



PRINCIPLES FOR SUPPORTING YOUNGER PEOPLE IN RESIDENTIAL AGED CARE

JULY 2018

This guide is for staff working in residential aged care, who have residents aged under 65 with complex support needs. While it is widely acknowledged that residential aged care services are not oriented to cater to the needs of younger people with disability, the reality is that due to a lack of suitable accommodation and support services, younger people continue to be assessed and referred to residential aged care.

We have based this guide on our own experiences of working with people aged under 65 with complex support needs, as well as key legislation and principles that provide a valuable practice framework, including:

- **Aged Care Act (1997)**
- **National Disability Insurance Act (2013)**
- **Aged Care Sector Statement of Principles (2015)**
- **National Guiding Principles for the Referral and Assessment of Younger People with Disability (2008)**

What is the NDIS?

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) is the system for the Australian Government to provide support and funding for people with a disability.

The NDIS provides funding for equipment and supports that are individualised to the younger person living in residential aged care. The NDIS aims to enable people to achieve their goals and maintain their connections with family and friends and their community.

How does NDIS funding differ from MyAgedCare funding?

The Australian Government is the primary source of funding for residential aged care facilities to provide care to older Australians. The funding that the aged care facility receives is based on immediate care needs, recognising that the ageing process is time limited and generally involves a decline in a person's capacity for self-care.

In contrast, the NDIS takes a long-term view, acknowledging the unique needs of each person and providing funding for supports to build a person's capacity for social and economic participation. For a younger person in residential aged care, NDIS funding can contribute to the improvement and/or maintenance of their skills, connections with family and other relationships, and affordable, accessible housing. It can also fund activity linked to earning an independent income, such as studying or support to re-engage with work. NDIS funding focuses on each person's goals and facilitating their achievement.

This contrast in funding approach is reflective of the different needs of people in various stages of their life.

How is caring for a younger person similar to caring for an older person?

Quality standards

The disability and the aged care sectors each have quality standards that guide the delivery of services by providers. All residents in residential aged care are covered by the Commonwealth Aged Care Act 1997 and all aged care facilities are accountable to accreditation standards which encompass areas such as health and personal care, resident lifestyle, living environment, continuous improvement and safety and security. Any services purchased using a younger resident's NDIS funding are covered by the NDIS Act 2013.

This means that in addition to the aged care quality standards, the principles of the NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Framework apply to services funded through the person's NDIS plan. The NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Framework details the key considerations in engaging people with disability in the NDIS, which include the right to dignity and respect; to live free from abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation; and to participation and full inclusion in the community.

Person-centred care

Services to both younger and older people focus on the person and their unique needs, considering physical, social and emotional, psychological and spiritual aspects of care. A person-centred approach that places the resident at the centre of their care and decision-making will enable the best outcome for a person of any age.

Working in partnership

An interdisciplinary approach involving a range of people is essential for both older and younger people in residential aged care. To meet a person's needs, it is important to consider the resident's perspective and that of their family/friends or other representative, as well as professionals such as the resident's doctor, specialists, allied health professionals and other staff who might know the resident and offer some insights into their personality, preferences and challenges.

Involving various people in the development and implementation of care plans ensures that aged care staff are adequately supported to provide quality care. Regular communication between these different groups is important to achieve the best quality of life for all residents.

How is caring for younger people different?

Rehabilitative approach

The majority of young people in residential aged care have diverse and complex support needs that require a rehabilitative approach to their support, allowing them to recover capacities that may have been lost. It is critical to provide access to specialists with in-depth knowledge of acquired brain injury and other progressive neurological conditions that commonly cause an admission to residential aged care. This will ensure, to the highest extent, that the person's skills and life roles lost as a consequence of their injury or condition may be re-gained.

Quality of life can be significantly impacted by enhancing a person's remaining skills, strengths and abilities related to their mobility, self-care and communication and using best practices in pain management and wound care. When this is not addressed with the support of specialists, young people often lose skills and their social networks diminish over time, impacting their physical and mental health.

Creating suitable environments

Younger people's lives are generally different to those of older people. Before their admission to residential aged care, a younger person may have been actively involved in employment, study, social connections, relationships and family life, or risk taking. Younger people in residential aged care tend to receive fewer visitors as time passes, losing the opportunity to grow socially with their family and friends, and resulting in isolation and boredom.

An environment that includes features like adaptive equipment and technology for facilitating mobility and communication, and a private space for family and friends to visit is essential. Personalising the environment to reflect a younger person's previous life and interests will stimulate them and provide opportunities to increase their capacity.

