

Age Old Problems: New Aged Care



A podcast by *Helping Hand*



Age Old Problems: New Aged Care
Episode 1: Navigating Home Care


Helping Hand

00:00:00 Kate

Welcome to *Age Old Problems: New Aged Care*, a podcast by Helping Hand that offers information and advice to help you find and access the right aged care services. This podcast was recorded on Kaurna land.

00:00:22 Kate

Hello, I'm your host Kate Holland. In this episode, our very first, we're going to learn all about home care: how the system works, how to access it, what's on offer, and the right questions to ask in order to have your needs met. Joining me to uncover all that information is Jo Carter-Jones, Group Manager of Retirement Living and Housing at Helping Hand, and one of our lovely home care clients Rex. Thank you both for joining us.

00:00:46 Rex

Thank you

00:00:46 Jo

Thank you

00:00:48 Kate

Now before we start getting into the finer details, I'd just like to briefly explain the different type of government funding for help at home services. The Commonwealth Home Support Programme and Home Care Packages are both Australian government initiatives designed to support older Australians to stay living independently at home, however they cater to different levels of need and operate differently.

00:01:10 Kate

The Commonwealth Home Support Programme is designed for older people who need some assistance with daily tasks to make to maintain their independence – it provides entry level support services on a short term or ongoing basis. Typical services include basic help at home such as gardening, cleaning, and social support. Home Care Packages are for older people with more complex care needs – they provide a higher level of support and more comprehensive care, such as nursing, and allied health services. So with those definitions in mind Jo, perhaps you can begin by explaining who is eligible for Home Care Services and whether they need an assessment.

00:01:49 Jo

So there are different types of assessment based on your needs, so the eligibility criteria really refers to two parts. So the first part is age-related – essentially you need to be either 65 years or older to access and be eligible for services, or 50 years or older if you are an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. The second part to the criteria is based on your needs, so you might be that you've noticed that you can't do things as easily as you used to, for example hanging out the washing, or changing the bed. It might be that you've had a recent fall, or a trip to hospital, or had a recent medical diagnosis that has impacted your health, and you're not feeling as well as you used to.

00:02:31 Kate

Now I know there are a lot of different types of services available, we can't run through all of them, but can you give us an overview of the sort of things people might seek out?

00:02:38 Jo

Yes, you're right there are lots and lots of services available to help support people remain living safely at home. It's easy to put them in categories I find, so if we look at assistance with home tasks – you can get

some assistance with some cleaning, or some shopping. If we look at personal care – you can get some assistance with your showering, and your dressing. You can have a whole range of services to help you remain well and look after your wellbeing – and those things include access to podiatry services, attending exercise groups to improve your strength and balance.

00:03:15 Jo

And there are also a range of services that can help you to get out of the home, such as transport assistance, and attending social groups, which are really good to help support you talk to people and keep in touch with your community.

00:03:29 Kate

So there are some really great things that people can access, but sometimes starting the process can feel a bit intimidating to people. Do you have some key suggestions for the things that they should keep in mind when they first start?

00:03:49 Jo

Yes, I can make a few recommendations that will make it a bit easier as you commence the process of accessing some services. The first thing I would recommend is, before you phone My Aged Care, if you decide to give them a call to talk about a need for services, is make sure you have a pen and paper handy and you have your Medicare card ready to go. They will ask you for that information and it's really helpful if you've got that ready to go so you don't have to jump up and grab things as they ask the questions.

00:04:13 Jo

Part of that process will be them giving you what's called your AC number, your Aged Care number, and it's helpful if you have that pen and paper ready so you can write it down, because when you ring them again they might ask you for that number, so it's helpful to have that ready. The other key things I would suggest is, have a think about who you would nominate as a representative who can talk to My Aged Care on your behalf. It's really great if you can do it yourself, but it is helpful to have someone else that can call and talk about you. Because, for example, if you're in hospital, or something happens, and you're not able to make that call yourself, then a family member or a neighbour or a loved one can make that call. And that definitely helps to make the process smoother and easier, especially if things go wrong.

00:05:05 Jo

I would also say, if you are waiting for a phone call from My Aged Care, or from the assessment team or from a service provider, don't wait too long. If you think you've waited a week or two and you haven't received a call, and you're wondering what's happening, don't just assume that there's other people in the queue and they'll get to you eventually – pick up the phone, call My Aged Care, ask for an update. Sometimes things can take a while, but it's really good to check in and just see what's happening to make sure things keep moving along.

00:05:34 Kate

And I assume when you do make those phone calls, it's OK to ask questions and really probe what would suit you best to meet your needs?

00:05:41 Jo

Absolutely. Ask lots of questions, don't hesitate to ask questions. I would also recommend having a look at the My Aged Care website if you have access to that. It does have lots of information. But phoning the My Aged Care contact centre and asking questions is also really helpful. You should have someone there that is really well briefed with the information and can answer all of your questions.

