Planning a Good Life Beyond the Family Home

A family and participant guide to planning early, trying safely and building a future with choice

> **You do not need to be ready to move.**
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> You may be thinking about the future, looking for short breaks, wanting to test living away from home, exploring who someone might live with, or preparing for a possible move years from now. The Future Home & Living Journey gives families a pathway to start before a crisis, without committing to one outcome.

This guide introduces The Helpers Future Home & Living Journey. It explains what the journey is, why it begins with the person rather than a property, how families and relationships are supported, how real-world pilots can be used, how evidence and NDIS funding are built, and how support continues after someone moves.

Foundation: The Helpers Light Program - designing better days around the person, their family, chosen relationships, community and the systems that enable a good life.

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1. Why this journey exists

For many families, the question of where a son or daughter may live in the future is one of the hardest conversations to begin. It can bring up fear, grief, hope, uncertainty and practical questions all at once. Parents and primary carers may worry about safety, who will provide care, whether siblings will be expected to take over, whether funding will be enough, whether a housemate will be right, what happens overnight, and what happens if a move does not work.

The Future Home & Living Journey was designed so these questions do not have to be answered in one meeting or at a point of crisis. It creates a structured pathway in which the participant, family, trusted people, professionals, housing partners and The Helpers can learn progressively and make decisions when there is enough information to make them well.

> **The central idea**
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> Plan the life first. Learn through real experiences. Build the evidence. Choose the housing and support model later.

2. Starting the journey does not mean deciding to move

A family may join the journey for many different reasons. Some people may be considering a move relatively soon. Others may simply want to begin planning while parents are healthy and able to help. Some may want regular short breaks or supported nights away from home. Others may want to build confidence through a pilot program, explore a possible housemate, or understand what the NDIS may require if a Home & Living request is made in the future.

You may be thinking about…	The journey can help you…
The long-term future	Start early, understand choices and build a plan gradually.
Short breaks or time away from the family home	Explore safe, planned opportunities without assuming this is a permanent move.
A pilot or “test the waters” arrangement	Try routines, overnight stays, shared support and possible housemates in a structured way.
A future SIL or other Home & Living request	Build real evidence of daily support needs, support ratios, overnight needs and housing requirements.
Who someone might live with	Start with friendships, trusted people and shared interests before making a property decision.
What happens if family care is interrupted	Build a contingency plan and make invisible family support visible.
Whether the participant wants to move at all	Support the person to experience options and express preferences without pressure.

> **What this is not**
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> The Journey is not a SIL waiting list, a housing allocation list, a promise of NDIS funding, or a sales funnel into one model or one provider. A successful outcome may be SIL, ILO, ordinary housing with supports, living alone, living near friends, remaining at home with changed supports, or another arrangement that fits the person.

3. The foundation: The Helpers Light Program

The Future Home & Living Journey is built on the same foundation as The Helpers Light Program: designing better days around the whole person rather than organising services in isolation. The person stays at the centre. Planning looks across five connected layers:

Light layer	What it means for Future Home & Living
Individual	What the person wants, how they communicate, what they enjoy, what support they need and what a good day looks like.
Family	What family members currently do, what they willingly want to continue, what is sustainable and what must eventually change.
Friends & chosen family	Who the person trusts, enjoys and wants in their life; relationships are not treated as an unpaid care roster.
Community	Work, day programs, sport, faith, transport, interests, familiar places and ordinary belonging.
Society & enabling environment	NDIS, health, housing, income, legal authority, transport, provider availability, safety and funding.

The Light approach asks a simple question throughout the journey: will this decision help create a safer, more connected, more meaningful and more self-directed life? The answer should include the participant's own experience, not only what staff or family think is best.

4. The fears families bring - and how the journey responds

A common family question	How the pathway responds
"Will they be safe?"	Safety is built progressively: risks, health, communication, personal care, medication, behaviour, emergency planning, worker skills and backup arrangements are identified before a move.
"Who will look after them when I cannot?"	The journey maps what family currently does, which tasks need paid support, what can be shared and what must be dedicated, including overnight support.

A common family question	How the pathway responds
“What if the NDIS does not fund enough?”	Stage 3 builds evidence of actual daily support needs; Stage 4 converts that evidence into a structured Home & Living funding submission. The process also identifies funding gaps rather than hiding them.
“Who will they live with?”	Relationships are explored before real estate. Shared activities and compatibility trials are used before a permanent housemate decision.
“What if they hate it?”	Pilots are designed to be reversible. The person can try, pause, repeat, change the arrangement or decide that a different option is better.
“Will siblings be expected to take over?”	Sibling involvement is voluntary. Love, visits and family connection are not treated as consent to provide personal care, overnight support or emergency cover.
“How will we know what support is really needed?”	The universal support questionnaire, detailed modules, real-world observations and targeted professional evidence build a practical picture of what happens across an ordinary week.
“What if the support needs change?”	Stage 6 is ongoing. Actual support delivery, incidents, outcomes and participant feedback are reviewed and can support future NDIS plan changes.

