volunteers to achieve personal and work goals
- Implement procedures to safeguard volunteer safety and well being
- Recognise volunteers as valued team members with opportunities to participate in relevant organization decisions
- Provide mechanisms to acknowledge contributions made by volunteers

Making the most of our volunteers' skills and strengths

Most Te Whai Sages volunteer work as visitors to older people and/or families with young children, but some support the service by using their skills in other ways, for example helping with:

- Administration
- Service promotion
- Events or social gatherings
- Sage Calls
- Fundraising

If you feel that you can contribute to the service in other ways, either as well or instead of being a visitor, do talk to your supervisor.

Qualities of a Te Whai Sages

Sages need to have:

- An interest in and empathy with older people and/or families
- A genuine desire to provide company and offer friendship
- Good communication skills including being an active listener
- Tact, objectivity and maturity
- Interest/background in community service
- Respect for confidentiality
- Cultural sensitivity, awareness and acceptance of difference
- Willingness to learn about the needs of older people, age-related conditions and/or young families
- About one hour of free time per week to offer on a regular basis to benefit an older person or family
- Intention to undertake the role of an Te Whai Sage as an ongoing commitment

NB *People who wish to promote their own personal causes and beliefs (including religion) should not be accepted as visitors.*

Note: It is considered that people aged less than 18 years generally do not have sufficient maturity and experience to provide mutual companionship as a Te Whai Sage. Therefore, unless visiting as part of a closely supervised school programme, **Sages must be aged over 18 years.**

Skills and Attributes Required

- An understanding of and an interest in seniors and/or families with young children and their ways of life
- Cultural awareness and respect for difference
- Active listening and communication skills
- Willingness to learn
- Demonstrated ability to understand and respect role boundaries
- Respect for confidentiality
- Reliability

You will become a Te Whai Sage when you have:

- Been screened by a police check and selected (face to face interaction only)
- Have your referee checks completed
- Completed boundaries training (read & sign initials for each page of this manual)
- Signed a Contract and Confidentiality Agreement in your application
- Been matched with a Client

Matching Clients and Sages

Compatibility

Supervisors gather information on the interests, location, health and mobility, goals and personality of new clients in order to match them with a compatible Sage. Clients and Sages are carefully matched with the aim that they will develop a mutually enjoyable relationship.

Introductions

Where possible the supervisor will introduce you and your Client in person. If this is not possible, the supervisor will notify you in writing or by phone that a match has been made, and then tell you how to proceed. You and your Client can then decide between you which day and time will suit you both best for visiting.

Co-ordinator follow-up

If you have concerns about your Client or are unhappy in your role for any reason, you should contact your supervisor straight away. If the match between you and your Client is not working, your supervisor may be able to support you and your Client to sort out the problem, or may assign

you to a different Client. All Client/Sage matches are reviewed on a regular basis as part of the Service.

Te Whai Sages role involves:

- Visiting regularly (for those assigned as a Te Whai Sage)
- Calls or messages regularly (for those assigned as a Sage Caller)
- Carrying a Te Whai Community Trust business cards if you visit
- Respecting your Client's culture, customs and religious beliefs
- Listening to your Client
- Respecting confidentiality
- Developing a positive relationship
- Enjoying activities/outings together if desired/able to do so (for those assigned as a Te Whai Sage)
- Being alert to changes in your Client's health or situation
- Attending at least 2 training sessions in your first 6 months - it is recommended that you attend at least 3 training sessions per year (for those assigned as a Te Whai Sage)
- Informing your supervisor of any issues for you or your Client
- Sending in your Record of Visits every 6 months or as directed (for those assigned as a Te Whai Sage)
- Update your supervisor monthly or as necessary (for those assigned as a Sage Caller)

Proactive Sage volunteering

All the above are things that every Sage needs to do to provide a basic level of service. As a Sage, you may be able to take things to the next level, which is to make a positive change to your client's level of social participation and independence. Through your work you may notice or hear about things that are preventing your Client from participating socially. You may also find out about things they used to do and would like to do again, or new things they would like to try.

