

If circumstances change, can care at home be reconsidered?

Why carers sometimes reconsider care at home

Naturally, when your family member moves into residential care you will question whether this was the right decision. At the same time, you may experience swells of emotion - sometimes relief and gratitude, sometimes anxiety, frustration and guilt.

Carers who have been through this, say that it can take up to three months to feel comfortable at the facility. It's not uncommon for carers to want to take their family member home during this time.

In what circumstances might care at home be reconsidered?

When circumstances change it is possible to reconsider providing care at home. For some carers and families, this might include:

- ▣ Your family member making unexpected improvements.
- ▣ The carer improving in their health or ability to provide care.
- ▣ Family returning from elsewhere, who can assist with caring.

A rushed discharge from hospital to residential care can also result in carers reconsidering care at home. Previously they may have had insufficient time to consider options and make the necessary plans.

Examine your reasons and the risks

In some situations taking your family member home may be the right decision, but it's important to carefully examine your reasons for this and the risks involved. You will need to show that your decision is in the best interests of your family member.

"My head said no, but my heart just kept saying yes."

Some possible reasons for reconsidering care at home

- ▣ Your own feelings of guilt, grief and a deep sense of loss - these feelings are natural but may make you reconsider your decision.
- ▣ Your family member's feelings or reactions - particularly if they seem unhappy or are pleading to be taken home.
- ▣ Being upset and angry about the realities of residential care - learning that the facility is not a 'home away from home'.
- ▣ Pressure from family or friends to take your family member home - sometimes they don't fully understand the situation.

Some possible risks in care at home

- ▣ The care needed - if the needs of your family member are just too high for care at home, both of you will be at risk.
- ▣ Your own health and ability to care - take an honest look at this.
- ▣ The family support available - is this realistic and sustainable?
- ▣ The home environment - look for solutions to any safety risks. You may need to purchase aides and equipment.
- ▣ The level and availability of services needed - if inadequate, you may need to consider purchasing additional services privately.
- ▣ The risks that were there before - find ways to reduce these.



Before you make a decision, talk through your thoughts and feelings. Contact the [Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre](#) on 1800 242 636* for information and support - ask about the [National Carer Counselling Program](#) which could be very helpful.

*"It's important not to rush the decision.
Carefully think it through before you agree to take them home."*

How to make plans for home

Get family involved

After weighing things up you may feel that the best option is to take your family member home. Share this decision making with your family - get their support. Without this, home may not be possible.

If family choose not to get involved in the decision making it may be a sign that they disagree, are ambivalent or at the very least may withdraw their support. It's better to know sooner than later.

Talk to the GP and the Director of Nursing

Let your family member's GP and the Director of Nursing know about your plans as soon as possible.

Expect that staff may be protective of you and your family member and concerned about your decision. The facility has a 'duty of care' to residents which also applies to those leaving the facility. The Director of Nursing must ensure that your family member will not be at risk and will receive adequate care.

Phone the Aged Care Assessment Service (ACAS)

Contact the [local Aged Care Assessment Service](#) as soon as possible - phone 1800 500 853 for contact details. Ask for their help in planning for care at home.

ACAS can assess the level of care your family member will need, help you minimise the risks, advise on equipment needs and make referrals to relevant service providers. ACAS will also be honest with you if they believe a return home is unworkable or the risk is too great.

Further information:

- ▣ [Aged Care Assessment](#) - information sheet.
- ▣ [Taking on Caring](#) - information on caring at home.

Contact the [Commonwealth Carer Resource Centre](#) on 1800 242 636* to request the above information sheet 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