5. The six-stage Future Home & Living Journey

The pathway is deliberately staged. Each stage answers a different question, and families can pause, repeat work, or remain at a stage for as long as is useful.

Stage	Main question	What families can expect
STG-01 | Vision & Readiness	What matters, and what are we worried about?	Participant hopes and preferences; family future conversations; important relationships; early housing-pathway education.
STG-02 | Exploration, Relationships & Skill Building	What should we start exploring and learning?	Choices, friendships, possible housemates, supported experiences, skills, housing pathways and pilot readiness.
STG-03 | Evidence & Option Design	What support is actually required, and what models may work?	Supported trials, compatibility testing, SUP-01 and detailed support modules, evidence gaps, professional questions and a seven-day support map.
STG-04 | Funding & Housing	Which option is viable and how will it be funded and housed?	Preferred model, Home & Living funding submission, housing/property pathway, affordability, occupancy/tenancy and support-roster design.
STG-05 | Move & Stabilise	How do we implement the chosen arrangement safely?	Final support plans, agreements, trained workers, property readiness, participant-specific competencies and staged transition.
STG-06 | Review & Improve	Is the arrangement delivering the life the person wants?	Good Life reviews, household wellbeing, actual support needs, incidents, outcomes, adjustments and evidence for future funding reviews.

6. Stage 1 - starting with the person and the family

Stage 1 is intentionally gentle. Families are not asked to produce every report or make a housing decision. The focus is understanding the person, the family and the questions that matter.

- PT-01: the participant's hopes, worries and preferences.
- FC-01: future conversations with parents, primary carers and family members.
- RHC-01: important friendships, trusted people and social networks.
- NP-01: understanding the main Home & Living pathways and identifying what the family needs explained.

The registration form is the front door. It should remain short and safe. Detailed clinical records are not required at registration.

7. Stage 2 - explore before choosing

Stage 2 is about building information through ordinary life. The person may try new routines, spend time with friends, explore neighbourhoods, practise household skills or discuss possible housemates. NP-02 also starts making practical pilot opportunities possible by looking at housing partners, temporary pilot accommodation, who pays for the roof, what support funding exists and what safety arrangements are required.

> **Relationships before real estate**
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> A vacancy should not decide who someone lives with. The Journey first asks: who does the participant like, trust and enjoy spending time with - and do both people want to explore more?

8. Stage 3 - have a go, test the waters and build evidence

Stage 3 is where ideas become real-world experience. A participant may do shared activities, day visits, evening routines, a single overnight stay, a weekend or repeated short stays. These are structured pilots, not auditions for independence.

The purpose is to learn: what support is actually required, which routines work, whether support can be shared, what happens overnight, whether particular people enjoy living together, and what the participant wants to try next.

The Helpers' evidence system begins with SUP-01, the Universal Participant Daily Support & Operational Evidence Questionnaire. Where relevant, it activates detailed modules covering personal care, meals and swallowing, medication, mobility, overnight support, communication and behaviour, skin/health, high-intensity clinical supports and emergency information. SUP-02 then identifies evidence gaps and asks the right professional the right question rather than commissioning reports simply because a report exists in the usual process.

9. Support ratios matter

A participant is not simply a "1:1 person" or a "1:3 person". Different parts of the day may require different staffing. For example, showering may require 1:1, an evening meal may work at 1:2, general household presence may work at 1:3, and overnight arrangements may be different again. Trials and evidence help establish where support can safely be shared and where dedicated support is necessary.

> **Why this matters for funding**
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> If funding assumes more sharing than is actually safe or workable, the participant may not have enough support at the times they most need it. The journey is designed to make those differences visible before a funding request is made.

10. Stage 4 - turning what we have learned into a funding and housing plan

The formal NDIS Home & Living funding request generally belongs after the family has built enough evidence to describe the person's real support needs and a proposed model is credible. The participant or authorised nominee makes the relevant NDIS request; The Helpers can organise the evidence, model the support, coordinate professional input and prepare the submission pack.

The funding submission should be the product of the journey, not the beginning of it. It should be able to explain what support is needed, how often, when, for how long, at what ratio, what family currently provides, what happens if support is absent, what trials have shown and what professional evidence confirms.

Keep these separate	Examples
Disability support	Support workers, supervision, prompting, personal care, overnight support, capacity building and relevant disability-related assistance.
Housing / the roof	Rent, mortgage, housing provider payments, SDA where separately eligible, or another housing arrangement.
Ordinary living costs	Food, utilities, internet, household contribution, personal expenses and other ordinary costs.
Professional evidence	OT, Physio, Speech Pathology, RN, Behaviour Support, GP/specialist or other evidence where it answers a real decision question.