There may be ways in which you can support your Client to take some steps toward participating in things they would like to do. Discuss this with your Client and your supervisor.

There may also come a point at which your Client is able to participate in things without your support. This may be a sign that it is time for you to step back, and perhaps begin working with a new Client. Again, discuss this with your supervisor.

The following poem by an older person expresses her continued need for challenge in her life.

My Children Are Coming Today

- By Nellie Renoux

My children are coming today. They mean well. But they worry.

They think I should have a railing in the hall, a telephone in the kitchen; they want someone to come in when I take a bath.

They don't really like my living alone.

Help me to be grateful for their concern. And help them to understand that I have to do what I can as long as I can.

They're right when they say there are risks. I might fall; I might leave the stove on. But there is no challenge, no possibility of triumph, no real aliveness without risk.

When they were young and climbed trees and rode bicycles and went away to camp, I was terrified. But I let them go, because to hold them would have hurt them.

Now our roles are reversed, help them see. Keep me from being grim or stubborn about it. But don't let them smother me.

Ideas for things to do during Sage Visits

As a Te Whai Sage, you agree to give one hour of your time per week to visit an older person or family. What you and your Client do during your visits will depend on the interests and strengths of both parties, the needs of your Client, the mobility and health of both parties, and the availability of transport. Here are some suggestions of things that other Clients and Sages have enjoyed. You are not obliged to do any of the things on the list, but may find it helpful as a source of ideas.

1. Visiting at morning or afternoon tea time, perhaps with some food to share can be a good way to break the ice on the first few visits.
2. Reading aloud from newspapers, favourite books, letters, etc.
3. Looking through family photo albums and encouraging your Client to talk about past life experiences.
4. Assisting with letter writing if needed.
5. Playing games (cards, scrabble, chess, etc).

6. Going out to a garden centre, and then planting annuals into pots together.
7. Taking some form of exercise together as able.
8. Going to a local lake, estuary or bird sanctuary to observe the bird life.
9. Taking your Client to visit a club they are or have been associated with (RSA, Rotary, Country Women's Guild, Lions, Masons, etc).
10. Taking your Client to attend a Te Whai Community Trust activity or meeting where they can meet other Te Whai Clients.
11. Visiting a museum or art gallery.
12. Taking your Client to visit a neighbourhood they used to live in, to observe changes and bring back memories.
13. Identifying and playing music you both enjoy.
14. Celebrating special days (birthdays, Christmas, Easter, etc.).
15. Creating a calendar or diary of events to help your Client keep track of special days, appointments, etc.
16. Enjoying nature together by sitting on the porch, walking in the garden, or going out somewhere together.
17. Watching a favourite TV show or video together.
18. Taking your Client to visit a friend.
19. Enjoying a meal or picnic together. Many people miss the pleasure of eating with others.
20. With your Client's consent, introducing them to someone new (e.g. a good friend or family member of your own).
21. Enjoying an outing to a café.
22. Going to a movie together.
23. Going out to the shops or to interesting local activities.
24. Doing some baking together.

Tick things on the list that you and your Client might enjoy doing, or jot down your own ideas. As you get to know your Client, be alert for interests you both share.

Taking your Senior Client on outings

Safety Issues

Taking Clients on outings is optional. As a Te Whai Sage you should not feel obliged to do this if you don't want, but research from Age Concern visiting service tell us that outings can provide great enjoyment for both parties. They can also be a step for Clients towards greater social participation and independence.

If you and your Client decide to go out, we want to ensure that all reasonable care is taken so that this can be done safely. Before taking your Client out, you should discuss safety considerations with your supervisor. If necessary, your

supervisor can communicate with family members. Some things to consider before taking a Client out are as follows:

- Is your Client able to walk/transfer independently?
- Can your Client get in and out of your car?
- Does your Client use a mobility aid?
- If so can you lift it safely, and will it fit into your car?
- At the planned destination, are there any barriers to mobility which your Client may not be able to cope with e.g. steps?
- Are there suitable toilets that your Client will be able to use?
- Are there any medicines your Client should take with them when they go out?

