

Care home checklist



Helping you to choose
the right care home



We are Age UK.

Our network includes Age Cymru, Age NI, Age Scotland, Age International and more than 160 local partners.

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Every effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in this guide is correct. However, things do change, so it is always a good idea to seek expert advice on your personal situation.

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Introduction

Choosing a care home is one of the most important decisions you can make. After all, you want to be sure that your new home offers everything you need and is a place you will be happy to live in. Finding out as much as you can about a care home will help you to make an informed choice. Whether you're looking for a care home yourself or with support from the local council, you have a choice as to where you live.

Everyone has different ideas about what they want from where they live. What is especially important to you? This handy leaflet contains some of the questions that you might want to ask, with space on each page for your comments and a separate page for you to note down any other questions of your own. If someone's coming with you on the visit, you could go through your questions together beforehand and highlight the ones that are really important to you.

Remember that if you're not happy with something, you can ask the home for an explanation.

For more information and advice about looking for a care home, see our free guide *Care homes* and our free factsheet *Finding care home accommodation*. In Wales, see Age Cymru's free factsheet *Finding care home accommodation in Wales*.

Throughout this leaflet you will find suggestions for organisations that can offer further information and advice about your options. Their contact details can be found in the 'Useful organisations' section (see pages 29–33). Contact details for organisations near you can usually be found in the local phone book. If you have difficulty finding them, your local Age UK should be able to help (see page 29).

As far as possible, the information given in this leaflet is applicable across the UK.

Location and building

Q Where is the home?

A

Q Will visitors be able to get there easily?

A

Q Are there transport links near by?

A

Q Are facilities such as shops, pubs, parks and places of worship within easy reach?

A

Q Is the area noisy?

A

Q Are the buildings and grounds well maintained and accessible?

A

Q Will it be easy for you to enter and leave the building, and move between rooms and floors?

A

Q How good is the wheelchair access?

A

Q Is there a lift?

A

Q Does the home feel clean and inviting?

A

Q Does the home smell pleasant and fresh?

A

Q Do the rooms feel hot and stuffy or cold and draughty?

A

Q Are staff welcoming and interested? Do residents seem happy and occupied?

A

Q Will you feel comfortable chatting and socialising in the home's public areas?

A

Q Are chairs arranged in groups or round the edges of the rooms?

A

Q Is there a quiet living room for reading, as well as one with a television?

A

Q Do the bedrooms feel spacious? Can you bring your own furniture and personal belongings? Are they all en-suite?

A

Q How does the home ensure the environment supports people with sensory impairments or dementia?

A

Pros

Cons

Day-to-day life

Q Are there telephone facilities you can use in private?

A

Q Is there mobile phone reception?

A

Q Can you access the internet, either in your room or on a shared computer? Do there seem to be enough computers for the number of residents?

A

Q Are books and newspapers available?

A

Q Does a mobile library visit?

A

Q Does the home arrange outings to the shops, entertainment venues or places of worship?

A

Q If you have pets, can you take them with you?
If not, contact the Cinnamon Trust for help with rehousing them (see page 31).

A

Q Does the home have its own pets?

A

Q How do staff get to know about a resident's life and experiences before they started living in the care home?

A

Q Does the home provide information on activities, or have an Activities Co-ordinator?

A

Q Are there any physical activities, such as exercise groups or gardening?

A

Q How will you be told about upcoming events?

A

Q Are you encouraged to stay active and do as much as you can for yourself?

A

Q What security arrangements are in place to ensure residents are kept safe?

A

Q Can you go outside for fresh air when you want to? Is there an outdoor seating area?

A

Q Are you allowed to make choices about your daily routine such as when you get up, go to bed, eat, get dressed, or go out?

A

Q Can you choose which clothes to wear each day? What are the laundry arrangements?

A

Q Do they provide single-sex facilities?

A

Q Are there any restrictions on visiting times or numbers of visitors?

A

Q Where can you spend time with your visitors?

A

Q Are there facilities for visitors to stay overnight?

A

Q Are young children welcome?

A

Q Is the home right for your cultural and religious needs?

A

Q Are there members of staff who speak your language?

A

Q Can the home meet your dietary needs?

A

Q Are there plenty of residents you feel you could socialise with?

A

Q Are there other residents from a similar background to you?

A

Q Is food prepared on the premises? Is there a choice of food, and when and where it can be eaten? Does the menu rotate on a weekly or monthly basis? Can you see sample menus?

A

Q How are special diets catered for?

A

Q Can you prepare food and drink for yourself?

A

Q Do existing residents enjoy the food and can you try it?

A

Q Are details of the complaints procedure readily available?

A

Q Are you encouraged to give feedback?

A

Q Is there a residents' and/or relatives' committee?

A

Q Do you have access to advocacy services?

A

Pros

Cons

Your care needs

Q Is the home registered to provide the level of care you need?

A

Q Will the home carry out its own assessment before agreeing to accept you?

A

Q Do the other residents seem to have a similar level of need to you?

A

Q What will happen if your needs change or increase?

A

Q Does the home have bathing facilities that meet your needs?

