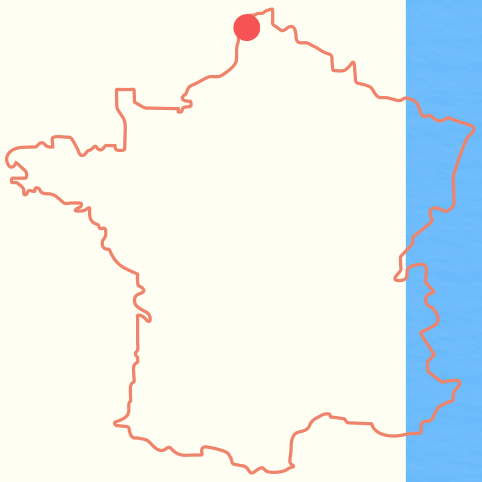
Courtesy Visits for Isolated Seniors

Bellidée, Saint-Martin-Boulogne

INTRODUCTION

Since 2024, volunteers in Saint-Martin-Boulogne have been visiting isolated seniors at home. The initiative is run by **Maison de Quartier Centre**, one of three neighbourhood community centres managed by **Bellidée**, together with the **CCAS (Centre Communal d'Action Sociale)**, the municipality's public social services.

Trained volunteers visit isolated seniors at home on a regular basis, talking, playing games, reading, or simply spending time together. In doing so, they hope to address the **growing isolation among older people living alone**. Beyond individual well-being, the initiative aims to **build intergenerational solidarity and active citizenship** in the neighbourhood: volunteers contribute their time and empathy, while seniors regain a real connection to local life. Through this ongoing contact, **their voices and needs also become more visible**, feeding – even if only indirectly – into community discussions and local decision-making.



FRANCE





ENGAGEMENT LEVEL

- ○ Inform
- ○ Consult
- ● **Involve**
- ○ Collaborate
- ○ Empower



MANDATE

The initiative was launched jointly by Bellidée and the municipal social services. It isn't a formal political process, but it does carry **institutional backing** through this partnership, and fits within a **broader local strategy** to combat isolation and strengthen social cohesion.

Volunteers and seniors can expect meaningful engagement and the chance to contribute to a more inclusive community, not a direct say in policy. Still, insights from the visits are shared with partners such as social services, feeding indirectly into better-informed local decisions.

RECRUITMENT

Recruitment runs through two separate channels. **Seniors are identified through local networks**, such as families, neighbours, or social services, and join voluntarily. **Volunteers come forward through local outreach, community communication, and word of mouth.** No qualifications are required, just **motivation** and a willingness to connect.

The volunteer group itself brings together people from **different backgrounds**, united by an interest in solidarity and community engagement. **Participation is open and flexible**: even a few hours a month can make a real difference.

PROCESS DESIGN

The initiative is ongoing, built around regular visits, and unfolds in phases.

It began with a **collective meeting in March 2024**, where participants were introduced to the project and worked together to define values, expectations, and practical guidelines. This process produced the **mutual commitment charter**, along with practical arrangements like scheduling and communication channels.

From there, **volunteers are matched with seniors** and organise visits directly, based on availability and preference. Visits usually take place at the seniors' homes, and can include conversations, games, or other informal activities.

Regular follow-up meetings keep the initiative running: they support volunteers, allow experiences to be shared, and give room to adjust the approach when needed, while also reinforcing the sense of community among participants.

Bellidée and its partners coordinate the project locally throughout, ensuring continuity and support over time.

OUTPUT & FOLLOW-UP

The main result is a **local network of solidarity**, connecting volunteers and isolated seniors. Concrete outcomes include **regular social visits**, **better well-being** for participants, and **stronger community ties**, alongside a **co-designed commitment charter** that defines roles, expectations, and shared values.

Beyond that, the project generates **qualitative insight into what isolated seniors actually experience**. This insight can be shared with local partners such as social services or community organisations. It doesn't produce formal policy documents, but it does **contribute indirectly to local decision-making**, by **raising awareness of social isolation and the needs of seniors**.

The project **keeps growing**: new volunteers join, and regular meetings help keep it sustainable.





RESOURCES

Financial resources are limited. The initiative runs mainly on **volunteer engagement**, supported by **coordination** from local staff, **meeting space** from the community centre, and **volunteers' time**.

No formal external evaluation has taken place. **Feedback comes informally**, through discussions with volunteers and seniors, and initial observations already point to a **positive impact**: better well-being for participants, strong motivation among volunteers, and more social connection in the community.

STRENGHTS

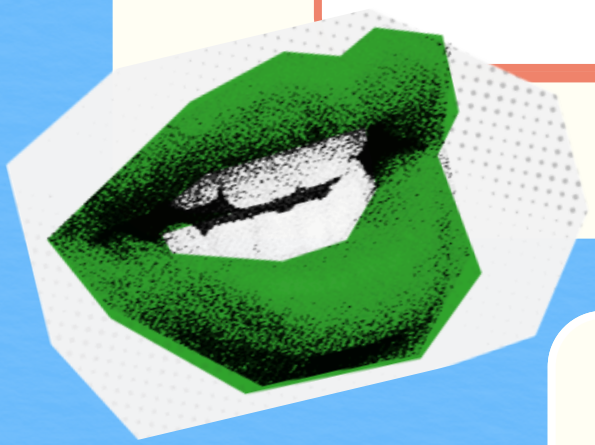
- Strong **human connection** and meaningful **relationships**.
- **Low-cost** and **easy to implement**.
- **Flexible participation** for volunteers
- Positive impact on **well-being** and **social inclusion**.
- Indirect contribution to **community life** and **local awareness**.

CHALLENGES

- Identifying and reaching **isolated seniors**.
- Ensuring **long-term volunteer commitment**.
- Coordinating **schedules** and **matching participants**.
- Maintaining **regular follow-up and support**.

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

- Start with a **collective meeting** to co-build shared values and rules.
- Keep the structure **flexible** to encourage participation.
- Provide **continuous support** to volunteers.
- Build **strong partnerships with local actors**.
- Recognise that even **small actions** can have real social impact.



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