

Practical and Pastoral Responses to Social Care

Navigating 'care' for someone can be very difficult from the perspective of that person's view of others caring for them, through to the steps in having a 'care package' in place. Here are some simple guidelines that may help you support others in your corps/centres and community.

What to do if...?

...I have a concern for someone who is struggling to look after themselves?

...I have relatives of an older person searching for a care home?

...someone is in hospital, but it is evident they cannot take care of themselves at home?

Supporting a Person with Issues Around Self-care

This can be very difficult, and the main thing to remember is not the presenting problem but person-centred care. There are no quick fixes, but support where needed can be invaluable.

- Firstly, plan to have a conversation with the person about your concerns for them. If you feel you aren't the right person to do this, find someone whom the person trusts to discuss these concerns.
- Remember that the person always has choice (unless they are a risk to themselves or others). Be prepared to go on a 'journey' with them as this can take some time.
- Before speaking, choose an appropriate time – remember anniversaries or birthdays of loved ones no longer present will be difficult. Ensure enough time is given to have a gentle and respectful conversation.
- Ask if they feel they could do with some practical help to cope with their day-to-day living.
- If you need further support, you could consider speaking to the social services in your local authority. It may be that a 'needs assessment' can be completed to assess a person's social care needs. To find your local authority social services department visit: www.gov.uk and enter your postcode.
- If someone is identified as requiring care, a financial assessment for social care will take place to decide whether a contribution towards the cost of care from the person will be required.

In the absence of family, church members/leaders may need to offer support to an older person requiring care. Whilst we have no legal or formal input on decisions about care (unless someone has been appointed as a Lasting Power of Attorney for Health and Wellbeing for an individual), older people may need and appreciate both practical and pastoral support. This can be a challenging process, so find someone they trust and approach the subject gently and sensitively.

The Search for a Care Home

The following may be helpful in supporting someone and their relatives in choosing an appropriate care home:

- Understand the needs of the person in terms of care and support.
- Consider where they would choose to live – at home / locally / close to family and friends.
- Before making a decision, consider if the care can be provided at home.
- Could they consider respite and a short-term solution rather than full-time?
- Make a list of suitable care homes.
- Read the UK Care Quality Commission inspection reports – www.cqc.org.uk
 - The Care Inspectorate for Scotland – www.careinspectorate.com
 - The Regulation and Quality Improvement (RQIA) for Northern Ireland.
- Contact the care homes – to discuss the type of care they provide, fees and vacancies.
- Visit the care homes with the individual – meet residents and staff.
- Consider the areas offered: dining room, garden, communal spaces, mobility – eg lift access, corridors etc.
- Ask about social activities and spiritual care, and links available with local churches.
- Ask to see recommendations from relatives and those living in the care home.
- Check reviews by visiting www.carehome.co.uk or contact olderpeopleservices@salvationarmy.org.uk for Salvation Army care home information and reviews.

Choosing a care home can be very difficult both from the perspective of the older person and the family.

The person may feel a loss of identity and disempowerment. It is important to remember that an older person's mental health can be impacted with transitions in life, of which moving into care is potentially one of the biggest. Ensure that members of the church family are aware when a move has been made, and with the agreement of the person ensure visits to keep links with the church are put firmly in place. The family may have feelings of guilt surrounding their inability to care for their loved one at home, so any pastoral and practical help you can give to support them at this time of transition will be invaluable.




From Hospital to Home, Care and Beyond

Navigating care needs after a hospital stay can be stressful for the friends or family of an older person. Concern for the vulnerability of a person if placed back within their home without a care package, or back into the care of a spouse who is also ageing and has their own care needs, can be very distressing.

Here are things to consider, both with the older person getting ready to leave the hospital and with their family, as well as ways to offer support with good and wise decision-making for their care and wellbeing:

- When speaking with hospital nursing staff, be aware that different people come and go due to changing shift patterns. Speak with the ward manager to ensure that the correct processes are in place in consideration of care. Ask to speak to one key person throughout the process if possible.
- Having a care package in place before discharge from hospital is imperative as it ensures that there are no gaps of care from hospital to home.
- Consider what care would be necessary, whether that is care in the person's home (generally up to four times a day to help with personal care, preparing food, medication, dressing etc) or whether the person's own home is no longer the safest place for that person.
- What are the needs of an ageing carer who is waiting for their loved one to return? Are they themselves being put in a vulnerable position if they receive the person out of hospital into their care? The healthcare professionals need to be aware of any vulnerability of the person in question and others around them.



Supporting an older person and their family practically in ensuring that a care plan is in place before discharge can help reduce the vulnerability of a person.

If it is felt that a person is going to be discharged before the correct care plan is in place, speak to the discharge nurse urgently and contact the hospital's Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) or the Charity POhWER (www.pohwer.net) who can provide help with NHS health complaints.

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