

Choosing a residential aged care home?

This Help Sheet provides information for families and carers of people with dementia who need to move to residential care. It discusses some of the things to consider when choosing a residential aged care home that will suit the needs of the person with dementia.

After the ACAT assessment

The Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT) will advise you which type of accommodation is best for the person with dementia. They will probably suggest that you look at a number of residential aged care homes and will give some names and contact details for some residential care homes that may be appropriate.

Looking at residential care homes

When you are choosing a residential aged care home take time to consider how it will meet the needs of the person with dementia. For example, does the home have appropriate activities for stimulation and security and suitable practices for someone who wanders?

It is advisable to visit at least three aged care homes. Ring and make an appointment with the Director of Nursing or Manager. Some homes welcome prospective residents and their family and carers to visit for a meal and this can provide an opportunity to talk to other residents and get a feel for the place.

You may find it helpful to take a friend or relative with you and a checklist of questions. You may need to visit more than once. Remember that first impressions count. Rely upon your intuition and commonsense.

If the situation is urgent you may find that your preferred choice is unavailable and you are under pressure to accept the first bed available.

You may need to decide which of the needs of the person with dementia is more important. For example, rather than the person having a large room, you might decide that it is more important that they are located close enough to home so that you can visit easily. You may be able to resolve any concerns you have, for example, about room size, by talking to the staff about how the person with dementia could have access to other areas.

Making the choice

You need to judge the situation for yourself and feel comfortable with whichever decision you make. This may mean that you decline the first offer of an available bed. If the person is in hospital this may be difficult as some hospitals may pressure you to accept the first offer. If you feel the vacancy is not appropriate to the needs of the person with dementia discuss your concerns with the hospital's Discharge Liaison Officer or social worker.

If the vacancy you accept is not your preferred choice, you may be able to transfer to the residential aged care home of your choice when a bed becomes available. Let the preferred home know that you are still interested and keep in touch with them.

What is good design in a residential care home for people with dementia?

Most people with dementia respond well to small, familiar domestic environments with safe places to move about in. A checklist of dementia-friendly design features is included in this Help Sheet.

Using this checklist may help you when visiting different residential care homes.

**Dementia-friendly
Environmental Checklist**

Does the place feel home-like? Yes No

Is it obvious how to get to the toilet from most parts of the home? Yes No

Are residents' different cultural backgrounds considered? Yes No

Do people usually seem to be relaxed and comfortable in the aged care home? Yes No

Are there objects that people are likely to bump into or trip over placed in safe areas? Yes No

Would it be clear to the resident where to go if they needed help? Yes No

Is this room decorated with subtle home-like furnishings that are not too busy or distracting? Yes No

Is this room decorated in a style that the resident would feel comfortable with? Yes No

Are there quiet and private spaces available? Yes No

If you were lost could you see something that would help you to work out where you were? Yes No

Is there a safe sun-protected outdoor space for residents? Yes No

Does each resident have space for their personal, special belongings nearby? Yes No

Adapted from *Kratiuk-Wall et al in Cultural diversity and dementia*, Commonwealth of Australia, 1997

Remember

It may be possible to discuss some of these specific features with residents, their relatives and staff.

Who can help?

The Australian Government has established My Aged Care, a service to provide support and assistance with queries about access to home and community care, respite fees, and bonds and charges. They can also help you look for Government funded aged care homes that meet your particular needs. Call **1800 200 422** or visit **myagedcare.gov.au**

FURTHER INFORMATION

Dementia Australia offers support, information, education and counselling. Contact the National Dementia Helpline on **1800 100 500**, or visit our website at **dementia.org.au**



For language assistance phone the Translating and Interpreting Service on **131 450**