

Volunteer Survey

2023 Report



ALONE

YOU'RE NOT ALONE

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At ALONE, our volunteers play a pivotal role in bringing our vision to life. We envision an Ireland where older people can age happily and securely in the comfort of their homes while maintaining strong connections to their local communities. Our mission revolves around empowering our volunteers to lead the charge in supporting positive aging at home. Volunteers are instrumental in strengthening our services, making them more efficient and effective.



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ALONE's approach to volunteering is built on a strong foundation of appreciation, empowerment, and responsiveness. We recognise that our volunteers are the heart and soul of our organization, and their dedication is the driving force behind our collective mission to combat loneliness and isolation among older people. With an unwavering commitment to continuous improvement, we strive to make the volunteer experience with ALONE fulfilling, impactful, and transformative. Together, we build a brighter future, where older individuals are supported, connected, and valued within their communities.



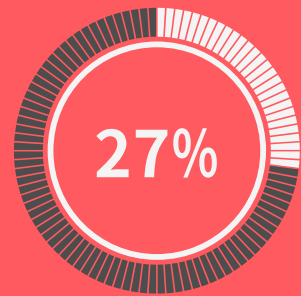
The volunteer survey

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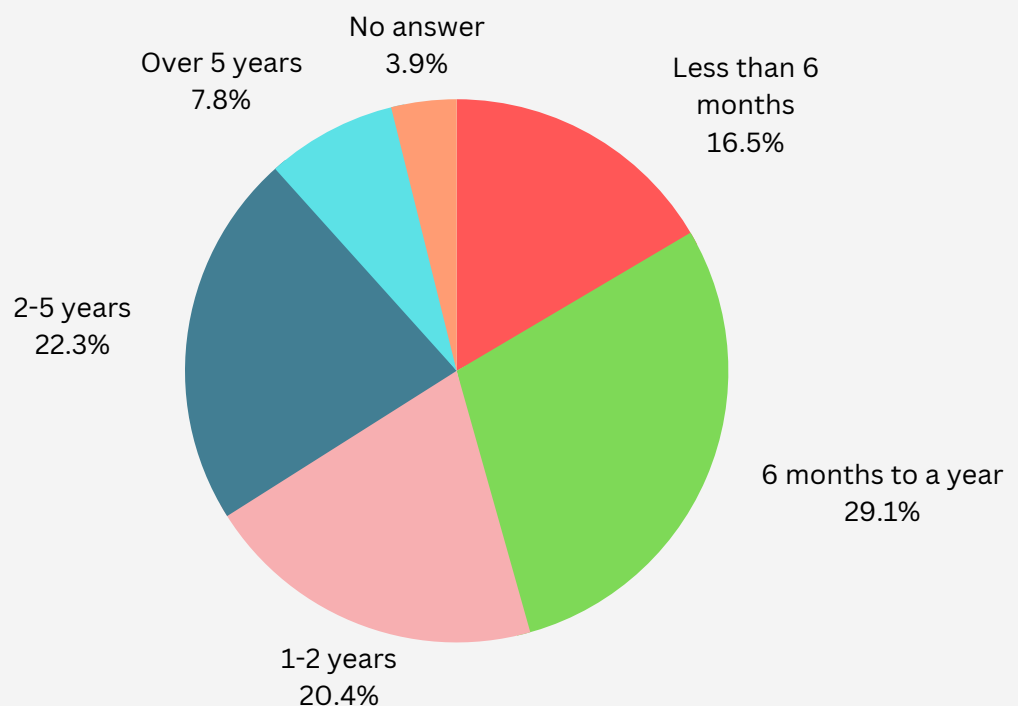
This year we have sent our Volunteer Survey to 2063 volunteers, we have received responses from 560. We want to thank all the volunteers who filled in the survey, thanks to this we are able to keep our Volunteer Programme up to date and ensure we meet the needs and expectations of our volunteers.

The overall feedback was very positive, our volunteers find their experience with us beneficial, and feel supported by our staff and adequately trained to perform the role.



