



## RESIDENTIAL CARE CHECKLIST

Although many people with dementia live successfully in their own home, at some stage they may need more care and moving into a residential facility can offer this. Once you know what type of residential care best suits a person with dementia's unique requirements you will need to choose an appropriate facility.

Try to visit as many facilities as possible before making your decision so that you can compare the many options available and the care being offered. Take your time to look around, talk to staff and residents, and don't be afraid to ask questions. You might find it helpful to make up your own checklist of things to look out for and to ask about.

Information about planning for and managing a move into residential care for a person with dementia can be found in the *Residential Care for People with Dementia* brochure or the detailed booklet on *Residential Care for People with Dementia*, both of which are produced by Alzheimers New Zealand and available from your local Alzheimers organisation.

This checklist is a guide to give you an idea of what to look out for when viewing and comparing residential care facilities. You will probably not be able to check all areas of this list and some will be more important to you than others. Selecting a residential care facility is an important decision. Make sure you allow plenty of time to view each facility and consider your decision.

### Questions to ask and things to look for when viewing a facility

#### STAFF

- For rest homes, how many hours per week is a registered nurse on duty, and when?
- How often does the rest home use agency staff?
- Do staff have an understanding of and specialised training in caring for people with dementia?
- Are staff qualified or are they untrained care assistants? If they are qualified, what are their qualifications?
- How many staff are on duty during the day and at night?
- Do the staff seem friendly, caring, and approachable?



- How do staff respond to residents? Do staff treat residents as individuals and know about their backgrounds and interests?

#### CARE

- How do management involve family / whanau in decisions and ongoing care planning, such as writing the care plan and reviews?
- What is the policy for communication between carers / family members and staff? How are relatives kept informed?
- How would staff deal with a situation/behaviour that bothers the carer?
- Is there flexibility with routine? For example, can a resident have a day in bed or can they get up later, if that is their wish?
- How are challenging behaviours managed?

- What policies and processes does the facility have in place to eliminate or modify restraint?
- Is the facility able to cope with a person's changing care needs or will the person have to move if they develop problems such as incontinence or challenging behaviour?

### OWNERSHIP / MANAGEMENT

- Who owns the facility?
- If the manager is not the owner, what input does the owner have in the day-to-day running of the home?
- Does the manager have a special knowledge of dementia?
- Does the manager seem tolerant and caring as well as efficient and capable and is he or she friendly and considerate to staff and residents?
- Does the manager openly answer your questions and does he or she understand your worries?
- Are they interested in the residents as individuals and do they try to meet their particular needs?
- Does the home have a carers' group or regular relatives' meeting with senior staff?

### LOCATION

- Is it convenient for carers and visitors to get to the facility?
- If the person enjoys going out, are there shops or a park nearby?
- Is there a safe attractive outdoor area?
- Can residents easily go out for fresh air?
- Is the setting pleasant?

### FIRST IMPRESSIONS

- Are you greeted in a warm and friendly way when you arrive?
- Is the atmosphere homely and welcoming?
- When you visit, are staff accessible and are they interacting with residents?
- How many lounges / living areas are there? Is there a choice?
- Is it clean and pleasantly decorated and furnished?
- Is there an up-to-date calendar? Is the time on the clock correct? Are there other features to aid orientation?
- Are the residents well presented; appropriately dressed in clean well cared for clothing?

### ACCESS

- Are the surroundings safe, comfortable, and easy to move around in for a person with dementia?
- Are the corridors wide enough for a walking frame or wheelchair?
- Are baths and toilets suitably adapted?
- Are there ramps or lifts?

### ADMISSION

- Do they offer to compile a detailed list of the person's habits and preferences or will you have to insist on this yourself?
- Will there be a member of staff who is particularly responsible for the person?
- How does the facility welcome new residents and help them settle in?
- Do you think that you will be able to talk to staff about your own feelings and anxieties?
- Does the facility offer day care or temporary stays so that the person can get used to the situation before moving in?
- Is there a waiting list?
- Is there a review of the placement after the first few weeks so that everyone can discuss how the person with dementia has settled in, what has been achieved and what problems have arisen?

### BEDROOMS AND PRIVACY

- Can the person have a single room?
- Can residents bring some of their own furniture and possessions?
- Are the bedrooms bright and pleasant, with room for an armchair and storage space?
- Can residents go to their room when they want to be alone and do staff and other residents respect the need for privacy and always knock on bedroom doors?
- Is there noise or disturbance from other nearby rooms?
- If in future your fees were paid by subsidy, would you have to change bedrooms?
- Can the manager move a person to another room? A change in health status may mean it would be better for them to be closer to the nurses station or dining room.

## PERSONAL POSSESSIONS

- Does the laundry system make sure that clothes don't get lost or returned to the wrong person? How does the home make sure no-one ends up wearing someone else's clothes?
- How does the facility assist residents to keep their personal effects safe?

## BATHROOMS

- Does the bedroom have an ensuite? If not, how close are the shower and bath facilities to the bedrooms?
- Can residents have assisted showers every day?
- Are there enough toilets in easy reach of the bedroom and living area?

## MEALS

- Ask the residents about the food. Do residents enjoy their meals? Ask to see a menu.
- Does the home take into account residents' likes and dislikes and cater for special diets?
- What times are the meals? Is there any choice at meal times?
- Can residents choose to eat at different times or in their rooms?
- Is food available at all times of the day and night?
- Are there any cooking facilities for the residents, such as snack-making facilities?
- Are residents supervised and/or fed if they have problems feeding themselves?

## ACTIVITIES

- Do they employ someone to organise activities? If so, how many hours per week and what times, days?
- What qualifications do they have?
- What training have they had in dementia care?
- Are outings and outdoor activities arranged and how often can each resident go? Is there an additional cost for outings or activities?
- Are there games and activities designed for people with dementia?
- Do people come in from the community to visit, to help with activities or entertain?
- Are residents encouraged to get involved with day-to-day life in the home, for example, with household chores or meal preparation?
- Are residents encouraged to do as much for themselves as they can?

- Is there a notice board for events? Try to see the programme of events for the last month too, to see how much variety there is.

## CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL

- If a person with dementia has a different background or culture to most of the other residents, do staff seem interested in and respectful of differences such as diet, religious observance, hygiene practices, clothing and ways of relating to other people?
- How are the spiritual needs of individuals catered for?

## HEALTH

- What happens if the person is unwell?
- Which doctor visits, how often, and is there a choice?
- What arrangements are made about medication?
- Is there noise or disturbance from other nearby rooms?
- If in future your fees were paid by subsidy, would you have to change bedrooms?
- Can the manager move a person to another room? A change in health status may mean it would be better for them to be closer to the nurses station or dining room.

## VISITORS

- Are visitors / children welcome at any time?
- Are there limits on the number of visitors at any time?
- Can visitors join a resident for a meal or make snacks?
- Are visitors able to take the resident out if they want to?

## FEES

- Does the facility have a contract with the District Health Board (and therefore accepts subsidised residents)?
- What is included in the weekly charge and what will be required to be paid for separately?
- If you are not receiving the Residential Care Subsidy, are medical costs covered by the fee?

For example:  
GP / Specialists  
Prescriptions  
Continence products

