



Care Finder case analysis

A snapshot of those COTA Victoria has helped in its first 18 months

What is Care Finder?

Care Finder was established nationally as part of the ongoing reform of the Commonwealth aged care system, and followed trials of the Aged Care Service Navigator initiative, in which COTA Victoria played a key role.

Care Finder complements the My Aged Care platform and other initiatives aimed at reducing barriers to aged care services.

COTA Victoria was contracted through the South East Melbourne Primary Health Network (SEMPHN) to deliver the program in and around the City of Kingston. Service delivery commenced in January 2023. [Further details on the program are available here.](#)

Case analysis

As Care Finder is still a relatively new program, we thought it prudent to provide insight into the characteristics and needs of people that have sought help from COTA Victoria's Care Finder service in the City of Kingston in south-eastern Melbourne over the last 18 months.

Our analysis highlights the diversity of older people needing intensive help to find and access appropriate care.

They are clearly amongst the most vulnerable in the community, often lacking any family support and facing complex health and social challenges that put them at high risk of slipping through the cracks and feeling abandoned by the service system.

Where our referrals came from

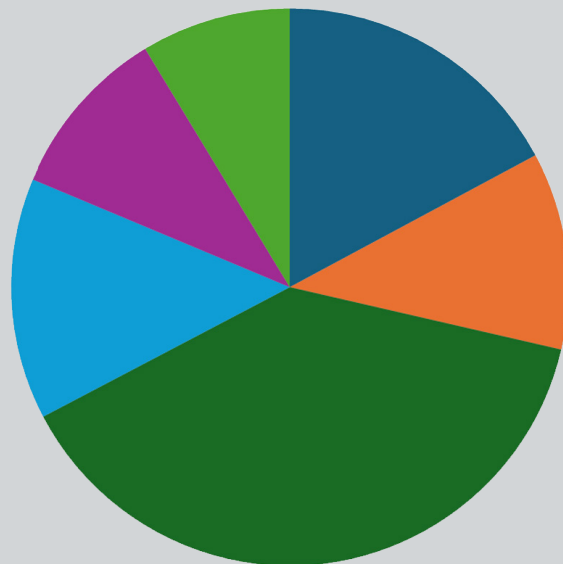
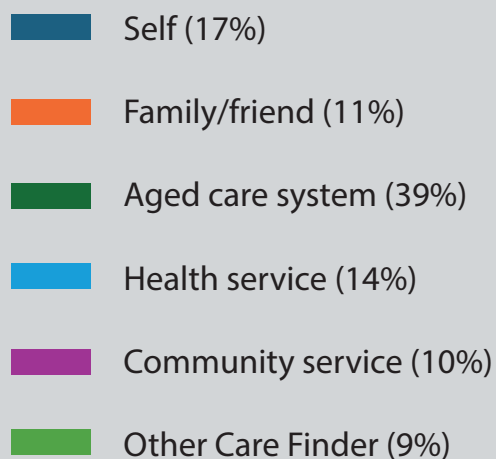
Care Finder was created to help those at high risk of missing out on receiving the care they need. Our assumption that this group will not be proactive in seeking support is proving to be correct.

In the period examined, 18% of referrals came directly from the individual and 12% from family and friends, the remaining 70% of referrals coming through professionals.

This highlights the importance of a wide referral network drawing on effective relationships with intermediaries such as health and aged care professionals and community organisations, to actively identify those with potential to benefit.

The vast majority (92%) of referrals from professionals related to individuals who had commenced engagement with the aged care system. Those referred by themselves or family members were generally not yet assessed for age care services.

Referral source



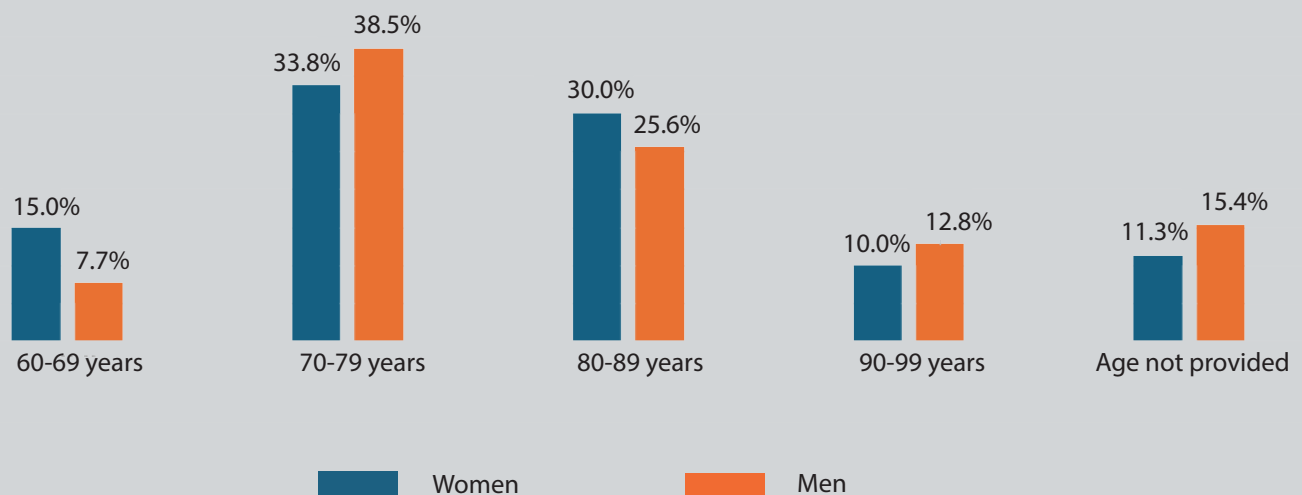
Who was referred

Our team recorded information on 130 individuals referred to the program since its inception. Overall, two thirds of those referred were female and one third male.

