

Choosing the right Care Home

Choosing the right care home is one of the most important decisions you or your loved ones can make. You will want to be sure it has everything you need and is a place you feel happy to live in. It is important you find out the most about care homes so you can make an informed choice.

Everyone has different ideas about what they want from a care home. We have put together some details we feel are valuable in choosing the right home. This information along with our checklist may help when visiting prospective homes.

When viewing a possible home

- Don't book an appointment, drop in unexpectedly; you will then see the home as it really is and can be sure it has not been prepared for you in advance and is a true reflection of how the home works.
- Lunch & tea times are a good opportunity to see the homes at one of the key times of the day. The atmosphere, staff, quality of food being presented and what the mealtime experience is like. You can possibly talk to residents and see if they are enjoying their meals. Ask to sample what is being served; meals are the biggest part of resident's days.
- Ask to meet a selection of staff from: Manager, Care staff, Catering and Activities person. This allows you to have a cross section of viewpoints of the home and provides access to key areas.
- The location of the home is a key factor in encouraging relatives and friends to visit frequently. Having close relatives and friends frequently visit is vital for anyone with dementia and contributes to their wellbeing and adjusting to a new environment.
- What are the visiting times are there any restrictions? Can you come and dine with your relative in the home?

On entering the home your first impressions are very important, all your senses will register different aspects of the home and this will be the same for your relative:

- Where you given a warm welcome from the staff member opening the door.
- Are you offered refreshments and invited to take a seat?
- Does the home have bad odours, can you smell home cooking, is there a strong chemical smell like air freshener or bleach?
- How is the home presented, is it clean? Is there attention to detail?
- Does the environment feel comfortable, homely and personal?
- Is it excessively noisy or is it calm? Can you hear music in the background?
- Observe the staff are they relaxed, smiling and approachable or do they seem rushed?

When being shown around the home, this should be a relaxed and comprehensive viewing experience. It should not be rushed and limited to certain areas.

- On your tour do you see staff interacting with the residents?
- Are the lounges configured so they encourage interaction or are all chairs lined up alongside one another?
- Request to see the bathrooms, there should be a wet room & a separate bathroom so residents have a choice.
- Seek the opportunity to speak to residents, staff and any relatives, which may be visiting?
- Ask to see the homes current CQC inspection report? This should be displayed in a public area along with the homes complaint policy & procedure.
- Are the front and rear gardens well maintained? Is there disability access to outside areas?
- What opportunities are there for your relative to have exercise? Do external therapists attend the home to hold classes?

Catering & Activities

- Ask to see the kitchen & request to see the menus. Do these provide a choice of meals daily?
- Can meals be taken in the bedrooms and at times that suit your relative? Is food available 24hrs a day?
- Does the home cater for specific dietary requirements and care about what food your relative likes or dislikes?
- Communal areas, is there a choice of areas and facilities, quiet areas, music room, hair salon?
- If they have an activity room, is there evidence it is being used and is there evidence of activities being carried out by the residents?
- Ask about what forthcoming activities & trips are planned and if they are regular (Is there a timetable on display)? Are there pictures of recent activities on display?
- Does the home provide a range of activities is it person centred?

Bedrooms

- Request to see as many bedrooms as possible? Residents may be moved around depending on their changing care needs and so its good the see the home can offer choice?
- Can your relatives bring in some of their own personal effects to their bedroom?
- Does the bedroom have ensuite facilities if not where is the nearest bathroom?
- Is the room attractive, well decorated and bright? If the room looks tired and worn ask if it will be decorated before a new admission.
- If specialist equipment is required like hoists or slings are these available in the home?
- Personal Care Needs
- Are you asked about your relative, what was there background & medical background? The manager should get a clear personal profile of your relative before being sure the home can meet their needs?
- Are you encouraged to become involved & contribute to the your relatives care file?
- If your relatives care needs change can the home accommodate these changes or will they have to move to another home?
- The home should help you understand all the care cost implications of your relative moving into the home. How the care will be funded depending on savings and any contributions you may have to make?
- Does the home operate a key worker system, so your relatives has dedicated care staff?

Choosing a Care Home Check sheet

Name of Home _____

First impressions

- Did the staff seem warm, friendly and polite?
- Do the residents seem happy, active and sociable?
- Does the home feel homely and welcoming?
- Does the home feel clean and inviting?

Location & Outside space

- Is the home in the location you prefer?
- Will visitors be able to get there easily?
- Is it a noisy location?
- Are the views pleasant?
- Can residents use the gardens?
- Is there an outdoor seating area?
- Are the grounds and gardens attractive?

Accommodation & Facilities

- Is the home well decorated, bright and cheery?
- Does it feel secure, can people wander into the home?
- Will you feel comfortable chatting and socialising in the home's communal areas?
- Is there a quiet living room for reading, as well as one with a television?
- Can you bring your own furniture and personal belongings?
- Is there a call bell system fitted and easily accessible?
- Are there any restrictions on visiting times or numbers of visitors?
- Does the home have the right adaptations and equipment to meet your needs?
- Does the home have extra wheelchairs and walking aids?
- Are laundry and room cleaning included?
- 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?
- Can you choose which clothes to wear each day?
- Does a chiropodist/physiotherapist/hairdresser/dentist/optician visit regularly?
- Can you keep your own GP? If not, what are your options?
- What are the travel arrangements for regular hospital and clinic visits? Can staff accompany residents if necessary?
- Are there costs for transport?

Catering & Activities

- Is there a separate dining room?
- Can the home meet your dietary needs?
- Are special diets catered for?
- Can you prepare food and drink yourself?
- Can you choose to eat in your room, if you prefer?
- Does the home provide information on activities, or have an Activities Co-ordinators?

Care & Contract

- Does the home have CQC compliance Policies & Procedures?
- Are details of the complaints procedure readily available?
- Is the home registered to provide the level of care you need?
- What will happen if your needs change or increase?
- How will the home let friends and family know if you're taken ill?
- How many staff are employed per resident in the home?
- How are staff trained and what qualifications do they have?
- Is there a manager on duty at all times?
- Can you see a copy of the homes contract/written conditions?
- Are any top-up payments required if you're being placed by the local authority?
- Did the home clearly explain the fees? Would any deposit or advance payment be required?
- Are extra items not covered by the basic fees clearly identified and accounted for?
- What arrangements are there for handling your personal money?
- How are your valuables kept secure?
- What are the terms for keeping your room if you have to go into hospital?
- What are the notice conditions in the contract?

