

How to choose a residential care facility

ELDER CARE

1. THE GP

Every facility will have a GP attached to it. You need to know whether your care will need to be transferred to this GP or whether you can continue to see your own GP. Depending on the facility, the GP can sometimes visit once per week, which can create difficulty for those wanting consistent communication with the GP.

Questions to ask

- Who is the GP and how often do they visit?
- Can you keep your own GP?
- How can your relatives communicate with the GP if required?

2. DIET

It is important to visit during a meal time. This will allow you time to assess the food that is provided, as well as the interaction between the staff and residents, and even the residents themselves. Doing so will help you gauge the social dynamic of the facility, and help identify whether it is appropriate for you. At this time, it will also allow you to question what type of diets the facility is able to cater to.

Questions to ask

- Are your relatives able to come for lunch?
- Are the residents able to have meals in their rooms?
- What time are meals usually served?
- Do they cater to your diet requirements?

3. THE MANAGER

Generally, it is the manager who sets the culture of the facility. Their foundation of hierarchy with the staff will affect the feeling of the facility, as it will mean the staff will have adequate knowledge of the events and how the facility operates. This will also demonstrate the staff's competency for the manager to trust the staff with such responsibility.

Questions to ask

- What is the manager's care philosophy for the facility?
- What is the communication pathway if your relatives want information about you?
- How much about the day is the manager aware of?
- Can you be visited at any time of the day?

4. OUTDOOR SPACE

One of the most important aspects of the layout is the ease with which people are able to access outdoor facilities. Outdoor activities have been known to be beneficial for the residents mental and social health, and should be highly encouraged in aged residential care facilities.

Questions to ask

- How accessible is getting outside for those with lowered mobility.
- What support does the facility provide for those who wish to go outside, but cannot mobilize sufficiently?

5. ACTIVITIES AND OUTINGS

In many facilities, activities often occur throughout the week, and are placed in the common spaces of the facility. Meaningful activities have been proven to improve quality of life.

Questions to ask

- What activities are offered to the residents?
- Is there a variety of activities?
- How accessible are these activities?
- Are the activities open to all residents with various types of mobility?

6. COMMUNICATION

As you may be living away from your family, it may become difficult for your family to visit daily. Therefore, it is important for the facility you choose to prioritize communication with your family about your overall wellbeing.

Questions to ask

- What is the best way for your family to communicate with the facility?
- How often will your family get an update?

7. LAYOUT & ROOM SIZE

The size and accessibility of the facility is critical for your living environment. Be sure that activities are centralized or easily accessible to you in your current state and in the future. Understand what is important to you when inquiring about your room. Do you value having more space? A view? A central and social locality?

Questions to ask

- What is the price of the room that you or your relative will have?
- What furniture can be brought into the room?
- Are pets allowed?
- Are there any private areas where you can sit down and enjoy a cup of tea?

8. THE CARE STAFF

Often your first appointment is with the clinical nurse manager or the registered nurse (RN) on duty that day, who will orientate you around the facility. It is important to assess the number of RNs to staff, and how they structure their time appropriately to complete their tasks, whilst still being able to build rapport with the other residents.

Questions to ask

- Are the residents happy?
- What is the staff to resident ratio?
- Is there a regular set of staff per shift?

9. FACILITY VALUES

It is important to understand the philosophy of the facility and what they value most.

Questions to ask

- Do they value wellbeing and autonomy? Or is their priority more focused on ensuring the life of resident?

10. AVAILABILITY

With the aging population, there is a higher demand for rooms in aged care facilities. It is important to ensure you can be accommodated within the facility, where you are able to receive adequate support and assistance that you require

ABOUT US:

TE ARAI PALLIATIVE CARE AND END OF LIFE RESEARCH GROUP

We are a research group, primarily based out of the University of Auckland. We specialize in research regarding the elderly population and how various factors can influence their health outcome.

Te Arai aims to conduct multi-disciplinary bi-cultural research that informs practice and policy in palliative and end of life care both nationally and internationally.

You can reach us via our website: tearairesearchgroup.org

This flyer is an outcome of research undertaken for the ELDER Project. For more information about ELDER, contact Associate Professor Michal Boyd: [m.boyd\[at\]symbol\[auckland.ac.nz](mailto:m.boyd[at]symbol[auckland.ac.nz)