Legal Issues

Volunteers who drive passengers must have and maintain:

- A current driver's license
- A current Warrant of Fitness
- Vehicle registration
- Road User License (for diesel vehicles and other vehicles that require it)
- Insurance

Insurance

The Insurance Council advises that full cover is always better than third party (for any driving activities) but of course this is more expensive. The decision about what type of insurance to have rests with you, the driver. Te Whai Community Trust advises that you contact your insurance company and advise them of your volunteer activities. You can ask the insurance company to put a note on your file. You will not usually need to pay for extra cover.

In the event of an accident, you are responsible for costs e.g. an excess, that is not covered by your insurance.

The Insurance Council of New Zealand Inc. www.icnz.org.nz ph: 04 472 5230 can provide further information.

Should your Client be injured in an accident in your vehicle, New Zealand's Accident Compensation scheme provided by ACC provides 24 hour no-fault personal injury insurance cover. ACC also provides advice about safe driving to prevent injuries. Visit www.acc.co.nz for more information.

Should you incur any fines (e.g. parking, speeding) while driving for Age Concern these are your own responsibility.

If you drive a car, check that your license, car registration, Warrant of Fitness, and insurance are all in order. If so, consider whether or not you

would feel comfortable taking an older person out as part of your visiting role. Discuss your thoughts with your supervisor.

Comparative Roles

A Te Whai Sage is not 'just a friend'.

Sages and Clients can and often do become close, but there are important differences between regular friendships, and the relationship between Te Whai Client and Sage.

Friend:

- ❖ Relationship established through normal life experiences in the process of social contact
- ❖ Relationship is highly subjective and based on mutual attraction
- ❖ Relationship does not have any goal beyond mutual satisfaction
- ❖ Each person has an implicit right to talk about himself, his problems and his feelings
- ❖ The relationship does not necessarily have a progression or ending

Te Whai Sage:

- ❖ Relationship is deliberately planned and promoted through a service for a purpose
- ❖ Relationship is defined, objective, purposeful and controlled
- ❖ Focus of the relationship is on meeting the needs of the Client relating to social participation
- ❖ The Client is encouraged to talk
- ❖ The Sage shares feelings when appropriate, being sure not to burden the Client with their own problems
- ❖ Duration of this relationship is determined by the Sage's, Client's and supervisor's perception of the Client's needs and requirements

Inappropriate self-disclosure to Te Whai Clients

A client/sage relationship is not the appropriate place to discuss, resolve or share personal or family problems with a client, or to gossip about others.

The above behaviour detracts from the client/sage relationship and adds to the clients' problems!

Age, ill health and loneliness make an person more vulnerable to others' problems. They have so much more time to worry about everything than busy people do – and worry they do!

The purpose of Te Whai Sages is to enhance the lives of clients, so burdening them with personal problems is unfair and a mistake in judgement. This means observing appropriate boundaries so that the main focus is on “enhancing the lives of Te Whai clients”.

Clients may say they want to hear about your problems, but be aware that this may be a sign that you have over-stepped the boundaries of your Sage role, i.e. the roles may have reversed.

The focus is always on your Client, i.e. your role is to give quality time to your Client – not vice-versa.

Te Whai Sages need to find other avenues to discuss or resolve personal problems. Sometimes for all of us life gets challenging and at times like this some visitors may need to take some “time out” from visiting if they are unable to keep clear boundaries, or if their own problems have become overwhelming. Please contact your supervisor if this situation applies to you.

Self-disclosure is NOT appropriate when:

- It detracts from the purpose of Te Whai Sages i.e. to enhance the lives of our Clients
- It detracts from what the Client is telling you, or if it distracts him/her in a negative way
- If it is used to help you solve your problems

If you have got into the habit of discussing your problems with your Client and don't know how to change the situation, please contact your supervisor for ideas on how to resolve this.

