

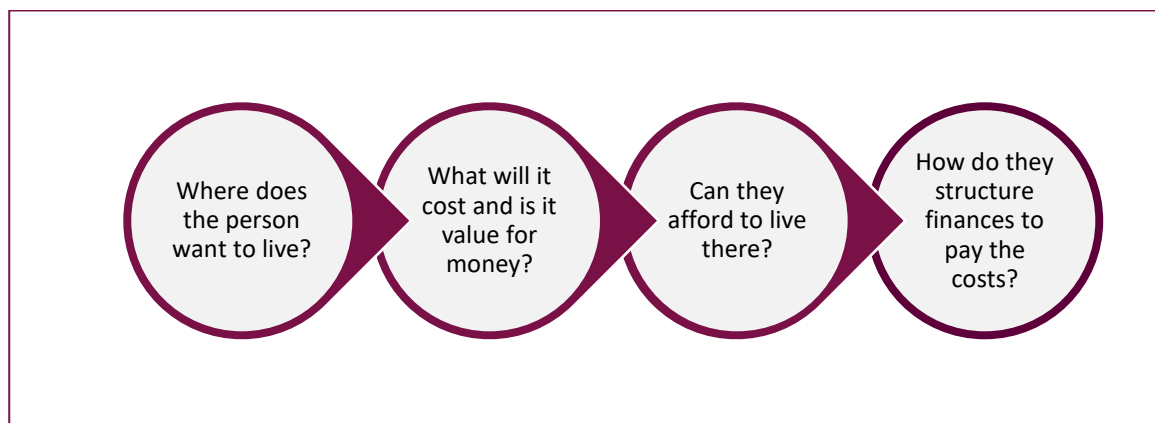
# Choosing a residential care service

## What is the strategy

Are you helping a family member to make the move into residential care? Are you confused and finding the process stressful?

Choosing the right care provider is an important and onerous decision and sometimes the choice may be limited because of the shortage in providers, the urgency and lack of time or the availability of suitable places. The pressure can be overwhelming.

But choosing the right residential care service is key to a good experience. There are many factors to consider when making a choice, but it can be approached in a similar way to choosing where to buy or rent a home. The decision process may include the following steps:



Making the choice might depend on:

- Where the person wants to live?
- Whether they want to stay in the same area or move closer to family members?
- Are they are looking for a service that is aligned to their cultural, religious or lifestyle needs?
- Can they access additional lifestyle services?
- What facilities, services or entertainment programs are provided?
- What is the style or standard of accommodation?
- Whether the service can meet their specific care needs, eg. dementia care?
- How much the person can afford or whether places are available if a low-means resident?

## Help to make the choice

The first step is to choose the location and then research the available care services in that area. There are a number of websites that can be used to search and compare care services but the main resources that clients use include:

**myagedcare.gov.au**

Use the 'find a provider' function to search for providers in the area as well as compare fees and services

**Placement services**

Google 'aged care placement' to find experts who can help with your research and decision making

**Financial planner**

A planner experienced in aged care may be able to connect you with services and work out a funding strategy

**Comparison websites**

Search the internet for websites that list and compare care providers

**Friends & relatives**

Ask for referrals and recommendations - you may know people who have already done the research

**Visit care providers**

Make an appointment to visit services in the area to get a sense of what it would be like to live there

## A checklist

This checklist provides a list of questions that you may wish to ask an aged care provider to help you narrow down your choice.

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**Tick**
**Care provider policies**

Find out about the rules for living in the service including the obligations and responsibilities of both residents and the care provider:

**Considerations include:**

- What service levels are included in the Resident Agreement and do additional fees apply?
  - Are there any specific 'house rules' that residents need to be aware of?
  - Are there strict times for personal care, bedtimes, meal times and visiting times, or is there flexibility to suit a person's preferences?
  - Can residents (or visitors) bring pets?
  - What security and emergency procedures are in place to protect residents eg fire safety, abuse issues?
  - Do staff always knock and ask permission before entering a resident's room?
  - How are complaints or concerns handled?
-

Tick

**Care and staffing**

Find out about the staffing levels and qualifications and how care is provided:

**Questions to answer include:**

- What care services are provided? Are there any limitations or restrictions?
- Are dementia needs catered for, and how?
- What staffing levels are maintained on weekdays, weekends and evenings (ie staff to resident ratios)?
- Are registered nurses on-site at all times (ie 24-hours a day) and do nurses supervise medications?
- What is staff turnover like and do residents get to know the same staff?
- What training and qualifications do care staff have?
- Can residents visit their own doctor or have their own doctor visit?
- Are visiting medical practitioners (ie doctors, dentists) available and if so, how often do they visit?
- What other health services available, ie physiotherapy, massage services, podiatry, rehabilitation, occupational therapy, speech therapy, optometry?
- How do the staff consult with the resident's family and can the family call and speak to the care staff at any time?

**Room and lifestyle**

Find out about the types of rooms and activities available to determine how happy and comfortable living there will be:

**Issues you should consider include:**

- Who is your typical resident?
- What types of rooms are available ie size, furnishings, bathroom access, views?
- Can couples be accommodated and how?
- Do residents have access to a safe or locker in their room to store personal items?
- Can residents bring their own furnishings and personal items?
- What additional lifestyle services can be accessed ie hairdresser, internet, pay TV, meal choices, alcohol with meals, newspapers, etc? What fees are payable for these services?
- What social and recreational activities are available? Do residents have any input into the choice of what's available?
- Are transportation services provided and is there a cost involved?
- Are cultural needs and religious/spiritual practices acknowledged or accommodated?
- What common or outside areas are available for residents to use?

Tick

**Meals and dining**

Find out about the quality and range of meals and what choices are available:

**Questions to answer include:**

- Are meals prepared fresh onsite every day?
- Can residents choose what to eat for each meal or is the menu set?
- Is a hot breakfast provided?
- How often does the menu change?
- How are a resident's requests and tastes accommodated eg vegetarian, gluten-free, pureed options, halal, kosher, etc?
- Can residents have snacks at any time they want?
- Do meals have to be eaten in the dining room or can residents choose where they wish to eat?

An Accredited Aged Care Professional™ can help you to identify options and choose the option that best suits your personal situation and objectives.

## Want more information?



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