A

Q If you need help with bathing, who will provide this?

A

Q Can you choose how often you have a bath or shower?

A

Q Are toilets available in all parts of the home?

A

Q Are they equipped with handrails and other mobility aids?

A

Q Are you helped to the toilet when you need to go, if necessary?

A

Q Is there a policy on when incontinence pads and catheters are used?

A

Q Can you keep your own GP? If not, what are your options? Can you access other health services such as opticians, dentists and chiropodists?

A

Q Who decides when a check-up is needed?

A

Q What are the travel arrangements for regular hospital and clinic visits? Can staff accompany residents if necessary? Are there costs for transport?

A

Q How will the home let friends and family know if you're taken ill?

A

Q What support does the care home provide in relation to end-of-life care? Are they aware of local NHS support services?

A

Q How many staff are employed per resident?

A

Q How are staff trained? What qualifications do they have?

A

Q Is there a manager on duty at all times?

A

Q What is the turnover of staff?

A

Pros

Cons

Contracts and fees

Q Can you see a copy of the home's brochure?

A

Q Can you see copies of recent Care Quality Commission inspection reports (or equivalent in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland – see pages 30–32 for details)?

A

Q Can you see a copy of the home's contract/ written conditions?

A

Q Can you come in for a trial period? What happens if you're unhappy with the home once you move in?

A

Q What are the home's fees? Do they require any advance payment or deposit?

A

Q Is it clear how the fees are structured and calculated? How frequently are they reviewed?

A

Q How are NHS nursing care payments accounted for in the fee structure? In Scotland, how are nursing care payments or free personal care taken into account when the fees are calculated?

A

Q How are fees collected?

A

Q Do self-funding and local-authority-assisted residents (in Northern Ireland, Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT)-assisted residents) pay the same rates?

A

Q Is a top-up payment required if you're being placed by the local authority (in Northern Ireland, if you're HSCT-assisted)? You shouldn't generally have to make a top-up payment.

A

Q Are extra items not covered by the basic fees clearly identified and accounted for?

A

Q What arrangements are there for handling your personal money?

A

Q How are your valuables kept secure? Are they covered by the home's insurance?

A

Q What are the terms for keeping your room if you have to go into hospital?

A

Q What are the notice conditions in the contract?

A

Q Are any fees payable after a resident's death and how soon do personal belongings need to be removed?

A

Q Any other questions (see pages 26–27)?

A

Pros

Cons

Useful organisations

Age UK

We provide advice and information for people in later life through our Age UK Advice line, publications and online.

Age UK Advice: 0800 169 65 65

Lines are open seven days a week from 8am to 7pm.

www.ageuk.org.uk

Call Age UK Advice to find out whether there is a local Age UK near you, and to order free copies of our information guides and factsheets.

In Wales, contact

Age Cymru: 0800 022 3344

www.agecymru.org.uk

In Northern Ireland, contact

Age NI: 0808 808 7575

www.ageni.org

In Scotland, contact

Age Scotland: 0845 125 9732

www.agescotland.org.uk

Care Inspectorate (Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland)

Regulatory body for care and children's services in Scotland.

Compass House
11 Riverside Drive
Dundee DD1 4NY

Tel: 0845 600 9527

Email: enquiries@scswis.com

www.scswis.com

Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW)

Regulatory body for care homes and domiciliary care providers in Wales. Can provide lists of care homes for a specific area and care home inspection reports.

Welsh Government
Rhydycar Business Park
Merthyr Tydfil CF48 1UZ

Tel: 0300 062 8800

Email: cssiw@wales.gsi.gov.uk

www.cssiw.org.uk

Care Quality Commission

Responsible for regulating health and social care services in England. Provides information on care homes in a specific area, care home inspection reports and an easy-to-read tick system to show whether a registered care home meets a range of essential standards.

Citygate
Gallowgate
Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 4PA

Tel: 03000 61 61 61
www.cqc.org.uk

Cinnamon Trust

Specialist charity for older people and their pets. It can help to rehouse your pet if you're unable to take it with you into a care home.

10 Market Square, Hayle
Cornwall TR27 4HE

Tel: 01736 757 900
www.cinnamon.org.uk

Elderly Accommodation Counsel

Provides lists of care homes in different areas of the country and offers free housing advice.

EAC FirstStop Advice,
89 Albert Embankment
London SE1 7TP

Advice line: 0800 377 7070
Email: info@firststopadvice.org.uk
www.housingcare.org

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA)

Regulatory body for health and social care in Northern Ireland. Duties include regulating and inspecting nursing and residential care homes.

9th Floor, Riverside Tower, 5 Lanyon Place
Belfast BT1 3BT

Tel: 028 9051 7500
Email: info@rqia.org.uk
www.rqia.org.uk

Relatives and Residents Association

Supports care home residents and their relatives.
Operates a helpline and has a network of local groups.

1 The Ivories
6–18 Northampton Street
London N1 2HY

Adviceline: 020 7359 8136

Email: info@relres.org

www.relres.org

Age UK Advice
0800 169 65 65
www.ageuk.org.uk



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