Protecting Yourself

N.B. For your own protection, think very carefully about if and when to give your address and phone number to your client. If your client is very lonely, there is a risk that they will want more contact than you feel able to give.

Some Sages do share their contact details once they have got to know their client. This is not wrong, but it is unwise to do so without thinking it through. If in doubt, contact your supervisor to talk it over. If your client does not have your phone number, but needs to contact you, they can always do so via your supervisor. Sage Callers will have offered their phone number as part of their role.

Issues/Problems that could arise while visiting

Clients are screened before being accepted into the service. This means that they have been identified as requiring more company, they expressed that they would like a Sage, and they are assessed as being capable of contributing to a mutually enjoyable relationship. The Client's environment is also assessed for risks before a Sage is put in place. Despite this care problems can still occur. It is essential that Sages are clear about situations in which they should contact their supervisor and seek additional help. The following are some problems or issues that you may face as a visitor.

- The Client's health or mood deteriorates, or they become confused
- The Sage's own health or circumstances change in a way that affects their ability to visit.
- The Sage feels uncomfortable, or at-risk due to something in the Client's environment (animals, hygiene, maintenance, etc)
- Loss of Sage's privacy through the Client making unwelcome contact with them in their own home or in the community
- Inappropriate behavior or interference from the client, family members or other visitors to the home
- False accusations against the Sages from a confused Client
- Expectations that the Sage perform tasks over and above the scope and aims of the service
- Any other situation which is causing stress to the Sage or causing them to not enjoy their visits
- Concern about the way the Client is being treated or spoken to by someone encountered while visiting*.

*if this happens, or if your Client tells you that someone is harming or distressing them, your Client may be experiencing Elder Abuse and/or Neglect. Elder abuse is a single or repeated act, or lack of appropriate action, occurring within any relationship where there is an expectation of trust, which causes harm or distress to an older person. Te Whai

Community Trust can refer to an Elder Abuse and Neglect prevention service. If you have concerns that this may be occurring for your Client, discuss it with your Co-ordinator. **Do not take any action yourself before doing so.**

If any of the above issues occur for you or your Client, or if you are worried or not enjoying your visits for any reason, contact your supervisor without delay. If you feel at risk for any reason in a Client's home, leave immediately, and contact your supervisor as soon as you are able.

Te Whai Sage Role and Boundaries

As a protection for themselves, Sages must be very clear about their role. It is the supervisors's responsibility to stress in training and support groups the rights of both the Client and Sage and the boundaries of the visitor role. A Te Whai Sage's main task is to establish friendship links with an older person or family through regular visits or Sage Calls. A Te Whai Sage should complement rather than replace family, friends, other service groups and health sector staff, and take care not to become an unofficial carer or home care worker.

In your role avoid at all costs:

- Physical care, performing personal cares, lifting or giving medication
- Managing finances or handling money
- Accepting gifts (of value)
- Heavy domestic housework or duties (light housework is ok)
- Having an inspectorial role (e.g. in a rest home)
- Taking the client out if the criteria for client outings are not met
- Feeling pressured to do anything with which you are not comfortable
- Taking over the role of the family, formal or informal carer, housekeeper, nurse, social worker or other visitors
- Visiting when either you or your Client has an infection or illness

The above boundaries are there to protect you, your Client and Te Whai Community Trust.

N.B. if you are offered a gift of no financial value (e.g. some flowers or a little fruit from your Client's garden, it is fine to accept).

Keeping yourself safe

Work within the boundaries of your role

Manage potential hazards:

If you feel unsafe when visiting for any reason leave immediately, and contact your supervisor.

Be aware of the Te Whai Community Trust complaints procedure (p.26 of this document).

Be aware of privacy and confidentiality issues (p. 26 of this document).