Our response rate is at 27%

The volunteers who took part in the survey have been with us for



"I am particularly happy that the phone befriending service exists. I have limits on my ability to volunteer in person at present and I have found the phone call volunteer option to be ideal for my circumstances. I have learned a lot about and from older people in the last number of months. It's been a deeply enriching experience for me at a point in my life where I really needed to do something outside of myself and my own circumstances. I'm very proud to be part of ALONE."



We wish to express our thanks for the positive feedback received from our volunteers.

We also recognize the concerns and challenges you've shared. We continuously learn from our past experiences and warmly welcome the constructive feedback our volunteers provide.

While we understand that perfection is an ambitious goal, our commitment lies in listening to our volunteers, cherishing their insights, addressing their needs, and acknowledging both their concerns and challenges.



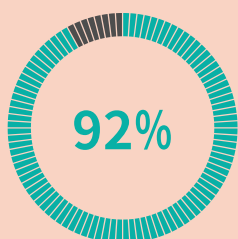
95% of volunteers reported they benefit from being an ALONE volunteer



The two most common benefits are doing something rewarding & enjoy social interaction, the least experienced benefit is increasing confidence or learning new skills

"Increased my knowledge & awareness of invisibility of older adults needs & entitlements in our society, in particular housing."

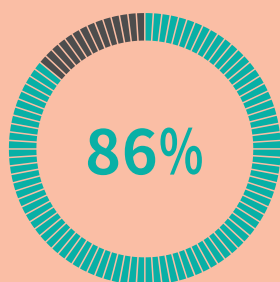
"It gives me a greater sense of contributing to the community."



92% of volunteers would recommend ALONE services to an Older Person they know

90% of volunteers felt prepared/somewhat prepared to start their role after the initial training





86% of volunteers would recommend ALONE volunteer opportunities to a friend, family member

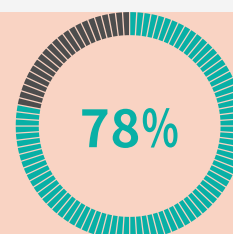


84 % of volunteers were satisfied or very satisfied with their volunteering experience

"I am impressed by the range of services provided by ALONE and happy with the support and guidance provided. It has been great to talk to a very varied range of Older People."

"I enjoy meeting my client and get a lot of satisfaction from the small effort I regularly make. I appreciate the opportunity that Alone has created for me"

78% of volunteers felt they are valued and recognised by ALONE



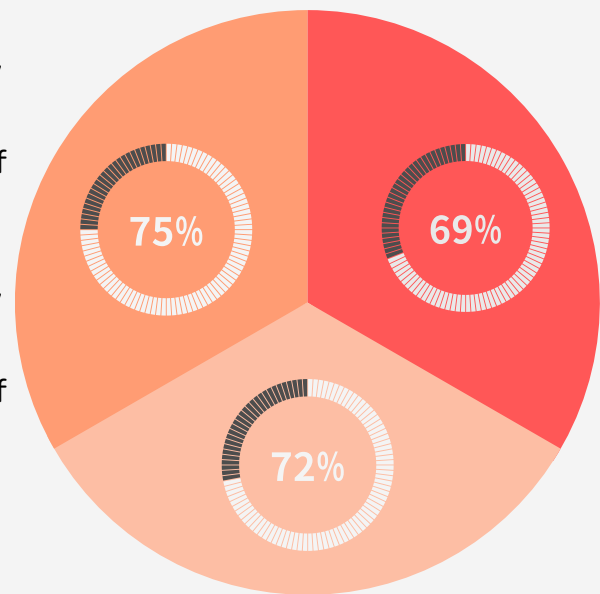
Our volunteers deliver 21,557 practical supports per year, with the highest type of practical support being technology assistance, small jobs around the house and accessing information online.

Volunteers Feeling Supported

Volunteers' feeling of being supported grew from last year.

Visitation Support & Befriending Volunteers by 6%, NSRL Volunteers by 12% and Telephone Support & Befriending Volunteers by 17%.

- 69% of Visitation Support & Befriending Volunteers strongly agree or agree they receive support from their support staff
- 72% of Telephone Support & Befriending Volunteers strongly agree or agree they receive support from their support staff
- 75% of NSRL Volunteers strongly agree or agree they receive support from their support staff



Based on the valuable feedback from our dedicated volunteers, we have identified several areas for improvement to enhance the volunteer experience with ALONE.