00:06:04 Kate

And we will have the website details and those phone number details in our show notes so we can make it easy for people to go and look that up after listening to the podcast. Now Reg, I think it's important we come to you now, because you're someone who has dealt with this process, and it wasn't too intimidating for you.

00:06:20 Reg

No, as a matter fact, I had no expectations of the process – I didn't even know it existed two years ago. I had a conversation with other people in the retirement village that I was in – we were having a little bit of difficulty at home, or I was having difficulty at home, and it was suggested that I ring Aged Care and look to get an assessment, which is exactly what I did, exactly as you've just heard. Initially I thought it was going to be daunting, whilst the process is longer than I anticipated – I was told the process may take five to six months to get an aged care assessment – it turned out that it was shorter than that, and I found that dealing with the Aged Care people was quite easy, I found them all approachable. As a matter fact I haven't got a complaint in two years of dealing with the Aged Care people. With Helping Hand I have no complaint at all, I found the process easy.

00:07:21 Kate

And what services are you accessing?

00:07:23 Reg

I'm actually accessing domestic help, I'm accessing physio, I have a falls alarm. We've been provided the cards for transport if needed. Although my wife still drives, I no longer drive, I gave up my licence earlier on this year.

00:07:42 Kate

Can I ask the delay in you accessing these kinds of services, is that because you thought it wasn't something that you will be given access to, or that you thought you didn't need, or you just didn't know about it full stop?

00:07:53 Reg

I suppose you get tied up in other programs that you get through your GP, through specialists, etc, and I found that that process rarely mentioned the Aged Care Packages that are available, and rarely mentioned the services that are provided through those that work within those packages like Helping Hand. I found the knowledge I got was sitting back and listening to those who are doing the assessments about what's available, was more important than listening to other people's advice about those processes – other people being people who had nothing to do with the services that are being provided. So I found the process excellent.

00:08:37 Kate

Do you think some people are resistant to accessing these services due to pride, and maybe being worried about people coming into their home?

00:08:44 Reg

I think both of those play a part. I think gender and history, given the age of people, plays a part. Males are reticent to give up their independence, to look at people helping them, because they see it as impacting upon their male ego. So I found it difficult in the initial stage to seek an assessment, but when I did, I suddenly realised there are a lot of people out there who can help you, and those people have helped

myself and my wife immensely. I think it's an ego thing, but I think it's a gender thing, especially for men. The other thing is I think a lot of people listen to their families a little bit too much. I think sometimes it's nice to go to somebody who is independent of the family to get the right advice.

00:09:36 Kate

And what has the process and help meant for your life, and would you recommend Helping Hand home care to other people?

00:09:42 Reg

What I found is that I get a lot of support through Helping Hand. The physio – I've had two physios with Helping Hand since I've been on the plan, and both of them have been excellent. If I can say it this way – I used to get headaches on a regular basis, and I had numbness throughout most of my body on numerous occasions. Through the MS Society and through Aged Care I now get my back physio-treated regularly. And because of the treatment on my spine, I rarely have headaches now – I have numbness, but I rarely have headaches.

00:10:19 Reg

Without Helping Hand I wouldn't have known that that was an avenue available to me. I really do believe that at the moment my wife and I are much happier in the home environment, than what we were when we were living away from the help that you get from Helping Hand and from Aged Care. Both areas have been fabulous. I can't believe that the response I got to some of my questions were so quick, and it cleared up a lot of problems.

00:10:50 Kate

So if people were going to take away one thing from listening to this podcast, one really solid piece of advice, as a recap, what would your one takeaway be? Jo?

00:10:59 Jo

Be patient, the process can take a while before you get to the commencement of your services, but the vital and important role that those services can play, as Reg has described, in keeping you safe and well and happy at home are so important, and so critical to helping you remain living at home, which in my experience is what the majority of people wanna do. There is no place like home. So if you need a little bit of help to help you remain living at home, then I think that's a really great option and I would certainly advise you go ahead and start the process.

00:11:35 Kate

What about you Reg, what do you think they should take away?

00:11:40 Reg

I think most people should listen to the experts, and sit down, relax, and let the process take its course. Nothing's ever done overnight, and I think just waiting, pausing, seeking advice, and letting the process take its course, is the only way to go. It's been effective for us and it's made our life a lot happier.

00:12:02 Kate

That's wonderful, thank you so much for sharing your expertise and your experience.

00:12:07 Reg

No worries, thanks very much.

00:12:08 Kate

Thank you. For more information on Helping Hand and their services please head to www.helpinghand.org.au. You can also call their home care number 1300 444 663.

00:12:23 Kate

Please remember – you understand your needs better than anyone. Take the time to contact one of our friendly team to find out how we can help.