



Residential Care

I chose a two-bed room for my mother to share. I thought that the stimulation from having company would outweigh the loss of privacy and independence. The atmosphere was more like a hospital than a home, but the company from my mother's roommate and her extensive family were a boon and a blessing for both of us. When I was unable to visit I knew that she would not be alone, and when I was there I had others to talk to. On Sunday afternoons when there were no organised activities, I would take my picnic thermos and some cakes and we would share our afternoon tea with other residents present in the lounge.

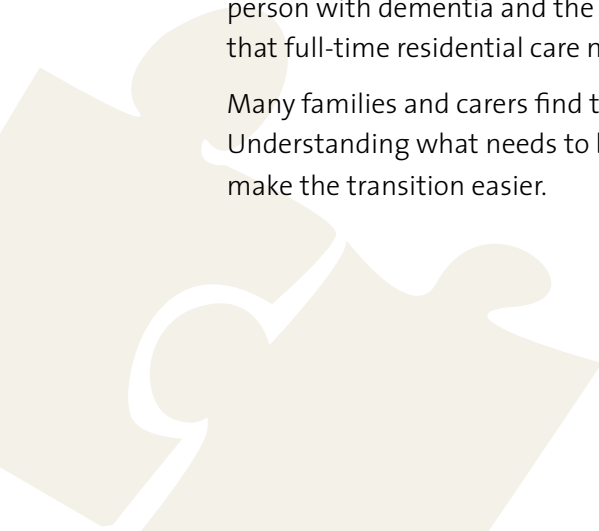
Over the next four years there were many sad moments as my mother's powers of speech, mobility and, ultimately, recognition faded. No one could tell me in advance what to expect because the progressive loss of capabilities is different for each person.

For my mother, it seemed to happen in stages, with shorter and longer plateaus in between. Sunday afternoon drives became Sunday afternoon walks in the garden, and in turn became Sunday afternoons by her bedside.

Residential care

As dementia progresses, caring usually becomes more intensive and the demands on families and carers increase. The health of the person with dementia and the wellbeing of the carer often mean that full-time residential care needs to be considered.

Many families and carers find this a difficult decision to make. Understanding what needs to be done and where to go for help can make the transition easier.



Finding out about residential care

Assessment

An assessment and approval for residential care from an Aged Care Assessment Team (ACAT) is required before you can start looking for residential care. They will help to assess the level of care the person with dementia will need, and provide information about appropriate facilities.

Types of residential facilities

Residential facilities are classified as offering either low level or high level care.

Low level care

These facilities provide assistance with some daily living activities such as eating, dressing, bathing, medication and some nursing.

High level care

These facilities provide 24-hour nursing care.

Some residential facilities provide both low and high level care so that people can stay in the same facility when the level of care they need changes.

Dementia-specific facilities

These facilities have specially trained staff and physical environments that have been designed to meet the needs of people with dementia. Not all people with dementia require a dementia-specific facility. People with special care needs, such as those who may not be accommodated safely in general residential facilities, are best suited to these facilities.

Dementia-specific facilities may provide low or high level care. There are a limited number of dementia-specific facilities, especially in rural areas.



Choosing a residential facility

Most residential facilities have waiting lists. How long you will have to wait for a vacancy varies between facilities. The ACAT will probably suggest you look at a number of facilities.

Take time to consider how each one will meet the needs of the person you are caring for. Decide on what factors are important to you before you go, and take a checklist of questions and a friend or relative with you when you visit each facility. Following is a suggested list of things to consider.

	YES	NO
1. Are the staff friendly and welcoming?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Did the staff receive and answer your questions positively?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Is the overnight staffing arrangements appropriate to the needs of the person with dementia?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Do staff appear to treat residents and their visitors with respect?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Is the facility a comfortable temperature?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Is the facility clean and comfortable?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Is there appropriate lighting and ventilation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Are there secure and interesting outdoor areas?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Are there areas for families to get together?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. Is family involvement encouraged, e.g. sharing of meals, celebrations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. Can family and friends be involved in care?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. Do people in the facility appear relaxed and at home?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. Are specific cultural backgrounds and beliefs respected?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Does the facility observe major commemorative events, e.g. Anzac Day?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15. Are there single rooms available?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16. Will the person have their own bathroom and toilet facilities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17. Does each bedroom give the person some privacy?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18. Do residents have some of their personal, special belongings nearby?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19. Are there provisions for married couples?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20. Are there quiet areas available?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21. Would it be clear to the resident where to go if they needed help?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22. Is the facility equipped to manage specific health concerns, e.g. pain management?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. Is there a residents or relatives committee?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What will it cost?

Residential facilities will be able to provide information about the range of fees and charges. The costs of residential care can be complex, so it is important to gather as much information as possible.

Adjusting to the move

The move into residential care is often very emotional for the person affected by dementia and their family and carers. People with dementia can find change very difficult. Careful planning and sensitive handling of the move can greatly help during this time of transition.

Families and carers may also have mixed feelings as a result of the move including relief, guilt or sadness. Daily activities and responsibilities will also have changed for family members and carers who carried most of the caring role.

Individuals need to find their own level of comfort in terms of caring for a relative or friend once they have moved into residential care. There are no rules to say how much anyone must be involved – it's a personal choice.