

Residential Care

Finding and choosing an aged care home



Discussing your needs

Requiring accommodation in an aged care home can become apparent following a sudden health crisis or after a long period of decline where it has become increasingly difficult to manage at your own home. It is a good idea to discuss concerns about declining health with your family, your doctor or health workers involved in your care.

Aged care needs assessment

Aged Care Assessment Services (ACAS) assess the person's care needs and eligibility for entry to residential aged care. To organise an assessment ring My Aged Care Contact Centre, Tel: 1800 200 422

An assessor will visit you at home or in hospital and will ask you questions about your health, care needs and lifestyle. With your approval they may ask your doctor about your medical history. You may want your carer, a family member or a friend to be there with you.

After the assessment a letter will be posted to you. It will include the assessment approval decision, services you are eligible to receive including referral codes and your support plan. You need to keep this letter as the information will be required when you apply at aged care homes. You may be approved for permanent and/or respite care.

Review of assessment outcome

If you have concerns about your assessment, you should first talk to your assessor or their organisation. Assessment organisations have their own complaints procedures in place to work with you to address your concerns. If you do not know the organisation's details, you can call My Aged Care on Tel: 1800 200 422 to find out.

If you cannot resolve the issue with your assessor or their organisation, you have the right

to seek a review of the decision by writing to the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care stating why you think the decision should be changed. You or your representative must send your review request within 28 days of receiving the assessment letter. Address it to:

The Secretary
Department of Health, Disability and Ageing
Attn: Aged Care Assessment Program
Reconsiderations
GPO Box 9848
ADELAIDE SA 5001

Finding residential aged care homes

The My Aged Care website features the searching tool allowing users to locate aged care homes in a given area:

www.myagedcare.gov.au/find-a-provider/search.

It is possible to narrow down the search applying filters such as room type, star rating, specialised care (e.g. indigenous Australian, veterans, LGBTI+) and health support (e.g. dementia, terminal illness).

Catalyst Foundation (including Seniors Information Service) can assist you with navigating the My Aged Care website and locating aged care homes in your preferred area.

Catalyst Foundation also keeps a register of residential aged care vacancies (permanent and respite). Anyone can contact the Foundation to obtain information about vacancies. Vacancies are also published on the website www.catalystfoundation.com.au.

Choosing an aged care home

The following checklist is a guide to what you might look for and the questions you might ask.

- 1. Location** - Is the home in a familiar area and conveniently located for family visits? Is there access to public or other transport?

2. **First impressions** - Is it clean, bright and welcoming? Does the home have a pleasant smell? Is the room temperature comfortable? Do the residents appear happy and well cared for? Do members of the staff seem caring and attentive? Are the communal indoor and outdoor areas safe, comfortable and attractive?
3. **Buildings** - Are the buildings well-maintained? Is the building layout suitable for older people, wheelchairs or walking frames? Is there good wheelchair access inside and outside? Is there suitable lighting?
4. **Costs** - If you are required to pay a Refundable Accommodation Deposit (RAD) or Daily Accommodation Payment (DAP) how much will it be?
5. **Optional additional services** – which ones are offered and what fees (Higher Everyday Living Fees – HELF) are charged for them?
See our fact sheet *Care Fees and Accommodation Payments*
6. **Accommodation** - Are there single rooms or shared rooms? What arrangements are made to ensure privacy, particularly when sharing rooms? Are there ensuites or are bathrooms shared? Can new residents bring their own furniture and belongings? What furniture is supplied? Can belongings be stored securely? Can residents change to a preferred room if one becomes available? Are there provisions for couples?
7. **Special needs** - Is there a need to consider any of the following: specific cultural needs, special diets, religious observances, sexuality, war service, needs of care leavers or any other individual needs?
8. **Daily living** - What 'house rules' and arrangements are in place - e.g. cleaning rooms, bedtimes, etc.? Are the meals varied and appetising? Are meal arrangements flexible i.e. can food be provided in your own room or at different times? What activities and outings are organised? Are residents' interests taken into account? What arrangements are made for visitors? What access is there to TV and the internet (e.g. Wi-Fi available)? Does a hairdresser visit the home?
9. **Privacy and dignity** - Is the privacy of all residents considered at all times? Do members of the staff wait for permission before entering rooms, except in emergencies? Are residents addressed courteously at all times?
10. **Consultation** - How are residents and their families consulted and informed about events, issues and changes? Do residents or their families/carers have input into the way the home caters for their needs? Are residents able to make choices about their daily living activities?
11. **Feedback/Complaints** - How do residents raise issues? How are complaints handled? Is a copy of the Aged Care Act 2024's *Statement of Rights* provided to residents?
12. **Health care** - What health care procedures are available in place, e.g. podiatry? Are rehabilitation programs and therapies readily available? How do residents attend medical appointments? How can family/friends be involved in care?
13. **Registration and quality standard** – All Commonwealth-funded aged care home must be registered undergo audits to ensure quality standards are met. The *Star Rating* system combines the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission's compliance rating and quality measures, staffing, and customers' experience. When you use the provider search tool on My Aged Care you can view the aged care home's overall *Star Rating*, which ranges between 1 and 5 stars. The rating allows consumers to compare the quality of residential aged care services, supporting more informed decision-making. www.myagedcare.gov.au/find-a-provider/search
It is also possible to check audit reports at www.agedcarequality.gov.au/reports

14. Staff - How many staff are on duty? What qualifications do the staff have? What staffing is provided at night? What training is provided for staff? How do residents contact the staff for assistance?

15. Palliative Care - What palliative care training do staff receive? Are the wishes of residents sought and respected? What special arrangements are made for families?

Apply to aged care homes

Contact various homes in your preferred areas to make an appointment to visit. Most homes offer regular tours or appointments for prospective residents or their families to be shown through.

All aged care homes have their own application process and may ask you to fill in a form. Talk to the homes and find out what process they have and what information they need.

Once you are offered and accept a place in an aged care home, the aged care home should then offer you a *Service Agreement* detailing the care and services that will be provided to you and any fees that may apply.

Other documents that may apply include:

- Accommodation agreement – to be signed before you move in as a permanent resident. However, you don't need to choose how you want to pay for the accommodation costs (i.e. in full as a lumpsum, as a daily payment or a combination) until after entry.
- Higher everyday day living agreement – for optional services you may wish to use. This can only be signed after you enter care.

Make sure you read and understand the agreements. Ask for additional information you feel should be included. Seek financial and/or legal advice if necessary.

Also consider making arrangements for *Enduring Power of Attorney* and *Advance Care Directive*, so that your instructions are known should you become incapacitated and unable to make decisions for yourself.

Further information

The My Aged Care website features useful resources including the booklet *Steps to enter an aged care home*, available from <https://www.myagedcare.gov.au/resources>

Care finders support senior Australians who need intensive support who could otherwise fall through the cracks. They will help people to understand and access Australian Government-funded aged care supports and services, including home and community care and residential aged care. Information and contact details for such organisations are available at www.myagedcare.gov.au/help-care-finder.

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