Emergency situations

- **Illness** – If visiting, ask the Client who to call, or call an ambulance if the situation is serious. If you phone and your Client is ill or does not respond, contact your supervisor. In a flu pandemic, if you suspect your Client has flu and you can't contact your Co-ordinator, call Healthline on 0800 611 116.
- **Fall** – Make the person comfortable on the floor, and call an ambulance. Do not attempt to lift the Client yourself.
- **Fire** – Exit immediately with your Client if you can, and call emergency services.

In any Te Whai Sages-related emergency, contact your supervisor.

Record of Visits/Supportive phone calls

Sages do not need to keep notes, although it helps to know how the Client is coping, but they must keep a record of each visit and supportive phone call. Sage Calls can keep a weekly summary of their Client calls. This is forwarded to the supervisor to provide accurate statistical reports to Te Whai Community Trust.

Phone calls can be recorded (date and time), however, whilst phone calls between visits should be recorded, it is not intended that they should replace your Te Whai Sage regular visits unless this has been agreed between you, your client, and your Co-ordinator.

Supportive phone calls defined for Te Whai Sages

A supportive phone call is a call made in order to reduce social isolation. For example, if a sage regularly visits on a Wednesday, but calls their client for a chat each Sunday because they know that weekends are lonely for them, this is a supportive phone call. Similarly, if a Sage is unable to visit because they have a cold, but phones to chat instead, this would also count. If a sage simply makes a brief, functional call to say that they will be late, this would not count as a supportive call.

Visits defined

The length and frequency of Sage visits can be negotiated between the Sage and Client, as some may prefer longer visits at greater intervals, or shorter but more frequent visits. Visits should be regular, however, and not more than 2 weeks apart. Visits which can be included on the Record of Visits form are –

- Transporting or accompanying a client to a social club or event
- Taking a client to an appointment or shopping
- Transporting a client to see friends or family, etc.

During a pandemic, visiting is restricted. no face to face contact, but delivery to doorstep is allowed, dates and times must be strictly recorded, and te whai must be notified.

Guidelines relating to temporarily absent visitors

Te Whai Sages visits can become a very important point in the week for clients, especially if they are severely lonely. If a visitor is going on holiday, or has a temporary illness, it is important that all reasonable steps are taken to ensure that the client continues to feel supported by the service.

For this reason, Te Whai Community Trust stresses the importance of communicating with your supervisor about absences, so that some cover can be provided. This can take the form of a temporary replacement Sage, a visit by the supervisor or phone contact. The decision on how to cover an absence should be based on an assessment of the impact of the missed visits on the individual client and availability of other Sages.

Listening Effectively

A Te Whai Sage needs to practice good listening. If you listen actively to your Client, they know that you are interested in them, that you value them for who they are and what they have to share, and that you want to be there with them.

Good listening requires awareness and practice. Liz Percival writes*:

There is an art to good listening. It involves using all of our body and all of our attention. We need to set aside our own opinions, agendas and internal conversations to really try to understand what the other person is trying to communicate to us. What is it like to be them right now?

The fruits of good listening are emotional needs met and positive feelings.

- *When you give me space to talk, I feel free. It encourages me to open up to you*
- *When you listen with your eyes, I feel important to you. You are giving me your attention and saying, "What you have to say right now matters to me more than anything else."*
- *When you ask me questions to make sure you've heard me and know what I am saying, then I feel connected.*
- *When you show that you know how I feel, then I feel secure. I'm loved and accepted and no longer alone.*
- *When you show that you understand, I feel valued and valuable.*

Exercise

Think of a situation in which you felt that another person failed to listen to you –

- How it made you feel
- What they did that made you feel that way

Now think of a situation which you felt that another person really listened to you –

- How it made you feel
- What they did that made you feel that way?

Listening effectively is not just a question of techniques, it involves opening your heart and mind to what someone else is telling you. There are however some things you can do to make it easier.

