

# Accommodation options after a brain injury

**The effects of a brain injury can be diverse, so a wide range of accommodation options are needed.**

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## Planning ahead

Exploring accommodation and support options is recommended once rehabilitation begins. Appropriate options are often scarce so it pays to look ahead and plan early. Points to consider include:

- the level and type of support needed
- the funding available to the person
- the family's social support network
- the family's capacity to provide care in the home or nearby
- services available in the area
- local amenities in the area (e.g. parks, cafes, restaurants, cinemas, shopping centres, chemists).

Living close to places of interest allows people to engage with them regularly. Less time on travel means more support hours available to engage in the things people enjoy.

People need the flexibility to move to more independent living as they re-master life skills.

Below is a list of accommodation from high support through to more independent living options.

## Nursing homes

While nursing homes have long been a 'last resort' for young people with high-care needs, they are not suitable. There are a number of organisations working towards moving young people back into the community. It is important to keep in mind that this transition can take time due to a lack of suitable housing options in the community.

## Slow stream rehabilitation facilities

A small number of government-funded facilities specialising in brain injury are available for people with high-care needs. These facilities provide a transition for people who might benefit from ongoing intensive rehabilitation but cannot remain in hospital because they are medically stable. It is important to think about accommodation well before discharge so that the transition home is smooth and timely. These facilities are usually located in capital cities and can have long waiting lists.

### **Supported accommodation (also known as group homes)**

Supported accommodation is a residence in the community where support workers provide the required amount of support and supervision. This can vary from around-the-clock care to a few visits each week. With a National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) or National Injury Insurance Scheme (NIIS) funding package, individuals can choose to either hire their own support staff, or share the cost of support staff with housemates (this option will be cheaper but everyone must agree on the support agency and workers chosen).

For more information about the NDIS and NIIS, phone the enquiry lines: 1800 800 110 (NDIS) / 1300 302 568 (NIIS). Alternatively, you can call Synapse first on 1800 673 074.

Non-government agencies like Synapse receive funding to set up brain injury-specific supported accommodation. Supported accommodation is also available through government and other non-government organisations, though it might not be brain injury-specific (i.e. the person's housemates could have other forms of disability).

Supported accommodation works for some people but not for everyone. People with acquired disabilities, such as brain injury or multiple sclerosis, often have partners and/or school age children. Therefore, their needs may not be met by group homes. There are not enough supported accommodation dwellings available to meet the expected need, so it is important to plan early if this housing type is a potential option.

### **Living with friends or family**

A person with brain injury may choose to be supported by family and/or friends at home. Carers might take on the role because they want to provide personal care and support, or find that available alternatives are inappropriate or expensive.

Taking on the role of carer can be demanding and requires support. Respite care is available so that carers can take regular breaks. Government funding is also available to provide carers with financial support.

A creative alternative chosen by some is to build a detached dwelling so that their family member can live semi-independently, while still having access to support. This is a long-term option for some, and a transition for others who will ultimately move into their own home. Another option is to buy or rent an apartment near family or friends to make it easier for them to visit and provide support.

### **Hostels**

Hostels are rarely appropriate for people with brain injury, but can be suitable for people who are more independent. A hostel is typically a large house divided into small bedrooms, often with on-site managers who provide differing levels of supervision. Assistance may include help with meals, supervision of challenging behaviours, laundry services and medication supervision. Hostels are not suitable for people with high-care needs, such as those who require nursing assistance (e.g. toileting, personal care).



Many hostels cater for people with a mental illness and have psychiatric support specialists visiting on a regular basis.

### **Own home with support**

Being supported to live at home can be an expensive option but one that most people prefer. In most cases a home will need to be modified to make it accessible and safe (e.g. building ramps to replace steps or installing handrails). People who choose to live at home will also need to access some level of care and support.

Those who are eligible for a NDIS or NIS funding package will be able to include home modifications and support in their request for funding, although this will ultimately depend on the resources available. Community organisations provide a range of services to help people stay in their homes. This can include home-delivered meals and community nursing.

The Synapse Options team can help you access the financial support and services you need in order to stay at home.