

Residential care

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When your loved one goes through a period of ill health, it can often lead to discussions surrounding whether they should go into long term residential care.

Sometimes this can be due to the extent to which their Parkinson's has progressed, or it can be because of a lack of community health or other family support. This situation is very common although it may feel like an overwhelming and difficult decision to make.

Discuss the options with your family and seek guidance from health professionals, particularly ones who know your loved one. If your loved one's needs are beyond what you can give, do look at residential care facilities with an open mind. Many people are happy living somewhere that meets all their daily needs and offers social, emotional and medical support.

RESIDENTIAL CARE – THINGS TO THINK ABOUT:

1. How is residential care provided?

Residential care includes the following types of long term care: rest home care, long term care, hospital care, dementia care and psychogeriatric care. Residential care does not include independent living in a retirement village. Some care facilities provide all the levels of care and some do not. In most cases the cost of care to the person is subsidised by government funding known as the Residential Care Subsidy.

2. What determines whether you can move into residential care?

To enter government-subsidised residential care, your loved one must have a needs assessment from a Needs Assessment and Services Coordination agency (NASC). They are likely to be eligible for residential care if they have 'high' or 'very high' needs which are indefinite. For more information about needs assessments contact your local NASC.

3. What government funding is available to help with costs?

If a needs assessment shows long-term residential care is needed, the needs assessor will explain how to apply for the Residential Care Subsidy. Government helps to fund the cost of care through the subsidy. It is means tested and depends on the level of your loved one's assets and income.

If the financial means assessment shows that their assets are below the defined asset threshold, they will qualify for government funding through the Residential Care Subsidy. Work and Income will then assess your loved one's income and tell them how much of this they need to pay towards

the cost of their care. This will include most of their New Zealand Superannuation and also any other income they receive.

For more information about the Residential Care Subsidy and to find out if your loved one might qualify, contact the Work and Income Residential Subsidy Unit on 0800 999 727.

If your loved one doesn't qualify for the subsidy, they will have to pay the cost of the care facility up to the maximum contribution for their area. They may qualify for a residential care loan. They can apply for this through Work and Income. They can also ask for a review of their means test at any time if they think they might have become eligible for the subsidy.

4. What can I do to find a care facility that suits my loved one?

You can get a list of care facilities in your area from the District Health Board, the Needs Assessment and Service Coordination agency, or your local Age Concern.

Start looking as soon as you think a care facility may be needed. Many care facilities now have their own websites, so you can view before visiting. It's a good idea to visit the care facilities and compare them. When your loved one finds a care facility they like, ask to have their name put on the waiting list. You can do this even they have not yet been assessed as needing care. If there is no vacancy at their first choice and they have to move into another care facility instead, ask to transfer to the care facility they prefer when a suitable place is available.

More detailed information about the steps to take to access long term residential care can be found in the Ministry of Health's booklet about long term care for older people. The booklet is called *Long-term Residential Care for Older People—What you need to know*. It can be downloaded from the Ministry of Health's website www.health.govt.nz.

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