Here are the initiatives we already have in place for you:

1. Volunteer Support

Volunteer Assistance Program

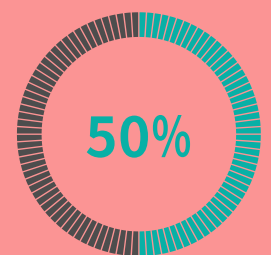
We asked our volunteers if they knew that we have a new **Volunteer Assistance Programme** available to them. We will be sending out more information about the programme to all volunteers in the coming weeks.

Please, read more about our Volunteer Assistance Programme:

In the past year, we have reintroduced the Volunteer Assistance Programme in a revamped format to better serve our volunteers. As part of this initiative, all our volunteers now have access to professional counselor support. Experienced counselors are adept at assisting with various challenges, providing guidance and support through issues such as stress, anxiety, relationship concerns, bereavement, and more.

To gain further insights into the Volunteer Assistance Programme and its offerings, please don't hesitate to reach out to ALONE. You can also find detailed information in your

You can also find detailed information in your Designated Role Guide, which was provided to you during the onboarding process. We prioritize your well-being and are committed to ensuring that you have the necessary resources and support to carry out your role with confidence and ease.



50% of responders were not aware that ALONE introduced a new Volunteer Assistance Programme

BFriend App

Some of the concerns mentioned in the survey, especially by the Visitation Support & Befriending volunteers were:

- no follow ups on the concerns you raised
- request for more support
- request for more effective communication

If you are a Visitation Support & Befriending, please make sure to use our new BFriend App.

The screenshot shows the BFriend App interface on a smartphone. The form is titled 'OLDER PERSON DETAILS' and includes the following sections:

- OLDER PERSON DETAILS:** Name 'Mary Murphy' and phone number '087 123 4567'.
- VISIT DATE & LENGTH:** Date '27/04/2023' and duration '1 hour'.
- HOW IS THE OLDER PERSON TODAY?:** Five smiley face icons representing 'Excellent', 'Very good', 'Good', 'Fair', and 'Poor'.
- ADDITIONAL SUPPORTS PROVIDED:** A text box containing 'No additional supports provided'.
- COMMENTS:** A checkbox labeled 'My Older Person needs additional support' and a text box for 'Comments'.

At the bottom of the form are two buttons: 'Cancel' and 'Save this Visit'.

The app is designed to offer enhanced support to volunteers who visit Older People.

The purpose of the app is to give you another channel to request support, raise concerns or communicate more effectively with ALONE.

We value your contributions as a volunteer, and the BFriend app is a testament to our commitment to support and address your needs effectively. Together, we can continue making a positive impact in the lives of Older People and create a more connected and caring community.

To receive access to the App simply go to www.bfriend.alone.ie or scan this QR Code

For instructions on how to register on the app [Click Here](#)

