### DESCRIPTION OF THE PRACTICE

**1. Title of the practice**

Contact visits - Public mandate for visits to older people to provide information about social care provision and collect socio-demographic data of the target group for planning purposes

**2. Organisation responsible for the practice**

Vienna Social Fund, Vienna, Austria

**3. Contact person(s)**

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**4. Summary of the practice**

The initiative takes place in all 23 districts within the authority of the City of Vienna. Employees of a non-profit-organisation called ‘Wiener Sozialdienste’ organise visits to older people through volunteers – ‘contact visitors’. The volunteers inform people aged 65 and above about social services provision and if they see a need for more support, they contact the case management team of the Vienna Social Fund to organise the required social care service for the client. NGOs offer various activities including centres for older people, physical activities, computer and internet training for seniors, community colleges, involvement in charity work, and becoming a representative of the City of Vienna.

The purpose of this initiative is to provide timely advice. This enables service providers to respond quickly to needs, and to promote inclusion as well as participation of older people in local decisions, social networks, and the local community. The initiative seeks to support older people to live a more self-determined life in old age, which also includes encouraging them to consider volunteering for the contact visits themselves once they do not need them anymore. Another purpose of the initiative is to gather socio-demographic data of the target group to advance knowledge for social service planning.

Lessons learnt:
- Contact visits are as important as they are preventive.
- Social networking is beneficial to older people’s social and mental well-being.
- Support to live a self-determined life in old age is vital.

**5. National/regional/local context of the practice**

This service is provided through publicly funded social services and financed mainly through taxes and donations. The municipal contract (‘Stadtverfassung’) stipulates that contact visits should be a compulsory service for older people.

The local policies and administration, the Viennese Municipal Constitution, and social legislation play a part in deciding who should be stakeholders in the initiative.

**6. Staff involved**

- Representatives of the local administration
- Employees of the local administration
7. Target group

- Employees of Vienna Social Services (‘Wiener Sozialdienste’) who train and supervise the visitors
- Employees of social services where needs are urgent
- An employee of the Vienna Social Fund who is responsible for managing the initiative and the effective transfer of knowledge
- The senior citizens’ representative of the City of Vienna

8. Aims of the practice

- Provide timely information
- Increase use of social services
- Prevent illness and morbidity
- Promote active ageing

9. Issues for social services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Integration/Cooperation across services</th>
<th>Service Planning</th>
<th>x</th>
<th>Contracting</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>Skills development (of the workforce)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>x</td>
<td></td>
<td>Quality of services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Others: Prevention and rehabilitation</td>
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</table>

10. Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pilot project (ongoing)</th>
<th>Project (ongoing)</th>
<th>Implemented practice (restricted areas)</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pilot project (terminated)</td>
<td>Project (terminated)</td>
<td>Widely spread practice/rolled out</td>
<td>x</td>
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11. Scope of the practice

Describe the setting of the practice, considering the following criteria:

- **Micro level practice**: practice that involves individuals at local level
- **Meso level practice**: practice that involves organisations or communities
- **Macro level practice**: practice that involves large population groups

Macro level initiative, across different regions in Austria.

12. Leadership and management of the practice

Description of the leadership of the practice, considering the following criteria:

- **Collaborative management**: shared between large partnerships, often of central, regional and local representation
- **Organisational management**: by one organisation
- **Professional management**: managed by a single person
**Collaborative management:** The City of Vienna and the Vienna Social Fund (VSF) developed the strategy and lead the initiative in collaboration with the councillor. The Vienna Social Services (Wiener Sozialdienste), a non-profit-organisation, runs the service and is responsible for coordination, training events etc.

There are challenges for the Vienna Social Fund in how the content of the visits of the volunteers and the work of the Vienna Social Services (Wiener Sozialdienste) are regulated.

### 13. Engaging stakeholders in the practice

Description of the engagement of stakeholders, considering the following criteria:

- **Individual practice:** individuals have sought practice change
- **Network approach:** one or more organisations develop a network
- **Collaborative approach:** large collaboration with relevant stakeholders

Access to services: The district managers select people to be visited based on various criteria (age, district, etc). These people are informed with a standardised notification letter about the visit including a suggestion for a visit date by the District Administration Office. It is possible to cancel or postpone the visit by telephone.

