



Checklist for choosing a care home



If possible you should visit care home that you are considering to make sure they meet your current and possible future needs.

You should not be asked to make an appointment and you can visit unannounced. You might like to have a checklist with you of points that are important to you in case you forget to ask something. Talking to staff, residents and managers can help you get an idea of what living there might be like. If you are visiting during normal visiting hours (usually during the afternoon) you can speak to relatives of residents to ask them what they think of the care home.

You can also ask to see any area of the home; not just the areas that the manager wants to show you, and you should feel able to visit more than once.

If you are looking for a care home for yourself or a member of your family, the following information is intended to help you make an informed choice.

Questions to ask

Location

- Is the home near to family and friends?
- Is it convenient for shops and public transport?
- What are the surroundings like?

Care

- Are you made welcome on arrival? Is there a welcoming atmosphere?
- Are residents treated with respect, consideration and affection? Do they have a degree of privacy if they wish it?



- Are residents allowed to choose where to be and what to do?
- Are there restriction times on visiting for the family, friends and other guests?
- Are residents allowed to leave the home to visit family or friends?
- Is the diet wholesome, varied and interesting? Have you been provided with copies of typical menus? Is there a choice of meals? Are individual dietary needs catered for? Why not ask to eat a meal with the residents when you visit.
- What refreshments are available throughout the day?
- Is there flexibility for getting up and going to bed?
- Are residents allowed visits from hairdressers, chiropodist, dentist, physiotherapist and other support agencies?
- Are trips and excursions available?
- Are you satisfied with the arrangements for spiritual needs?
- Are hobbies and activities catered for and encouraged?
- Are drugs and medicine securely stored and is their issue supervised? Can you have a choice of GP?

Accommodation

- Is there a current Registration Certificate prominently displayed
- Are there fire exits / extinguishers and are staff trained in fire procedures?
- Are alarm cords available and easy for residents to reach?

- Is the home clean and well decorated? Are the furnishings adequate and comfortable? Are residents allowed to bring their own furniture?
- Heating and cooling fans – are there individual controls?
- Is there a phone where residents can take calls in privacy and comfort? Can you install your own phone in your room?
- Is the manager or duty manager available at all reasonable times?
- Are the bedrooms pleasant and properly equipped? Are they en-suite and if not where is the nearest bathroom?
- Can residents lock their rooms?
- Are rooms such as the lounge and dining room pleasantly furnished? Is it possible to sit quietly?
- Are there extra wheelchairs, walking frames and other mobility aid available?
- Do residents have access to a garden or other private outdoor area? Is there somewhere to sit?
- Is there a lift?
- Is alcohol permitted?
- Are people allowed to smoke in any parts of the care home?

Personal Conduct

- Does the manager have a caring attitude towards residents?
- Does the staff duty rota provide continuous 24 hour cover by competent staff?
- What is the staff ratio to residents?
- Does the home operate a standard procedure to assess the care needs of potential residents?
- Is information on residents stored confidentially?
- Were you permitted / encouraged to talk in private to existing residents to seek their views on the suitability of the home? Did they look happy and well cared for?
- Does the home make provision of short-term accommodation for relatives of seriously ill residents?



Finances

- Will you be offered formal and comprehensive written contract of residence? How much notice is required on side to cancel the contract?
- If there is no standard contract, then terms should be agreed and a document setting out those terms should be signed by all parties including the council (if they arranging your care or contributing towards your care)
- Can you afford the fees on a long term basis?
- How often does the home increase fees? Will you be able to afford regular increases? Will you have to move if you can't?
- Are the fees payable in advance? If so, is there a refund if you leave?
- What do the fees include? Is there an extra charge for additional services such as laundry, hairdressing, newspapers, toiletries, extra care, incontinence pads and sheets, chiropody, physiotherapy?
- What proportion of the fees are payable in the cases of temporary absence such as holidays or hospital admission?
- What is the care home's approach to 'top-up' fees?



More information

You can find a list of local care homes in our online directory, Social Care Connect.

www.barnet.gov.uk/socialcareconnect

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) carry out inspection reports, which check on essential standards of quality and safety.

Website: www.cqc.org.uk

If you need this fact sheet in a different format, please contact the Adult Social Care and Health on:

Tel: 020 8359 7150

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