

Does your family member need more care and support?

At some stage you and/or your family member may feel they need more care than you can offer them - even with the help of support services. Accommodation options worth considering include independent living units, retirement villages, serviced apartments and supported residential services (SRSs).

Because the type and level of support offered can vary widely, it is important for you and your family member to be clear about their needs. You can then look for the option that best suits. Anticipating future care needs where possible is also a good idea.

What are the benefits of supported living options?

Supported living options offer older people the opportunity to maintain as much of their independence as possible, while receiving a little assistance when they need it. Some say the benefits include:

- ▣ The company and friendship of others nearby.
- ▣ Mutual support - residents assisting other residents.
- ▣ Response to emergencies, 24-hours a day.

"I don't drive anymore, so I go with Margie on Tuesdays and do my shopping when she does hers."

While most will state that a 24-hour 'on call' system is in place, it is important to find out exactly what this means as it can vary widely.

Independent living units

These small, self-contained units usually consist of one or two bedrooms, with a kitchen, bathroom and small living area. The majority are run by not-for-profit organisations such as churches, philanthropic organisations or local government.

In most situations, residents access regular community support services when needed. Most independent living units do not provide this on site. Costs vary - all involve a weekly fee; many also require an ingoing contribution, which is either fixed or income-tested.

Retirement villages

Retirement villages are designed for more able older people and tend to promote safety, a community with people the same age and quality of life. They are privately run and may consist of up to 300 units on one site. Units may have one, two or three bedrooms, a small kitchen and living area. There are usually group recreation facilities.

Depending on the retirement village, meals are sometimes available on site, however regular community support services would have to be arranged for other needs should they arise. Costs vary, consisting of a purchase price and a monthly service fee.

Serviced apartments

Usually residing within retirement villages, serviced apartments provide all meals, cleaning and laundry for residents, who will usually have access to the activities and facilities offered by the retirement village. Some serviced apartments may even provide low level care or be registered as a Supported Residential Service (SRS). Costs vary, consisting of an ingoing fee and a monthly service fee.



Supported residential services (SRSs)

Privately run, supported residential services (SRSs) are often medium to large houses or facilities that offer care and support to aged and/or disabled people. Residents can have their own room or share, with access to shared living and garden areas. Activities may be offered.

Meals, personal care, laundry and cleaning are provided with staff available throughout the day and evening. Some SRSs accommodate residents with largely age related issues, while others primarily cater to the needs of those with mental illness or intellectual disability.

SRSs are registered with and inspected by the Department of Human Services. However they are not government subsidised, nor required to meet the standards that residential aged care facilities are subject to. Nevertheless, many provide an excellent standard of care.

Cost - weekly fees ranging widely. Accommodation bonds do not apply, although a small number of SRSs may request an ongoing fee.

Making decisions about the best options

Take time to weigh things up - consider all the options and look carefully at the finances involved. Should your family member's condition progress and they come to need a higher level of care, you will both want to be clear about any 'exit' fees and other requirements.

"Unfortunately there are no shortcuts - check out all the options."

Here is some advice from families who have been through this:

- ▣ Talk openly with your family member about their wishes.
- ▣ Get as much information as you can before making a decision.
- ▣ If your family member's condition is likely to progress rapidly, it may be best to look into residential care now.
- ▣ Contact your [local Aged Care Assessment Service](#) (ACAS) for more information and advice - phone 1800 500 853 for details.

Further information:

- ▣ [Aged Care Information Line](#) - ph: 1800 500 853.
- ▣ [Retirement Village Association](#) - ph: 1800 240 080.
- ▣ [Starting to think about residential care](#) - 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