



Fact sheet for Aged Care Assessors on care finders

31 October 2024

Purpose

This fact sheet provides information on the care finder program, the target population for care finders and how an aged care assessor can find and connect a person with this service.

This fact sheet also details information on changes to the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) Assistance with Care and Housing (ACH) service type.

What is the care finder program?

Some older people need extra, intensive support to navigate and access aged care services and other supports in the community.

In these situations, a care finder may be able to help.

The national network of care finders provides one-on-one **specialist and intensive** support to help **vulnerable** older people to understand and access aged care services and other relevant supports in the community. Care finders can visit people in their home or in the community.

Care finder organisations have been commissioned by the 31 [Primary Health Networks](#) (PHNs) across Australia.

Detailed information on the care finder program and its requirements is in the [policy guidance for PHNs](#).

Who is in the care finder target population?

To ensure care finder support is available to those who need it, strict eligibility criteria have not been developed for people to access care finders. Care finder organisations are responsible for determining if a person is within the target population.

An older person fits in the target population for care finders if they:

- are eligible for aged care services, and
- have one or more reasons for requiring intensive support to:
 - interact with My Aged Care (through the website, telephone, or face to face), or
 - access aged care services, or
 - access other relevant supports in the community.

Reasons a person may need the intensive support provided by a care finder may include:

- being isolated or they don't have available support (including because they are uncomfortable receiving the support, or their support person is not able to assist)
- communication barriers, such as limited English language or literacy skills
- difficulties processing information to make decisions being unsafe or they may end up in a crisis situation (within the next year), however they are resistant to engage with aged care, or
- their past experiences mean they are reluctant to engage with aged care, institutions, or government.

What do care finders do?

Care finders help vulnerable older people in the target population to navigate, understand and access aged care services and other relevant supports in the community. **Care finders can work with people at any stage of their aged care journey**, including those who are not yet receiving aged care services, people who have an aged care assessment but have difficulty accessing the support identified on their Support Plan or those who are receiving aged care services.

Care finders assist people to use one of the three My Aged Care access channels (online, face to face – Aged care Specialist Officers (ACSOs) or phone - Contact Centre) to access aged care services (if needed).

Care finders assist their clients by:

- supporting them to interact with My Aged Care so they can be screened for eligibility for aged care services and referred for assessment
- explain and guide them through the assessment process including, where appropriate, attending the assessment
- helping them to find the Commonwealth-funded aged care supports and services they need and connect with other relevant supports in the community, including supporting them to:
 - understand the different types of aged care supports and services
 - find and make an informed choice about providers or services
 - complete forms for any service (unless someone else is better placed to help with this)
 - attend provider meetings alongside the client or help to find a provider
 - understand the agreement that needs to be signed with the provider
 - connect with other relevant supports in the community, noting that, this may occur **before** they assist a person to access aged care (as well as any other time)
- high level check-in with clients on a periodic basis and follow up support once services have commenced to:
 - check that the person is still receiving services and providers are managing any changes to their needs
 - provide support where services have lapsed or needs have changed and providers are not taking appropriate action, such as (depending on the situation and the client's wishes):
 - contacting the provider, with the client's consent, and working with them to put in place new services
 - working with the client to change providers

- supporting the client to interact with My Aged Care so they can be referred for re-assessment and helping them to move to new services and/or providers (as required).

Should I refer to a care finder or an advocate?

Care finders primarily support people within the target population to understand and access aged care services and connect with other relevant supports in the community. At times, care finders provide discrete elements of individual advocacy. However, this is not considered to be their primary role as care finders are not funded to provide advocacy services.

People requiring individual aged care advocacy support and mediation should be referred to the [Older Persons Advocacy Network \(OPAN\)](#). OPAN provides advanced advocacy skills or intensive advocacy support, including in situations of elder abuse. OPAN can assist people within, and outside of, the care finder target population.

When would an assessor and care finder interact?

Assessors and care finders working together can help vulnerable clients get the intensive support they need to access aged care and other community services.

There are 2 key ways an assessor and care finder may interact, they are:

1. if the client already has an established relationship with a care finder, or
2. if an assessor thinks a client would benefit from a relationship with a care finder.

If a client has an established Agent relationship with a care finder, the assessing organisation should contact the nominated care finder in the first instance. The care finder Agent can support the client through the triage and assessment processes.

Where possible a client should be part of conversations that relate to them between an assessor and a care finder.

If an assessor thinks a client would benefit from a relationship with a care finder, they can connect the client with a care finder service, as long as the client is in agreement and is part of the target population.

Assessors can connect a person with a care finder service by:

- **Phone** – calling the care finder service, with the client's consent, will increase the likelihood of the client engaging with the care finder, or
- requesting a care finder client relationship through the Assessor portal, noting this should be done in conjunction with a phone call to confirm the care finder organisation is willing and able to support the client.

Care finders are provided through many different service organisations so there is not a central intake point or phone number.

Assessors can find the contact information for care finder services in each region on the related [My Aged Care webpage](#). This information includes target groups the organisation will focus on (e.g. homeless, LGBTQI, CALD or Forgotten Australian clients).

Assessment Team leaders may also consider a referral to a care finder for a vulnerable client who does not have anybody to support them.

Prior to Triage

Prior to calling the client to conduct triage, team leaders should note where the client has a nominated care finder. Team leaders may wish to:

- contact the care finder in the first instance to confirm a time to conduct triage so the care finder can be present with the client, and/or
- make an outbound call to the client with the care finder present on the same phone call.

Alternatively, the care finder may confirm that the client is willing to undertake triage without their presence, and the team leader can contact the client directly. The care finder may advise the client to expect a call, to help the client feel comfortable to receive the phone call.

Will assessors still need to provide linking support?

Many of the vulnerable clients that assessors currently provide linking support to are expected to be in the target population for care finders. Assessors can connect these clients to care finders if they agree. Assessors may connect a client to a care finder if they continue to require ongoing support to access services after the short-term linking support episode has concluded.

Assessors may also provide linking support themselves if the client is not comfortable being referred to someone else, or if they need some help but are not in the target population for care finders.

Changes to Assistance with Care and Housing (ACH) service type

Since **1 January 2023** the CHSP ACH service type only provides ACH Hoarding and Squalor. Assessors can continue to make ACH Hoarding and Squalor referrals through the My Aged Care assessor portal.

ACH navigation services (Advocacy – legal and financial and Assessment and Referral) previously funded in the CHSP ACH service type are now funded as care finders.

To connect a person to support because they are **homeless or at risk of homelessness** (and there are no concerns regarding hoarding and squalor behaviour) contact the **care finder by phone**.

You are no longer able to refer for homelessness services and support (ACH Advocacy – Financial, Legal or Assessment - Referrals) through the My Aged Care assessor portal, however, you can request a care finder relationship for a client after calling the organisation to confirm they can accept the referral.

ACH Hoarding and Squalor Services

The eligibility and description of ACH Hoarding and Squalor services have been updated in the [CHSP manual](#) to reflect changes to the ACH service type.

Referrals to ACH Hoarding and Squalor services can continue through the My Aged Care assessor portal.