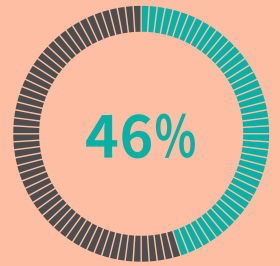


2. Volunteer Training

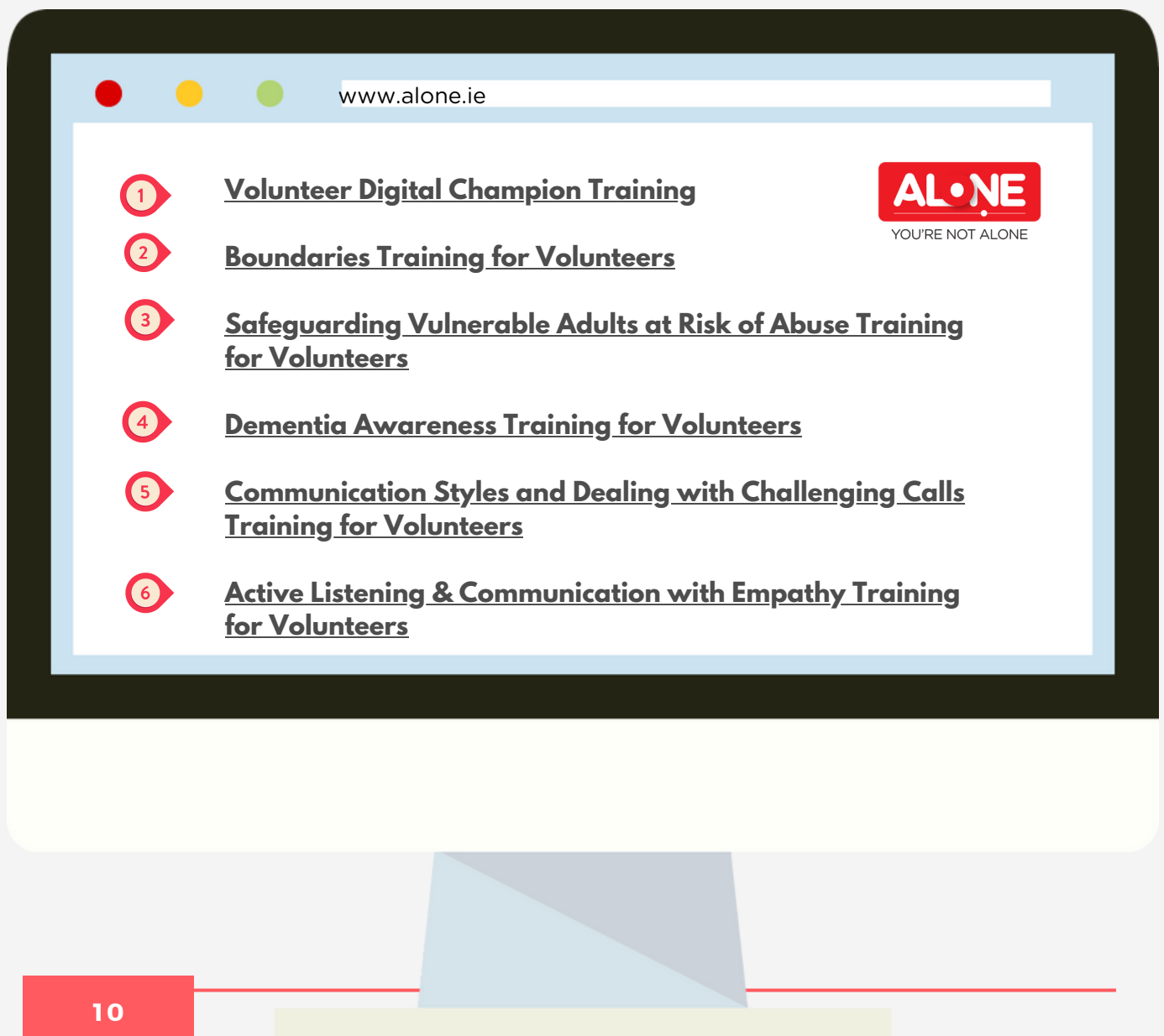
Thanks to the invaluable feedback from last year's survey, we have taken significant strides in enhancing our volunteer training programs.

We are working on a training promotion plan to ensure all our volunteers are aware of and have access to the training which will support them in the delivery in their role.

Currently, we offer the following training modules:



We discovered that only 46% of our volunteers were aware of our additional training designed especially for them



We strongly urge and empower you to delve into these training modules and seize every valuable learning opportunity they present.

To stay updated on upcoming training sessions, you can refer to our Volunteer Brief. Additionally, you can access specific training information based on your volunteer role:

Where to find our training



For Visitation Befriending & Support Volunteers, the training resources are available in the "Resources" section of your BFriend App at www.bfriend.alone.ie



For Telephone Befriending & Support Volunteers, you can find the training in the "Settings" section of your Tel App.



NSRL Volunteers can access their training materials on SharePoint through the "Resources Document" section.

If you ever encounter any difficulty in locating the training materials, please don't hesitate to reach out to ALONE for assistance. We are here to support you on your volunteering journey and ensure that you feel well-prepared and empowered to make a meaningful difference in the lives of the older individuals we serve. Happy learning!