11. Stage 5 - preparing the home and the support system

Once the chosen pathway and funding are sufficiently clear, Stage 5 finalises the operational support profile. The house, agreements, staffing, support plans, medication/mealtime/manual-handling or behaviour plans, worker competencies, emergency arrangements and transition schedule are put in place before the participant relies on the arrangement.

Where a pilot house is used before a permanent move, the same principles apply in a lighter form: clear participation and occupancy agreements, a booking schedule, support ratios, worker roster, safety controls, costs and a plan for what the pilot is intended to learn.

12. Stage 6 - living well is the ongoing test

The journey does not end when someone moves. Stage 6 asks whether life is actually working: does the participant feel safe and at home; are important relationships continuing; are workers reliable; are support ratios right; is the household compatible; are health and behaviour supports effective; are parents able to step back in the way they hoped; and what should change?

Actual support records and participant feedback also become valuable evidence if the NDIS plan later needs to change.

13. What The Helpers can do - and what remains your choice

The Helpers can…	The participant and family remain in control of…
Explain the pathway and organise the work.	Whether to start, pause, continue or stop the journey.
Help complete questionnaires and structure family information.	What the participant wants and what the family willingly agrees to do.
Arrange supported experiences and pilot opportunities where appropriate.	Whether a particular experience should be tried again or not.
Coordinate professionals and turn unanswered questions into targeted evidence requests.	Choice of professional and consent to share information.
Build support maps, rosters, funding models and submission documents.	Whether to ask the NDIS for a change and who acts as nominee/representative.
Explore housing partners and model housing costs.	Where the participant wants to live and whether a particular property feels right.
Provide disability supports where chosen and within scope.	Provider choice. Using The Helpers for one part of the journey does not require using The Helpers for everything.

> **As little or as much heavy lifting as you want**
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> Some families want The Helpers to coordinate almost everything. Others want information, a few tools and occasional help. The pathway is designed to support both.

14. What you do not need to do at the beginning

- You do not need to know whether SIL, ILO, SDA or another pathway is the answer.
- You do not need to find a house or housemates before joining.
- You do not need to upload every medical or allied-health report with the registration form.
- You do not need to decide when the participant will move.
- You do not need to promise that siblings or relatives will provide future care.
- You do not need to create a crisis to justify starting future planning.
- You do not need to use The Helpers for every service or provider role.

15. Registration: the first practical step

The Future Home & Living Journey Register is an expression of interest and consent form. It records basic participant details, who is completing the form, participant involvement, communication

preferences, broad hopes and worries, planning horizon, living preferences, support considerations, connection preferences and consent/authority boundaries.

Registration does not allocate housing, create a SIL application or commit the participant to a move. After registration, The Helpers should contact the participant/family, confirm preferences and consent, discuss what is most useful to do first, and identify the most appropriate starting point in the journey.

A good registration form should…	It should not…
Capture enough information to make the first conversation useful.	Demand a full clinical history.
Record the participant's involvement and preferred communication.	Assume a parent can share information without appropriate authority.
Ask about hopes, worries and time horizon.	Force a housing or SIL decision.
Ask what contact/opportunities the family wants to hear about.	Share identifying information with other families without specific consent.
Allow people to update preferences or leave the register.	Suggest registration guarantees funding, housing or a housemate.

16. What success looks like

Success is not defined by whether someone eventually enters SIL. Success is a future in which the participant has more genuine choice, family support is sustainable, important relationships are protected, housing and support arrangements are clear, the right evidence exists when decisions are needed, and the person can try, learn and change direction without being trapped by an earlier decision.

> **The outcome we are working toward**
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> A home and life directed by the person; reliable support that does not depend on one exhausted family member; parents who can remain parents; siblings who can remain siblings; and a system that can explain clearly what support is needed, why it is needed and how it will be delivered.

17. Important boundaries

This guide is an information and planning document. It does not determine NDIS eligibility or funding, provide legal or clinical advice, create a tenancy, or guarantee a housing outcome. NDIS policy, pricing, registration and planning processes can change. Current requirements should be checked when a funding, housing or service decision is actually being made.

The Future Home & Living Journey is designed to keep the participant's voice, consent, privacy and choice visible at every stage. Where a professional opinion is required, the relevant qualified professional should provide it. Where legal or tenancy advice is required, appropriate independent advice should be obtained.

Source and design note

This family guide is a rewritten opening paper for The Helpers Future Home & Living series. It draws on the earlier "Planning a Good Life Beyond the Family Home" evidence review, The Helpers Light Program Future Home & Living Pathway, the controlled Future Home & Living architecture, and the Stage 1-6 working papers, questionnaires, pilot tools, evidence system and operational support materials developed since the original series edition.

The underlying evidence principles remain: begin before crisis where possible; centre the participant's will and preferences; make unpaid family support visible without assuming it will continue; protect voluntary sibling roles; learn from real experiences; keep housing and disability support conceptually separate; obtain professional evidence only when it answers a relevant decision; and review whether the eventual arrangement is actually producing a good life.