



FRIENDSHIP NOW connect smile healing  
kindness • COMPASSION purpose  
caregiver healthcare patience  
long term sense  
support LOVE UNCONDITIONAL nurture  
respect trust GRACE

## Pros and cons of having a carer

**Toni Tickton**, Client Wellness Advisor, discusses the advantages and disadvantages of home care in later life.

Carers bring many advantages, especially to independent living and to personalised care, but this option may not suit everyone. Here are some factors to consider:

### Advantages of having a carer

- Personalised care: one of the main advantages of having a carer is the individualised attention provided. This can include personal care, cooking favourite meals, and helping to identify risk factors such as falling.
- Staying in your own home: the familiarity of one's own space and possessions can be enormously comforting.
- Less pressure on relationships: family and friends can more easily enjoy themselves by being relieved of the caring role, which could be stressful and time consuming for them.
- Keeping pets: a carer can assist in managing pets, which might otherwise need to be re-homed if you moved to another residential setting.
- Peace of mind: a carer can provide companionship for you and often great peace of mind to concerned family members.
- Staying together: for couples, it may be preferable, and more cost effective to have a carer in your home for one partner, rather than to split up and move a spouse to another facility.
- Alternative to retirement village or frail care: whether by choice or because of "having left it too late", carers can enable seniors to remain at home, even in the palliative care stage of life. Medical and professional nursing services are increasingly also available on a home visiting basis.
- Driving: if a person is no longer driving, a carer/driver can help prevent isolation and maintain contact with regular or special outings.

### Disadvantages of having a carer

- Finding the right person: the key is to find the right person who is competent and sympathetic to the needs of the client.
- Cost: will vary depending on the hours worked by the carer. The hours could range from a few hours per day, or a couple of days per week, all the way through to 24 hours per day. Remember that carers, too, have personal lives and will need appropriate time off.
- Available space: if a couple requires a night carer for one spouse, the intrusion into bedroom space may require a change of sleeping arrangements.
- Balancing the relationship: despite the temptation for a very close bond, especially with a long-time carer, it may be useful to remember that this is an employer-employee relationship. Structured channels of accountability are often useful and sharing confidential information such as a banking pin number is risky. Written daily logs, in a specific format, can help with continuity of care and with accountability. This is especially relevant if medication is being administered.

### How to find a carer

There are basically two avenues to sourcing carers:

- Agencies: in most cities and towns there are several home care agencies to choose from, some registered for medical aid purposes and others not. The advantage of using an agency is

the provision of continuous service – if the carer cannot make a shift, then the agency would provide an alternative person. Some agencies require a minimum number of hours for the carer to work, while others are more flexible.

Some agencies, and also medical practices, provide private recruitment services, so that carers are screened before being employed.

- Word of mouth: this usually means a carer is privately contracted and will negotiate conditions directly with the client/employer.

### Other factors to remember

- Carers can be hired for temporary assignments, such as recovering from surgery.
- Sometimes one might prefer to start with just a few hours of carer time, growing as the need arises.

Personal Trust does not recommend carers directly; rather we can offer names of reputable agencies that we are aware of.

Source: adapted from <https://www.which.co.uk/later-life-care/home-care/organising-home-care/pros-and-cons-of-having-live-in-carers-a5d0p5z0uvr>

### Case Study by Christine "Pepe" Cooper

Earlier this year, I was asked to assist a client whose health was deteriorating, to establish what options were available to her in order for her to stay in her own home.

It was clear that the client's very loving and caring tenant was no longer able to cope with the demands of a frailer person.

A care agency was approached, an assessment was done, and a carer was booked for a couple of hours three times a week. There were strict criteria set by the client which the agency acknowledged and fulfilled.

A significant positive outcome of employing a carer was greater mobility for the client. She had felt trapped in her bedroom as her legs were too weak and the stress of moving insurmountable. With encouragement from the carer, the client could venture into her art room which was uplifting and gave her immense pleasure.

The tenant was also supported by the carer as he could attend to his business knowing that the client had someone to assist and feed her.

Situations change quickly and, in this case, having a carer in situ, also proved invaluable as she was able to identify further health issues which, left undetected, may have proved problematic.

*Toni joined Personal Trust in March 2019 as a Client Wellness Advisor. She is a social worker by training and has a Master's degree in social administration. Toni has many years of experience working in the mental health field, in hospice and in palliative care. We are delighted to have Toni working with our clients at Personal Trust. Toni and Pepe Cooper work together offering retirement lifestyle support and advice to clients and their families.*