

Senior Living in HK - Residential terms “defined”

Our common understanding of terms is “anything but common” and this seems to be true anywhere people are faced with defining the issue of housing. In Hong Kong various options are available to seniors that range from staying in your own home to specialized facilities that provide round-the-clock nursing care. The names of the different types of housing options can sometimes be confusing and the terminology can vary. Generally, the different types of senior housing are set according to the amount of care provided for activities of daily living and for medical care.

1. Aging in place
2. Independent Living
3. Self-care Hostel (Social Welfare Department, Hong, Kong)
4. Assisted Living
5. Home for the aged (Social Welfare Department, Hong, Kong)
6. Care and Attention Home (Social Welfare Department, Hong, Kong)
7. Dependent Living
8. Nursing Home (Social Welfare Department, Hong, Kong)
9. Infirmary (Social Welfare Department, Hong, Kong)

Aging in Place

This is your own home. Staying at home as you age has the advantage of allowing you to stay in a familiar place where you know your home layout, the building, neighbors and the community. Hong Kong offers a range of visiting care services that can help you maintain your independence within the comfort of your own home. You may also consider to make home modifications to make your life easier and safer, such as removing clutter, installing bright lighting, bathtub railings, or emergency call buttons that keep you safe as your mobility and needs change.

Independent Living

This is your own home. Independent living is simply any housing arrangement designed exclusively for seniors, generally those aged 60 and over where you can enjoy all the freedom you expect from living as you wish without most of the worries associated with traditional home ownership. In general, the housing is friendlier to older adults with easier navigation and no maintenance work to worry about. The design of an independent living premises includes safety and security features tastefully integrated into the home to be there when you need them, but not to interfere with your active lifestyle.

Since independent living facilities are aimed at older adults who need little or no assistance with activities of daily living, most do not offer medical care or nursing staff. As with regular housing or “aging in place”, you can hire in-home help separately as required.

Self Care Hostel

(Extracted from Social Welfare Department, Hong, Kong)

Hostels for the Elderly provide communal living accommodation, programme activities and round the clock staff support for elders who are capable of self-care. In Hong Kong this means resident accommodation within shared rooms, provision of social work service (e.g. assessment, counseling, referrals and programme activities)

Note: With effect from 1 January 2003, the Social Welfare Department has ceased to accept new application for placement in Hostels for the Elderly. Starting from 2005-06, Hostels for the Elderly will gradually be phased out and converted into homes providing long term care services

Assisted Living

This can be *either* your own home or another residential choice. Assisted living is most commonly a community residential option for those who need help with some activities of daily living or minor help with medications. Some assisted living facilities provide apartment-style living with small kitchens, while others provide only rooms and a meal service. Most assisted living communities have a group dining area supported with common areas for social and recreational activities.

Assisted living may be suitable when you need more personal care services than are feasible at home or with independent living and you don't require round-the-clock medical care and supervision of a care home. The level and type of daily help required may vary although staff is generally available 24 hours a day.

Memory Care

This is a bespoke service for some persons set within an assisted living environment seeking to create a calm and nurturing environment with active social engagement and interaction that caters to the mind, body and spirit. Generally a specially trained team supports the unique needs of individuals so community residents aren't just living and managing their own cognitive decline, but rather living well despite it. It may be part of an assisted living community.

Homes for the aged

(Extracted from Social Welfare Department, Hong, Kong)

Homes for the Aged provide residential care, meals and a limited degree of assistance in activities of daily living for elders who are unable to live independently in the community yet are not dependent on assistance with personal or nursing care, and are assessed to be of no or mild impairment level under the Standardised Care Need Assessment Mechanism for Elderly Services. This option includes accommodation within shared rooms, provision of at least 3 meals a day, assistance in daily living activities such as cleaning and heavy laundry and provision of social work service (e.g. assessment, counselling, referrals and regular organized social activity programme)

Note: With effect from 1 January 2003, the Social Welfare Department has ceased to accept new applications for placement in Homes for the Aged. Starting from 2005-06, home for the aged places will gradually be phased out and converted into care and attention places providing continuum of care

Care and Attention Homes for the Elderly

(Extracted from Social Welfare Department, Hong, Kong)

Care and Attention Homes for the Elderly provide residential care, meals, personal care and limited nursing care for elders who suffer from poor health or physical/mild mental disabilities with deficiency in activities of daily living but are mentally suitable for communal living, and are assessed to be of moderate impairment level under the Standardised Care Need Assessment Mechanism for Elderly Services. Some Care and Attention places are provided by contract homes and private homes participating in the Enhanced Bought Place Scheme. This option includes accommodation within shared rooms, provision of at least 3 meals a day, therapy, nursing services, personal care assistance, regular visits by a registered medical practitioner and provision of social work service.

Dependent Living

This is a residential option generally provided externally within a Care Home environment. A care home provides the most care for an elder resident outside of the hospital. Services would include assistance with the activities of daily living, but they differ from other choices by providing a high level of medical care. Generally doctors, skilled nursing care and related medical professionals such as occupational or physical therapists are on premises or routinely available.

Nursing Home

(Extracted from Social Welfare Department, Hong, Kong)

A Nursing Home provides residential care, meals, personal care, regular basic medical and nursing care, and social support for elders who suffer from poor health or physical/mental disabilities with deficiency in activities of daily living but are mentally suitable for communal living, and are assessed to be of severe impairment level under the Standardised Care Need Assessment Mechanism for Elderly Services. A Nursing Home aims to provide residential care for elders who as a result of deterioration in their health condition, cannot adequately be taken care of in Care and Attention Homes for the Elderly yet do not require the intensive medical and nursing care provided in infirmaries.

Infirmity Units

(Extracted from Social Welfare Department, Hong, Kong)

This accommodation is physically set up in some subvented residential care homes for the elderly with additional provision of nursing staff for maintaining and supporting elderly residents who have been assessed to be so chronically ill or disabled as to require infirmity care in the existing homes.