The ages of people seeking help ranged widely with nearly two thirds (64%) being between 70 and 89. The age profile for men and women were similar, with slightly more women in the younger 60- to 69-year-old group and slightly more men being 70-79 and 90-99.

Almost a quarter of those referred (23%) had culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds and one percent were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders.

Age profile (% of total by gender)



The individuals referred showed a range of social and health related concerns.

A key factor for Care Finder is the level of informal or family support available. More than half lived by themselves and were reliant on support outside the household. Four in five had no regular support person.

The remainder were not comfortable or did not trust potential carers. This was variously linked to estrangement from family, fear of an abusive relationship, or family members facing health and other challenges of their own.

Communication difficulties were also common. Some 20% had difficulty with hearing, vision loss, or language communication and nearly one in ten reported digital literacy issues or were unable to use common digital communications technology.

In relation to the reluctance to engage with the system, we noted that 19% of people referred were distrustful of government and large organisations or had had negative experiences with aged care services in the past. Some 29% said they found it hard to make decisions.

Key characteristics of clients



1 in 3 financially disadvantaged



1 in 2 living on their own



1 in 4 living with mental illness



1 in 5 with impaired hearing, vision, or communication



1 in 20 homeless or insecure housing



1 in 5 distrustful of government & organisations

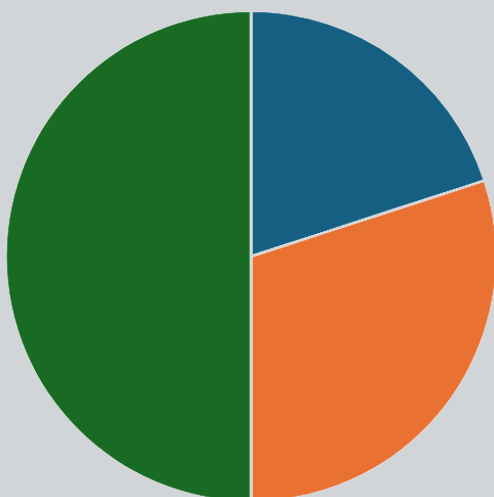
Navigating the aged care system

There was an almost even split between those who had already been formally assessed by the aged care system and needed assistance going forward, and those who had not yet been assessed.

Around half were at the very start of their aged care journey and needed advice essentially from scratch, having minimal understanding of what is involved in accessing aged care or even knowing what support is available.

Nearly 20% already had some services in place but their needs had increased or changed, so required guidance on how to go about adjusting services. Some people had previously rejected a home care package, but now felt they needed those services after all.

The remaining individuals had been assessed and accepted for aged care but had not yet engaged with providers of the services they required.



Stage of participation in aged care

Assessed and receiving services (20%)



Assessed but not yet receiving services (30%)



Not yet assessed (50%)



Reasons for seeking support

The main reasons people contacted our Care Finder team were broadly in line with program objectives and related to help with My Aged Care navigation, guidance on increasing existing services, and assistance with finding service appropriate providers.

Many of those referred were confused about the aged care system and needed help to understand what the system offered and how to access this. Some had been through multiple services but had not established ongoing relationships with a provider and felt abandoned.

Others were experiencing carer stress, had a need for respite care or post-hospital care, required residential care advice or social support, or assistance addressing their dissatisfaction with current aged care providers.

Once Care Finder staff began engaging with participants a wide range of other, more underlying, issues started to be identified. These included hoarding, depression, gambling, alcohol, cognitive decline, ongoing trauma, stress, and anxiety.

A small but worrying number of people were found to be in difficult family situations involving estrangement, trust issues, volatile relationships and/or domestic violence. Some experiences of elder abuse - predominantly financial abuse - were uncovered during consultations.

Who couldn't we help further?

As with most programs of this nature, not all those referred to COTA Victoria's Care Finder were able to be assisted further. Over this period, some 58 people referred were not found to be eligible.

In around 80% of cases, this was due to not being a resident of the catchment area for the program, in which case they were generally helped to approach other Care Finder sites. In other cases, ineligibility related to having a carer or support person, or clearly not being eligible for aged care services.

We will continue to collect information about those found to be ineligible to help ensure that we refine our targeting and that the system as a whole can provide complementary support.

Contact the COTA Victoria Care Finder team

- [Click here to submit an online enquiry form](#)
- Phone us: 1300 135 090
- Email us: carefinder@cotavic.org.au