- Sit facing your client and look at them to show they have your attention

- Be still in body and mind
- If possible, reduce background noise and switch off your cell phone
- Pay attention to your client's body language, facial expression and tone of voice. This will help you to understand how they feel about what they are saying
- Ask questions to encourage them to continue, use 'W' words – what, where, why, when, how – e.g. When did you get married?; how many children do you have?; what sort of work did you do when you were younger?
- Briefly reflect back what you think they are saying, using different words. Then check that you've got it right, e.g. 'So it sounds as though you were really excited when you got that news'. Or 'So you decided to leave at that point? Is that right?'
- Encourage your client to tell you about their life experiences. You are likely to hear some interesting stories. Resist the urge to jump in with your own related story, as this will stop them from finishing theirs.
- Accept that your client will feel and think differently to you about some things, and show respect for their point of view.

Open and Closed questions

There are a number of ways you can encourage your Client to talk while you listen. One is to use a mixture of closed and open questions. Closed questions are questions that can be answered with a 'Yes' or a 'No', or a short answer. Open questions invite the other person to open up and give a longer response. An example of a closed question is:

Do you watch much TV?

This is likely to produce a short answer, but tells you quickly whether or not this is an area of interest for your Client. If it is you might follow up with an open question such as:

What sort of programmes do you find interesting?

This invites a longer answer. If you find you are doing most of the talking during a visit, using more open questions may help to change this. Other examples of open questions are:

What was life like for you as a child?

How has the neighbourhood changed since you first moved here?

Exercise

Next time you have a conversation with a friend or family member, try to notice when you use closed and open questions and notice what sort of responses you get.

Seeing and listening with the heart

As a Te Whai Sage, you are giving your time because you are interested in getting to know and understand an older person. Opening yourself to another person in this way is a gift. The following quote about how we see other people applies equally well to what we hear when we listen to them.

*What the eye sees is only a shell.
What is essential is invisible to the eye.
Only with the heart can we see the essential.**

'The Little Prince' by Antoine de Saint-Exupery

Mutual Benefits

Many of volunteers comment that they gain, and learn a lot through spending time listening to an older person. Karl A Pilemer Gerontologist, Researcher, and author of the book "30 Lessons for Living" says:

'In the end I come down on the side that the accumulated wisdom of older people – our "experts" on living – can serve as a helpful guide for younger people. They bring experiential knowledge of just about every problem a human being can go through. People from their teens to middle age will find that the roadmap for life elders provide, can help them take a new look at their own situations and to choose new ways of living that will make them happier. We just have to be ready to ask and listen'.

Overcoming communication issues

Hearing Loss

As people age, our hearing changes, and we may have difficulty hearing other, particularly if there is background noise present. If the Client you are matched with has significant hearing problems, your Co-ordinator will discuss this with you before you visit. Health Ed Trust* recommends the following when speaking with a person who has hearing loss.

- Get the person's attention before you start to speak to them. For example, stand where they can see you.
- Reduce background noise so they can hear you more easily. For example, turn down the volume of the radio.
- Stand 1-2 metres from the person, so that you are close enough for them to hear you, without being in their personal space.
- Face the person, so they can see your facial expression and your lips forming words as you speak.
- Do not chew or put your hand over your mouth as this stops the person from seeing your lips. Some will "read" your lips.
- Speak a little slower and clearly so they have time to understand what you say.
- Try again, using different words, if the person does not understand you.
- Speak at normal volume – speaking too loud can change the sound of the words, making them more difficult to hear.
- Use body language to help them understand what you say. For example, point to or hold up objects.
- Use pictures and symbols or write a message to communicate.
- If the person wears a hearing aid, make sure it is worn correctly and working correctly by checking the battery and connections and volume.

If you are having difficulty communicating with your Client, or if you feel that their hearing has deteriorated, discuss this with your Co-ordinator.

*Health Ed Trust NZ In. (2008). The Ace Programme: Supporting the older person: Module 4: Effective Communication. (Training resource).

