



My family member is in hospital. What do I do now?

A simple guide for families navigating aged care and support options.

When a loved one is in hospital, it can feel overwhelming and confusing. You may be worried about what happens when they leave hospital and whether they will have the right support. You don't have to figure this out alone.



Start here:

Ask to speak with the hospital social worker.

The hospital social worker can help you understand your family member's needs, the aged care pathways, and what happens next.

THE PATHWAY: WHAT TO DO STEP BY STEP



1 Is your family member currently in hospital?

This pathway is for families who are concerned about discharge, changing needs and aged care options.



2 Ask to speak with the hospital social worker

When you next visit, ask the nursing staff or ward team:

"Can I please speak with the social worker involved in [name]'s care?"



3 Explain the concerns clearly

Let the social worker know what has changed or what you are worried about.

Examples may include:

- They were already struggling at home
- They now need more support
- They live alone
- Their mobility has changed
- Their memory or cognition has changed
- Their current supports are no longer enough
- Family cannot safely provide the level of care needed



4 Ask what assessments or referrals may be needed

You might like to ask:

- Does my family member need an aged care assessment?
- Has their current level of support been reviewed?
- Who can help us understand what aged care services they may be eligible for?
- Can you explain what needs to happen before discharge?



5 Ask who is coordinating the next steps

Before you leave the conversation, make sure you understand:

- Who is responsible for the next step?
- What referral or assessment is being arranged?
- Who will contact the family?
- What do you need to do?
- What happens next?

WHAT SHOULD I SAY?

Here are some helpful phrases you can use.



"My family member's circumstances have changed, and I need help understanding what support options are available when they leave hospital."



"I'm concerned that [name] is not safe to return home with their current level of support. Their needs have changed, and I would like to discuss this before discharge."



"I don't believe their current supports are enough to safely meet their needs."

IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT YOUR FAMILY MEMBER GOING HOME



If you are concerned they cannot safely return to their previous living arrangement, don't assume that someone else already knows. Tell the hospital team clearly.

Your concerns matter.

USEFUL REMINDER



You do not need to know all the answers or the right words. Asking questions and speaking up is an important part of advocating for your family member. You are not alone in this.



Who is a hospital social worker?

Social workers are qualified professionals who help patients and families navigate difficult situations. They can assist with discharge planning, support options, referrals, and connecting you with the right services.

Still not sure?

If you are feeling overwhelmed or unsure where to start, we can help you understand your options and find the right next step.



NEED HELP FINDING YOUR PATHWAY?

Get in touch

