

'Nobody knows
my needs better
than me.'

Gwenda



Self-advocacy toolkit

This booklet equips you with the information and resources you need to speak up for better aged care.

A guide to self-advocacy

What you need to know for better aged care



Self-advocacy puts you in the driver's seat. It is the ability to speak up for yourself on issues that are important to you.

You might want to speak up when you:

- are finding it difficult to access aged care services
- have a concern about your aged care services
- don't feel like your aged care services are meeting your needs
- want to make a complaint.

The Self-advocacy toolkit provides some practical tools to help you get started.

It contains a step-by-step guide to making yourself heard and checklists to help you speak up for better in home and residential care.

This booklet also covers your aged care options when leaving hospital and tips for making an effective complaint.

When something is not right, or not working for you, it's okay to speak up.

Older people receiving government-funded aged care – either in their own home or in an aged care home – have rights.

Enshrined in the *The Charter of Aged Care Rights*, for example, is your right to safe and high-quality services and your right to be treated with dignity and respect.

The Charter also supports your right to speak up and:

- have control over, and make decisions about, the personal aspects of your daily life
- be listened to and understood
- complain free from reprisal
- and have your complaints dealt with fairly and promptly.

Professional aged care advocates frequently use their knowledge of the Charter to support better outcomes and you can too.

Self-advocacy in action

Lorraine's husband, Ron, lives with dementia. When he first went into residential care in regional NSW, she had concerns about the quality of care.

'He was locked out in the garden one time I went to visit him – it was the middle of winter.

'The manager used to say; "Now, now Lorraine, this is what happens. You are not coping".'

Lorraine was hesitant about raising her concerns.

But after learning about her rights, Lorraine has become a powerful advocate for herself and Ron.

'You still have to watch out for them. I don't want to be difficult. But I do want Ron's rights to be heard.'



If at any stage you run into problems, or you just need to talk things over, our professional aged care advocates are here for support. Scan the QR code or chat to us **1800 700 600**.



Step one: What is the problem?

There can be many parts to a problem. Make a list of your issues before you make a phone call or go to a meeting. Being clear in your mind will help get results.

Step two: Know your rights

Knowing what you can reasonably expect from your aged care service provider is key. Familiarise yourself with the *Charter of Aged Care Rights* and the *Aged Care Quality and Safety Standards*.

Ask yourself:

- What are my rights in relation to this particular issue?
- What do the Aged Care Quality and Safety Standards say?
- Are there any program manuals I can read to identify what my provider's responsibilities are?
- What does my service agreement say and does it provide information on the process of making a complaint to my provider?

Step three: What would you like to happen?

After making a list of issues, think about what you would like to achieve? Being clear about what you would like to happen will keep everyone focussed on finding a solution.

- Work out what is most important to you and the outcomes you are not willing to compromise on.
- There might be a quick fix for some issues where others will take longer to solve.

Step four: Make a phone call

Talk to someone who can make changes and work with you towards fixing the problem.

You should ask for the Manager or someone who handles complaints.

Step five: Hold a meeting

Sometimes you need to meet face to face. It might not be a problem that can be fixed over the phone, or perhaps more time is needed to understand and work through the problem.

Step six: Keep check

If the changes or actions, you have agreed to have not been done you will need to follow up. Call again and explain that you are not happy with the progress. Ask for an update or if you can speak with someone higher about the issue.

If you are not seeing the changes you expect to see, you may wish to consider making a formal complaint to the Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission.



Checklist 1

Speaking up for better home care

How do YOU want your care delivered?



There are prompts below to help you identify the things that are important to you. When you are talking to a prospective or current **home care provider**, be sure to make your preferences clear. It's okay to speak up.

What is important to me about how the service is delivered?

(For example: I like to sleep until at least 9am, someone of the same sex to support me with showering, respect for my cultural needs.)

What do I need from the service?

(For example: Someone to remind me to take my medication, help with cleaning and washing, or help with groceries and food preparation.)

What else would I like to know?

(For example: Will the same support worker come each time? What happens if my care needs change? What are the fees and costs? What does my monthly statement look like?)

What should I do if I'm not happy with my current care?

- call the manager or complaints team
- tell them what you want to fix the problem
- ask about next steps and when changes will be made
- speak with our advocates who can provide further information or advocacy support.



Visit our toolkit online for resources on home care costs, scan the QR code or visit: open.org.au/toolkit or chat to us **1800 700 600**.

Checklist 2

Speaking up for better residential care

How do YOU want your care delivered?



There are prompts below to help you identify the things that are important to you. When you are talking to a prospective or current **residential care home**, be sure to make your preferences clear. It's okay to speak up.

What is important to me about how the service is delivered?

(For example: Food that I enjoy and that is suitable to my needs and culture, to be able to wake up when I choose, a person of the same sex to support me to shower.)

What do I need from the service?

(For example: Safe and high-quality clinical care, a phone in my room and flexible visiting options so I can remain connected to my friends and community, access to my own GP and other services e.g. physiotherapists, dentists.)

What else would I like to know?

(For example: What fees am I expected to pay? Can my family visit whenever they want? What happens if my care needs change?)

What should I do if I'm not happy with my current service?

- call the manager or complaints team
- tell them what you want to fix the problem
- ask about next steps and when changes will be made
- speak with our advocates who can provide further information or advocacy support.

Visit our toolkit online for resources on residential care costs, scan the QR code or visit: open.org.au/toolkit or chat to us **1800 700 600**.



Checklist 3

Leaving hospital

What are my aged care options?



Older people often feel pressured into moving into residential care but there are other options you can explore after an unexpected admission to hospital. It's okay to take your time and to explore all your options.

Here's a list of questions that you can ask that will help you to make an informed decision.

Ask the hospital social worker

Is **transition care** an option – how long would I need to wait to access?

Will my private health insurance cover **rehabilitation**?

What other services are provided by the state or territory **health service** e.g. hospital at home?

Ask your service provider/My Aged Care

Is there a **surplus** in my package that could be used for additional care hours or can I pay for additional services to top up my package?

If I have a home care package can I access an **urgent assessment** for a higher level of care e.g. level 2 to level 4 package?

What are my **options** when short-term post hospital care ceases?

Our advocates can provide further information about your aged care options when leaving hospital. Chat to us **1800 700 600**.

If at any stage you run into problems, or you just need to talk things over, our professional aged care advocates are here for support.

Chat to us **1800 700 600** or scan the QR code.



OPAN member organisations by state or territory:



Supported by funding from the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care