



Plan ahead for the aged care you want

Early planning can take away a lot of the stress and uncertainty that can arise when considering aged care at home or a residential aged care facility.

Know what your options are

The first option that probably comes to mind is a residential aged care facility. These facilities provide accommodation and care depending on your personal needs. Care can range from personal care, such as help with showering and dressing, together with occasional nursing care to continuous nursing care for those with a greater degree of frailty.

What you may not realise, however, is that there are also Home Care Packages that provide access to services that can help you to stay at home for as long as possible. Support services may include cleaning, meal preparation and transport for shopping or appointments.

Start planning early

There are a number of reasons why you should plan ahead and well before the need for aged care is imminent. For example:

- in many cases, the need to move into residential care can be sudden due to a serious illness or injury (eg a stroke, heart attack, or fall), or another unexpected event
- it's not uncommon to find there are significant waitlists for residential care, particularly at the more popular facilities, and
- regardless of whether home or residential aged care is required, if you wait until the last minute to speak to a financial adviser, you may not be able to minimise the fees you may have to pay and/or maximise the social security benefits you may receive.

Visit local facilities

Whether you currently need residential aged care or not, ideally you should plan to visit a range of facilities in your chosen area as soon as possible and, you may prefer to do this with family members.

Becoming familiar with the alternatives can enable you and your family to have meaningful conversations regarding your options and make more informed lifestyle and financial decisions.

Importantly, with assistance from a financial adviser, you can:

- determine whether care in your preferred facility is affordable, and
- potentially start restructuring your assets to improve your financial position.

Assess affordability

A range of fees may be payable when accessing care services. One of the key payments when moving into residential care is the accommodation payment. This payment:

- is subject to certain limits
- can be paid as a lump sum, in regular instalments, or a combination of a lump sum and regular instalments, and
- is published on the facilities website and at myagedcare.gov.au for potential residents to consider.

The published amount will vary between facilities and, as a general rule, it will be higher for newer places because of the money recently outlaid on building or improving the accommodation, and for facilities in more affluent suburbs.

It's therefore important to ensure you will have sufficient assets to pay the accommodation payment required to secure yourself a spot in your facility of choice when the time comes, as well as cover the ongoing aged care fees and your living expenses.

Understand the trade-off

There are a range of strategies that can be used to reduce aged care fees. However, caution needs to be exercised to ensure you have enough money to afford the care you'd want. A financial adviser can help you to address this complex issue. They can also assist in many other ways. This includes helping to address your estate planning needs, in conjunction with your lawyer.

To find out more about the information in this article contact Belinda Tink at Foundation Wealth Planners on 02 6813 0977.

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