



Where should your family member live?

Most older people prefer to stay living at home

When your family member or friend begins to need more help with day-to-day things, you may start wondering whether they should continue living at home.

Take time to understand the difficulties your family member is facing, as well as what the future might hold before making any decisions. Look for ways around the difficulties - things that could help your family member while keeping them safe.

Talk to your family member and others in your family about your concerns and find out what arrangements they think would be best.

How to balance safety and risks

In some situations, despite your best efforts you may be unable to keep your family member safe in their own home. This is often seen with dementia, when people can forget to turn off the gas stove or to lock the doors at night. It may become necessary to live elsewhere.

*"Mum put the electric kettle on the stove and lit the gas.
Another time, she turned the gas on but didn't light it."*

Of course, older people without dementia can also seem unsafe or at risk. Sometimes this is because they keep doing things the way they always have, like standing on a chair to change a light globe.

While this is frustrating and perhaps frightening for families, older people have the right to make their own decisions if they have the capacity to do so. This includes the decision about where to live - even if there are some risks involved.

If you are unsure whether your family member is capable of making their own decisions about living arrangements, speak to their GP who can assess this for you. People with dementia are sometimes still able to make these decisions, with family support.

Options that could be considered

Families often consider a range of living options which may include:

- ▣ Staying at home with help from family, friends and support services.
- ▣ Sharing the home with a student who will offer hours of free support in return for free accommodation.
- ▣ Moving in with family, perhaps with the help of support services.
- ▣ Supported living options - e.g. independent living units, retirement villages or supported residential services (SRSs).
- ▣ Residential care (previously known as hostels or nursing homes).

Support services like home help, personal care, respite care and delivered meals are available in most areas and may greatly assist your family member - as well as easing some of the pressure you might be feeling.

Equipment like wheelchairs, shower stools, specialised seating and personal alarms, as well as aids to help with dressing or meal preparation for example, can be of great benefit.



Where to get more information and advice

Before making any decisions get some advice. You could talk to:

- ▣ Your family member's GP.
- ▣ The Aged Care Assessment Service (ACAS). Ph: 1800 500 853 for the contact details of [your local ACAS](#).
- ▣ The [Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre](#) - ph: 1800 242 636*.
- ▣ The organisation that is most relevant to your family member's condition - e.g. Alzheimer's Australia.
- ▣ Your local council to find out about [Home and Community Care services](#) and their availability.
- ▣ Organisations that sell or hire [aids and equipment](#).

Talk to other family members and friends too - they can be a great source of information and support even if they find the situation difficult to deal with initially.

*"My sister didn't want me to talk about it at first.
She said it upset her. Now she listens and offers me support."*

Remember that any decision you make should be in collaboration with your family member where at all possible.

Further information:

- ▣ [Aged Care Assessment](#) - information sheet.
- ▣ [More information on accommodation options](#)
- ▣ [How and why to organise support services](#) - information sheet.

Contact the [Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre](#) on 1800 242 636* to request the above information sheets be sent to you - or to find out about other information sheets in this series.

*Free call except from mobile phones. Mobile calls at mobile rates.

We do our best to keep these links up to date, but the internet changes all the time. If you can no longer access any of the above resources, please go to our [Internet Troubleshooting Guide](#), or email us at website@carersvic.org.au