Other communication issues

Your Client may experience other health and disability issues that make communication more challenging, such as vision impairment, aphasia (difficulty communicating due to injury to the parts of the brain that deal with language – e.g. after a stroke) or dementia.

If your supervisor is thinking of matching you with a client who has specific communication issues, he or she will discuss this with you beforehand. If you are not comfortable with the proposed match, it is important that you let your supervisor know this. If you are matched with a client with communication issues, your supervisor will discuss with you any specific information that may help you to communicate with your client more effectively.

- Speak clearly, and if the person has difficulty with English, speak slower and use words that are easy to understand.
- Speak at the same volume as the Client.
- Ask for guidance before you act (e.g. “Do you mind if I sit here?”)
- Sit or stand at the same level if possible.
- Allow time to get to know each other and begin by talking about things that are not personal.
- The use of eye gaze and touch can vary between people, so learn what is comfortable for your Client.
- If your Client seems uncomfortable, ask them to tell you if you are doing something they don't like

Cultural Considerations

Culture is defined in many different ways, but is central to all our lives. Here are a couple of definitions of culture from the Oxford English Dictionary.

- *The ideas, customs and social behavior of a particular people or society*
- *The attitudes and behavior of a particular social group*

In New Zealand, the Ministry of Health describes culture in this way:

“Culture” means a group of people who share certain things – these might be a view of the world, a set of customs, certain activities, and a pattern of beliefs... Culture is not just about our race or what we look like, or what language we speak. Culture is much more than that. Culture can be about religion, occupation, and lifestyle. Examples include deaf culture, gay culture, military culture, even gang culture. We all belong to a lot of different cultures..”

The culture/s that we belong to influence how we see the world. Shared cultural backgrounds can make it easier to connect. For example, two people who have worked as nurses or attended the same church are likely to have some things in common. People with different backgrounds, on the other hand, can offer each other new worlds to explore.

New Zealand has many different cultural communities, and our Te Whai clients come from a wide range of different backgrounds. As a Te Whai Sage, you will work to create a relationship of trust and friendship with an older person who is lonely and isolated. To do this, you will need to be open to understanding how they see the world, and respectful of their way of doing things.

Cultural considerations for Maori

This training information has been gifted from Age Concern and the Rodney Visiting Service, which is a health and disability service, working hand in hand with the District Health Boards and the Ministry of Health.

The District Health Boards were established in 2000 under the NZ Health and Disability Act. Under the Act, District Health Boards have responsibilities to improve the health of people living in their districts. Part of this is working to reduce the gap in health and well-being that exists between Maori and other ethnic groups. The Ministry of Health acknowledges their responsibility to meet the needs of people of all cultures in New Zealand, but states that:

“It is also completely appropriate that we maintain a focus on Maori culture and Maori health – recognizing Maori as tangata whenua, the indigenous people of this land, and recognizing that Maori people have the greatest health disparities across a wide range of health indicators”.

Age Concern New Zealand aims to be an inclusive organization which works for all older people. One of our core values is to “respect the values and social structures of Maori and people of all cultural and ethnic backgrounds, demonstrating respect by working together to gain mutual understanding”.

Age Concern New Zealand and Te Whai Community Trust standards require that the Treaty of Waitangi is acknowledged and cultures are respected across all the work that we do.

Putting cultural considerations into practice

In practice, for the Te Whai Sages service this means that we work to build relationships with Maori and other ethnic groups at local and national level. Our aim is to understand the needs of the diverse older populations we serve, and to provide services that are relevant to them, and that they feel comfortable and able to use.

As a Te Whai Sage, we will ask you about your ethnicity, so that we can take this into account when matching you with a client. We try to match visitors to clients with similar cultural backgrounds, but it is not always possible. If your client's background is different from your own, we ask that you talk with your co-ordinator about any specific cultural knowledge you may need to help you to work effectively with them.

For example, many of you will be aware of Maori protocols such as not sitting on tables, not touching people on the head, and not putting tea towels in a washing machine used to wash clothing.

