

Caring partnerships

This help sheet describes the importance of families developing a strong care partnership with residential care staff, to look after someone living with dementia.

Making the change

Moving someone into residential care is never easy. It can be emotional for the person moving, as well as for families and carers. It may bring up mixed feelings, including sadness, loss, relief and/or guilt. Your previous role to actively support or manage daily tasks and routines for the person living with dementia will change. But this doesn't mean you will stop caring for them.

You will play a vital role in forming and maintaining a care partnership with staff.

You have the experience of caring for the person and can:

- explain and show how they prefer to be looked after
- provide input, advice and make decisions on the best quality of care.

There is no rule about how much you should be involved. It is your choice.

Forming a caring partnership

For the best outcome, look on the care of someone living with dementia as a partnership between you and the care home.

A caring partnership means:

- Good communication between all parties.
- Staff, residents, families and friends work together.
- Care provided meets the individual needs of the resident, their family and friends.
- Staff understand the person's life history and current situation.
- Staff welcome and encourage the involvement of the resident and their family in different ways, such as eating together, assisting with showering and receiving regular information about the home.

When a care home works together with families, everyone benefits. The home should involve you in caring by:

- Learning about the person's background, including their work life, favourite activities, likes and dislikes, languages spoken, religion and culture.
- Asking about personal preferences such as what they like to wear and when they like to eat, shower, go to bed and get up.
- Encouraging setting up their room to be as homelike as possible.
- Developing and regularly reviewing a care plan with you to ensure needs are being met.
- Nominating a relative or advocate to consult with about changes in medical care or dementia symptoms, including changes to the person's mood and behaviour.
- Inviting you to help with activities at the home and attend group meetings for residents and families.
- Understanding the resident's wishes about future health care if they can no longer give their opinion.

If the care home does not actively involve families and friends, speak to the manager about ways to address this.

If you feel that the care home does not welcome your involvement, consider contacting:

- **Older Persons Advocacy Network (OPAN)**
Call: **1800 700 600**
- **Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission**
Call: **1800 951 822**
Visit: agedcarequality.gov.au/making-complaint

Tips to share information with the care home

- **Communicate your needs clearly.**

For example:

"My husband doesn't like to eat at midday. We need to arrange a later mealtime."

"I want to be told of any changes in his behaviour, no matter how small."

- **Give important information to the care home.**

For example:

“My father doesn’t like to talk much.”

“Mum likes a shower early in the morning.”

- **Explain what is most important to you about the care provided.**

For example:

“My wife has always prided herself on her appearance and it is important that she is well groomed when visitors arrive.”

Group support

Support groups can be helpful for carers after someone has moved into residential care.

Many facilities run groups for relatives.

Dementia Australia also runs some groups that provide support to carers of people living with dementia in residential care.

Additional reading and resources

- Dementia Australia library service
Visit: dementia.org.au/library
- Dementia Australia support
Visit: dementia.org.au/support
- Dementia Australia education
Visit: dementia.org.au/education

Further information

Dementia Australia offers support, information, education and counselling.

National Dementia Helpline: 1800 100 500

For language assistance: 131 450

Visit our website: dementia.org.au