Volunteers: The recruitment of volunteers that will act as contact visitors is done through the City of Vienna’s website "Freiwillig für Wien (Volunteer for Vienna)", a volunteer database, promotion in the media and also directly by the districts. The contact visitors are selected together with the districts after successful completion of training which is provided by the Vienna Social Services where the volunteers are also subsequently employed on a minimum contract. During the initial visit the volunteers provide information on social services, regional bodies and initiatives; conduct an assessment of the client’s individual needs; and collect data on their living circumstances using a standardised interview guide. In case of immediate need for care or support, services are organised by the Vienna Social Services in cooperation with the Vienna Social Fund (FSW). The volunteers receive a small compensation for every completed visit (currently approx. €8).

### 14. Involvement of service users and their families

Description of the involvement of service users, considering the following criteria:

- **Team involvement:** service users and carers were part of the practice team
- **Consultative:** a consultative body of users was set up for an on-going dialogue and feedback
- **Involvement in care:** person-centred approaches to care/support

Team involvement: There are monthly meetings attended by the contact visitors, the district managers, the FSW and other stakeholders of the district (e.g. representatives of social housing). These meetings are used for sharing information, discussion of the follow-up contact visits carried out and giving information to the Vienna Social Fund regarding social needs in the district (use of social services, visits by social workers or senior consultants etc.).

### 15. Costs and resources needed for implementation

Description of how the practice is financed, considering the following criteria:

- **Within existing resources:** staff time and other resources are provided ‘in-house’
- **Staffing costs:** costs for staff investment
- **Joint/Pooled budgets:** two or more agencies pool budgets to fund services
- **Funded project:** external investment
Funded project: external investment: The Vienna Social Fund, a wholly owned subsidiary of the City of Vienna, funds the Vienna Social Services and the budget is released by the council. It is approximately EUR 433,000 per year.

### 16. Evaluation approaches

**Description of the evaluation method of the practice, considering the following criteria:**

- **Multi-method:** use of both a qualitative and a quantitative approach
- **Single method:** qualitative or quantitative approach
- **Audit:** looks at data sources such as existing medical records, and/or other routinely collected service data.
- **Informal:** refers to in-house service evaluation using locally designed tools and/or collecting opportunistic feedback
- **No evaluation**
- **An evaluation is planned**

Multi-method: With the help of a range of approaches including standardised questionnaires, formal interviews, and client feedback, the volunteers gather information, which is important for urban development and planning. The Vienna Social Fund has an electronic tool to evaluate the data and uses an automatic data processing method.

### 17. Measurable effects of the practice and what it has achieved for...

| Service users | Measurable effects include stronger involvement of older people, timely provision of information and support, and improved social support. |
| Formal care givers | n. a. |
| Informal carers | n. a. |
| Organisations | In addition, through the use of standardised questionnaires, the organisations involved were able to improve the type of data they receive from older people and are able to use this for future care planning. |
| Other | Things that worked particularly well include the contact visits with the volunteers, who had enough time to personally engage with the older people, allowing them to fully discuss their problems and ideas, and to assist with filling out the questionnaire. |

### 18. Anticipated or ‘aspirational’ effects of the practice and what it has achieved for...

This category can include outcomes which are not documented, quantified or properly evaluated. They can include such elements as improved knowledge, quality, workforce, etc.

| Service users | n. a. |
| Formal care givers | n. a. |
| Informal carers | n. a. |
| Organisations | n. a. |
| Other | n. a. |
19. How the practice has changed the way the service is provided (lessons learned)

The contact visits do not change the care provided, but they are an important mechanism to present the programme to the public and identify demand, thereby improving the quality of life of older people before a critical situation may arise.

20. Sustainability of the practice

Description of whether the practice is sustainable, considering the following criteria:

- **Potential for sustainability:** practice was newly started or is on-going/not yet mainstreamed. How could the practice be sustained (in terms of resources)?
- **Organic sustainability:** service users have been empowered to take the practice forward
- **Established:** the project has been operational for several years

Established: Since its inception in 1977, the initiative has become an established programme and the visits are now compulsory.

21. Transferability of the practice

Description of whether the practice has been transferred, considering the following criteria:

- **Transferred:** transfer to other regions, countries, service user groups, etc.
- **Potential for transferability:** there is interest from the outside; elements of the practice have been taken up and used elsewhere; material for transferability (for ex. training material) has been developed

Transferred: This initiative has already been implemented in all districts of Vienna. The following elements are transferrable to other areas and regions:

- Contact visits
- Local policies and administration
- Involvement of social services

22. Further information

[https://www.wien.gv.at/menschen/senioren/aktiv-leben.html](https://www.wien.gv.at/menschen/senioren/aktiv-leben.html)