Planning for the future

Many younger people in residential aged care do not have social support available to them, and/or are not yet connected to the NDIS. Empowering individuals and their family/support network to take an active role in the individual's long-term care will likely provide opportunities for physical and emotional wellbeing.

Succession planning is a key aspect of this, as the person in residential aged care may outlive their parent/s or partner, which can significantly impact the person's financial capacity and the continuity of their care. A partnership approach to developing a support plan involving a range of people in the person's support network will enable their hopes and aspirations to remain alive beyond the life of their current carers.

Financial impacts of disability

Significant and permanent disability can severely impact workforce engagement and subsequent income, reducing a person's ability to accumulate capital over their lifetime. Younger people in residential aged care often feel uncertain about their future due to limited personal resources. Supporting a person to access NDIS funding may enable them to maintain or improve their skills and overall quality of life.

Things to consider

Connecting staff with younger residents

Some younger people in residential aged care have described the value of matching aged care staff with younger residents. This matching process has involved nominating staff with an interest in working with younger people, who will take on a specialised support role at the facility. This might include regular meetings with the younger person and their family or representative, and receiving additional education in the acquired brain injury or other condition experienced by the younger person. This model can facilitate a higher quality of care and fewer hospital admissions due to enhanced staff understanding of the person and their unique needs. Where possible, consider the knowledge and experience of staff when allocating resources to promote the best outcomes for a younger person.

Holistic documentation

Where medical documentation captures a broad range of care aspects, staff are more likely to have an effective understanding of a younger person's needs over the long term. This provides a clear picture of the person's unique needs and their history, particularly for those people who may not communicate through speech.

Examples of documentation that have helped younger people in residential care include use of photos or video/audio to record stages of their life, development of specific clinical protocols that have potential to avoid hospital admission (for example a 'chest management protocol'); and display of a quick reference guide in a person's room, detailing communication strategies or effective positioning for maximising communication with the person and accommodating pressure care.

Summer Foundation digital stories, such as those from Michele, Kirsten and the Wallsend residential aged care facility describe the experience of a younger person in residential aged care regaining their skills and engaging in life again. Go to: summerfoundation.org.au/documents/digital-stories

Important links

Legislation

Aged Care Act (1997)

The legislative framework for the funding and regulation of aged care in Australia. The Australian Government Department of Health is responsible for the operation of the Act.

<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2018C00141>

Quality of Care Principles (2014)

The legislative framework for the care and services that aged care facilities must provide to residents. It details the accreditation standards, which consist of a set of principles and a number of expected outcomes.

<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/2018C00294>

User Rights Principles (2014)

The legislative framework for upholding the rights of residents in aged care facilities. It details the Charter of Residents' Rights and Responsibilities.

<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2017C00141>

National Disability Insurance Act (2013)

The legislative framework for the operation of the NDIS.

<https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2016C00934>

Principles/Frameworks

Aged Care Sector Statement of Principles (2015)

The principles to guide the partnership between the Australian Government and consumers, providers and the workforce. Developed by the National Aged Care Sector Committee and the Australian Government, it details the role of each partner in establishing and maintaining an effective aged care partnership.

https://agedcare.health.gov.au/sites/g/files/net1426/f/documents/O2_2015/aged_care_sector_statement_of_principles_-_final_feb_2015_0.pdf

National Guiding Principles for the Referral and Assessment of Younger People with Disability: between state and territory disability services and Aged Care Assessment Teams (2008)

<http://webarchive.nla.gov.au/gov/20140801083222/>

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/ageing-acat-guidelines-disability.htm>

NDIS Quality and Safeguarding Framework (2016)

A national framework to help empower and support NDIS participants to exercise choice and control, while ensuring appropriate safeguards are in place. Establishes expectations for providers and their staff to deliver high quality supports.

https://www.dss.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/O4_2017/ndis_quality_and_safeguarding_framework_final.pdf

National Disability Strategy 2010-2020

The nationwide strategy for supporting people with disability to maximise their potential and participate as equal citizens in Australian society.

<https://www.dss.gov.au/our-responsibilities/disability-and-carers/publications-articles/policy-research/national-disability-strategy-2010-2020>

Other resources

Aged Care Accreditation Standards fact sheet

<https://www.aacqa.gov.au/providers/residential-aged-care/resources/ah0011accreditationstandardsfactsheetenglishv14.1.pdf>

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

The United Nations human rights agreement to promote, defend and reinforce the human rights of all persons with disabilities.

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/disabilities/convention-on-the-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities.html>



This project has been funded by the National Disability Insurance Scheme.

We value your feedback about this resource – please contact the Summer Foundation at info@summerfoundation.org.au, or 1300 626 560.