



## RESIDENTIAL CARE FOR PEOPLE WITH DEMENTIA

If you are a person with dementia or are involved in caring for someone with dementia there may come a time when you need to consider a move to long-term residential care. This information sheet explains briefly what is involved in planning for and managing such a move. For more detailed information on the topics in this information sheet see the *Alzheimers New Zealand booklet on residential care for people with dementia* which is available from your local Alzheimers organisation.

### Checklist

Some things you might want to look for in residential care facilities are:

- Do staff have an understanding of and specialised training in caring for people with dementia?
- When you visit, are staff accessible and are they interacting with residents?
- Are the surroundings comfortable, easy to move around, and safe?
- Do they offer residents a range of appropriate, meaningful activities and outings?
- Are management open to carers being involved in decisions and ongoing care planning?
- How is challenging behaviour managed?
- What policies and processes does the facility have in place to eliminate or modify restraint?
- Can the facility cater for the person with dementia's changing care needs over time?
- Contact your local Alzheimers organisation for a more detailed checklist.

### Considering long-term residential care

There is no one 'right' time to make a decision about residential care. It may be something that you have been thinking about and planning for a while or it may be a decision that has to be made quickly. Either way, this is likely to be a very difficult process and not one that you generally plan for or expect to have to go through.

There are sure to be all sorts of emotions for you all –

the person moving into a home or hospital, the carers, and family – so finding someone to support and assist you at this time can be helpful.

In thinking about this option it is important to remember that a person with dementia has the right to be cared for in a safe, protective environment. Even with help from friends and family, and other support services, there may come a time when care in the person's own home is not best for either the person or any family carer. Residential care may then be an appropriate alternative. This does not mean the carer must relinquish their role entirely. Instead it allows for the carer to care for a person with dementia in partnership with professionals.

### How to arrange long-term residential care

The first step in getting into long-term residential care is for the person with dementia to be assessed by someone from your local needs assessment service. You may already have had contact with this service in organising support in your home. You can contact this service directly (details are available through your local hospital), or your GP or someone from your local Alzheimers organisation can refer you. If the person with dementia is in hospital, staff there will arrange the assessment. A specialist (psychogeriatrician or geriatrician) may be involved in the assessment process if a person has specific care needs relating to their dementia.

If the needs of the person with dementia are such that they can no longer be supported to live safely at home, then you will be advised which type of residential care facility is most appropriate. There are four types of facility:

- Rest homes
- Dementia units
- Long-term care hospitals
- Specialist long-term care (psychogeriatric) hospitals

A person with dementia may move initially into any one of these types of facility, depending on their individual needs and required level of care. If their condition then changes, a new assessment may be required to determine what type of facility is now appropriate. This can be organised either by the family or with the help of staff at the home or hospital.

## Choosing a suitable facility

Once you know what type of residential care best suits a person's needs, you will need to choose the facility. It can be helpful for all concerned to be involved in this choice as this can aid the settling in process later on.

It may be that there is only one suitable facility in your area, or the facility of choice is full at the time of the initial decision. A person with dementia can move to another facility when space becomes available and so you may wish to have their name put on the preferred facility's waiting list. If you do have a choice, then it is best to visit the different facilities to see which one suits best. Visit at different times of the day, and go unannounced. It can also be helpful to talk to people who work in this area (your local Alzheimers organisation, your GP, or staff at the needs assessment service) and these people can help you get lists of the facilities available in your area.

## Financial and legal considerations

If a person with dementia is assessed as needing ongoing, long-term residential care in a rest home or hospital they may be eligible for financial help from the government (Residential Care subsidy) to cover some of the costs of care.

If you want to know more about the financial help the government provides for residential care then you should get a copy of the Ministry of Health booklet Long Term Residential Care for Older People - What you need to know June 2010 ( [www.moh.govt.nz](http://www.moh.govt.nz) ). This can be obtained from your local Alzheimers organisation.

It is important to read the residential care facility's Admission Agreement carefully as it sets out what extras you will need to provide or pay for.

It is also important to be aware of the legal issues relating to the move (e.g. The Protection of Personal and Property Rights Act, Enduring Power of Attorney, the role of welfare guardians and property managers) and you may want to seek legal advice.

## Making the transition

The move is a big step and is likely to be difficult and emotional for all concerned. Many people with dementia

and their carers feel a tremendous sense of loss and separation after such a move and feel that they are now deprived of their roles and responsibilities to each other. Many carers also feel that there is a now huge gap in their own life. You may want to think about who might be able to offer support, both on the day of the move and while you all adjust to the change.

## Caring partnerships

Staff at the residential facility will be better able to provide what a person with dementia needs if they know what they are used to. You will need to inform them about likes and dislikes, food preferences, dressing habits, daily routines, interests, family situation, and any other important factors.

There should be the opportunity to be involved in developing and reviewing a care plan for the person with dementia. Many carers also choose to stay connected by visiting or by being involved in some practical parts of caring, such as meal times, or social activities.

## Rights and responsibilities

Residential care facilities must meet the requirements of the Health and Disability Services (Safety) Act and be certified. There are also additional voluntary Standards for Residential Care for People with Dementia. You should be given a Code of Patient Rights when you sign the Admission Agreement and this will also be displayed for residents and families to refer to at any time.

If there are aspects of the care you are not happy with, or other difficulties, try and resolve these by talking to the staff member concerned or the person in charge of the home or hospital first. All facilities have complaints procedures which you should be informed about on admission. If you do not get the help you want after talking to the staff, contact your local Alzheimers organisation, local health advocate, Age Concern, or the Health and Disability Commissioner.

For more information contact your local Alzheimers organisation. Freephone 0800 004 001

The Seniorline Service, run by the Ministry of Health, can also provide you with additional information. Freephone 0800 725 463 [www.adhb.govt.nz/rcline](http://www.adhb.govt.nz/rcline)

*Alzheimers New Zealand has a range of information sheets and booklets available for people with dementia, their carers, families and whānau. Alzheimers member organisations located throughout New Zealand provide a variety of services and support to all people affected by dementia. Contact your local organisation on freephone 0800 004 001.*

*This information sheet provides a general summary only of the subject matter covered and is not a substitute for informed professional advice. Any person with dementia or their carer or family/whānau should seek professional advice about any individual case. Alzheimers New Zealand is not be liable for any error or omission in this publication, as a result of negligence or otherwise. This information sheet was produced in March 2010.*

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