It is helpful to be aware of cultural practices that may be important to your client and their family, and to understand the reasons behind them, but be careful not to make assumptions. Each individual and family will have their own way of doing things, and we ask that you work to the guidelines below to help you to understand and respect your client's unique cultural needs.

- Look and listen to see differences in greetings and practices (e.g. if there is a pile of shoes outside the door check if you should take yours off)
- Let the person know your name, your role and where you come from
- Make sure you get the person's name right, and use the name and form of greeting they prefer

THE PRIVACY ACT

Te Whai Community Trust standards for membership require that Te Whai Sages comply with the requirements of the Privacy Act 1993. Te Whai Community Trust has obligations to both you and your Client under the Act. In brief these are that:

- 1) We will only gather the information we need
- 2) We will only use it for the purpose for which it was obtained
- 3) We will store it securely

- 4) We will not keep it for longer than we need it to fulfil the purpose for which it was obtained
- 5) You and your Client have the right to see any information about you held by Te Whai Community Trust, and to ask for it to be corrected if it is inaccurate
- 6) Information about you or your Client will only be shared within Te Whai Community Trust to board members, Co-ordinators or Sages who need to know it in order to function effectively and to provide the best service
- 7) Information about you or your Client will not be disclosed outside the organization unless:
 - a) There are reasonable grounds to believe that there is a threat to public health of safety, or the life and health of an individual
 - b) Te Whai Community Trust has a legal duty to disclose information, or is obliged by the law to do so.

For more information on the Privacy Act visit <http://www.privacy.org.nz>.

Te Whai Community Trust will not give out your phone number or other contact details to your Client. If you wish to do so when trust is established, that is your choice.

Confidentiality

As a Te Whai Sage, you will learn things about your Client and their family that are personal and confidential. It is essential that you keep this information to yourself unless you need to discuss it with your supervisor or disclose it in an emergency situation.

Whilst you can talk about your role, what you do, and how you feel about it, it is important not to talk about what your Client and their family said and did, to identify them, or to talk about their problems or conflicts.

It is part of your role to discuss with your supervisor any concerns you may have about your Client or their situation or anything which impacts upon you as a Sage.

If you need to disclose information to someone other than your supervisor i.e. in a life-threatening situation, be careful to stick to facts, and not to participate in gossip.

Reminding yourself and your Client of your role as a Te Whai Sage will help you to maintain confidentiality and an appropriate relationship.

Complaints procedure

Te Whai Community Trust has a complaints procedure in place, which is implemented immediately a complaint is made. Those concerned will be advised

of the proceedings. A copy of the Te Whai Community Trust complaints procedure will be made available to you on request.

Your Relationship with Te Whai Community Trust

Your supervisor is your key contact at Te Whai Community Trust. It's important that you contact your supervisor at any time if you have concerns or questions relating to your Client or your role.

Regular communication

Regular contact is maintained through:

- Record of visits
- Support meetings
- Newsletters
- Reviews

Temporary absences/Change of circumstances

- Inform your Client if you will be unable to visit when expected.
- Let your Co-ordinator know in advance if you know you will be unable to visit for a period of one month or more.
- If your Client is particularly lonely and reliant on you to come, let your Co-ordinator know if you will be absent for more than one visit. It may be possible to provide some other temporary support.
- If you need a break we will help to arrange cover for you.

Leaving the Service

If you need to stop visiting permanently, the most important thing is to inform your supervisor so that your Client can be matched with a new Sage, and you can be removed from the Te Whai Sage list.

Thank you!

'Volunteers don't get paid, not because they're worthless, but because they're priceless.' - Sherry Anderson.

Many thanks to Sue Robertsons from Age Concern Visiting Service for creating this training document and allowing the content to be used as our own Te Whai Sages training manual. Age Concern is a key contributor for Te Whai Sages Senior Support.

*Document last updated and prepared by
Te Whai Community Trust Projects Manager
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