3. Volunteer Recognition

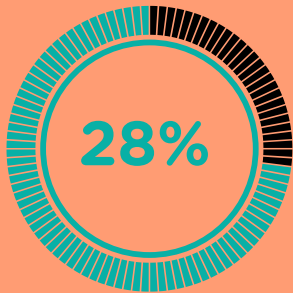
The majority of the respondents to the volunteer survey said they would like to see Social Events being organized by ALONE to make them feel appreciate and connected to ALONE and other volunteers. We held first set of Volunteer Social Events between May and July 2023, with 270 volunteers attending the events across the country.

ALONE is enhancing the recognition process to show appreciation to volunteers and encourage their continued involvement. Social events, befriending anniversary messages, and volunteer milestone messages are some of the initiatives planned to recognize and celebrate volunteers' contributions.

We are now looking forward to the next set which will take place in November/December 2023.



4. Visitation Support & Befriending Volunteers



28% of our volunteers said they don't know who is their Older Person's Support Coordinator.

We would like to draw your attention to how to get in touch with the Support Coordinator:

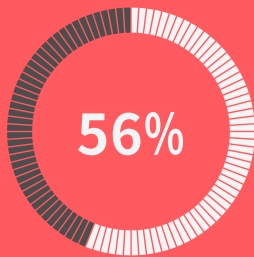
You can log your request through the **BFriend App** - Request Support for the Older Person and a member of the ALONE staff will be in touch to follow up on your request.

Alternatively, you can find information on Support Coordinators in your area on ALONE website
<https://alone.ie/contact/>

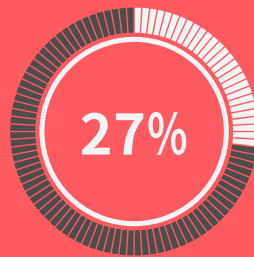


5.NSRL Volunteers

We asked our NSRL volunteers if they would like their shifts to be shorter. The responses were as follows:



56% of volunteers said that they do not require any changes to the current shift length.



27% of volunteers stated that they would welcome a change to 2-hour shifts.

For volunteers who are unable to commit to 4-hour shifts, we kindly suggest that they communicate this with their NSRL Coordinators. Your input is essential in helping us tailor our volunteering opportunities to better suit the availability and preferences of our volunteers. We appreciate your feedback and aim to accommodate your needs as much as possible while ensuring a positive and rewarding experience for everyone involved.



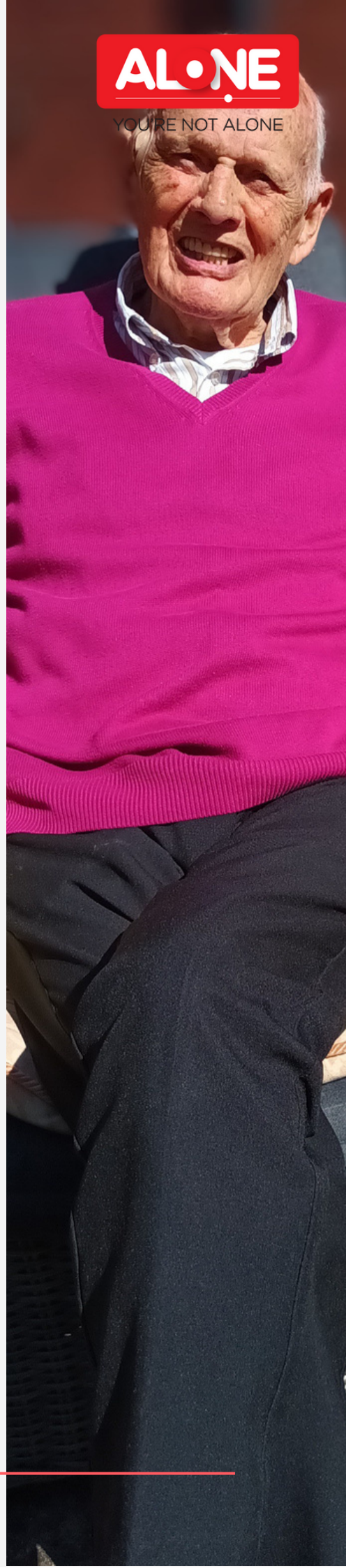
6.Challenges Older People Experience

We asked you what challenges Older People you volunteer with experience to see how we help you to better support them. A significant number of you reported that the older persons you assisted did not currently experience any difficulties and were doing well, often having full-time carers to address their medical needs. However, **many volunteers highlighted concerns about isolation and loneliness among the older individuals, emphasizing the need for companionship, social engagement, and attending local activities or events to combat these issues.**

If the Older Person you support would like to be linked in with local community, please make sure to get in touch with ALONE through BFriend App, Tel App or directly with you NSRL Coordinator and flag your concerns with us.

Some of you also said that **knowing more about benefits, entitlements, and grants** available to older people would be beneficial to them. If your older person would like to know more about resources available to them you can direct them to ALONE website

https://alone.ie/frequentlyaskedquestions_infoforolderpeople/



1.Future Training

We are currently working on another set of additional training modules. In next few months you will see following subject being covered:



Mental Health

Bereavement



Cancer Focus

2.Future Recognition

ALONE is enhancing the recognition process to show appreciation to volunteers and encourage their continued involvement.

Social events, Thank you messages, and Volunteer Appreciation Certificates are some of the initiatives planned to recognize and celebrate volunteers' contributions.

We have already had a set of Social Events this year and we are now looking forward to the next set which will take place in November/December 2023.

3.Challenges Older People Experience

Access to and information on local services for Older People

ALONE are developing an **online National Directory of Service for older persons** which will have information on the key services and activities available. The directory will be publicly accessible and help you support your older people find and access appropriate services, groups, and activities in their area. We will let you know when this platform is ready for use.

1. Why we don't have certain training in place

Some volunteers expressed their interest in receiving training on First Aid and Assisted Decision Making during the survey.

However, we regret to inform you that we are currently unable to provide this specific training to our volunteers due to certain limitations. We are open to considering these areas in the future.

Our primary focus at ALONE is on delivering support in domains that closely align with our mission and expertise, primarily centered on promoting positive aging at home. It's worth emphasizing that First Aid and Assisted Decision Making encompass complex medical and legal dimensions, demanding specialized training and qualifications. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the demand for these topics and will thoroughly explore our potential to accommodate them.



2. Clarification on Supports Provided by Volunteers



Another observation from the survey was that some volunteers requested training in counseling and emergency services. However, we want to provide a clear explanation as to why we do not offer training in these areas.

It is important to clarify that the services provided by ALONE volunteers are not counseling or emergency services.

While our volunteers offer companionship, emotional support, and practical assistance, they are not trained counselors or emergency responders.

In case of emergencies, such as a fall or house leak, volunteers should promptly flag these concerns with relevant Emergency Services and report it to ALONE. Our priority is the safety and well-being of the Older Person, and we want to ensure they receive the best possible support from trained professionals.

3. Clarification on ALONE Volunteers not being Carers

During the survey, some volunteers expressed concern that the Older Person or their family might perceive them as carers. We want to assure all our volunteers that **ALONE volunteers are not Carers**. The role of our volunteers is to provide social support, companionship, and assistance to Older People, fostering meaningful connections and enhancing their quality of life.

We recognize the importance of maintaining clear boundaries in the relationship between volunteers and Older Persons.

If you encounter any concerns or questions about your role as a volunteer and how to address this matter with the Older Person or their family, please contact ALONE.

We are committed to facilitating open communication and will gladly reach out to the Older Person or their family to provide clarification and ensure that everyone involved understands the nature of the volunteer's support.

At ALONE, we value the invaluable contributions of our volunteers, and we strive to create a positive and respectful environment for both volunteers and Older Persons. Your dedication to supporting Older People is highly appreciated, and we are here to support you throughout your volunteering journey.

[Link to Boundaries Training for Volunteers](#)




We extend our gratitude for your invaluable contribution to our survey aimed at enhancing our services for older people. Your dedication and insights makes a significant impact on the lives of those we work with.


Thank you from everyone at ALONE for being a crucial part of our mission.



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Thank you for taking the time to read this report. If you have any questions or would like to discuss our findings further, please don't hesitate to reach out to us.

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