

## Choosing a care home

Moving into a care home will always involve some degree of stress and it's best to plan ahead, if you have the opportunity to do so. Making a choice will be easier if there's time to consider what you or your relative needs, what's available and the costs involved.

### Types of care home

All establishments providing accommodation with personal or nursing care are now described as 'care homes'. Homes which are registered to provide nursing care, formerly known as **nursing homes**, are sometimes referred to as 'care homes which provide nursing care' to differentiate them from homes which are registered for personal care only which used to be called **residential homes**. Some homes have dual registration and provide both types of care.

Care homes may cater specially for people with learning disabilities, sensory disability or specific physical or mental illnesses. Homes for elderly people with some form of dementia are sometimes referred to as 'EMI' homes – EMI stands for 'elderly mentally infirm' or 'elderly mentally ill'.

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) has responsibility for the registration of care homes. CQC Inspection Reports are available for most care homes. CQC contact details are on page 3.

### Funding

Depending on your needs and financial status, the local authority and/or NHS may partly or fully fund your care. Contact Social Care Services who will arrange an assessment to decide what type of care you will need and how it will be funded. With additional help and support in place, it may be possible to remain at home. Your views **must** be considered during this process.

If the local authority is likely to be funding a care home, your choice may be limited – it may not be able to cover the cost of more expensive homes, for example. Always contact social care services to clarify your position.

If you are paying the full cost yourself, you do not have to go through the local authority. However, if there's a chance that you may need help with fees in the future, it's best to have your needs assessed before making private arrangements.

### What should I look for when choosing a care home?

#### Location

- Are you familiar with the area?
- Is it near to facilities such as shops, parks or places of worship?
- What about transport? Can it be reached by relatives and friends?



## Appearance

- Is it too big or too small? A large home could feel intimidating, a small one claustrophobic.
- Does it seem homely and welcoming?
- Is it well cared-for? Does it look and smell clean?
- Does it seem too noisy or too quiet? For some people silence can be as painful as too much noise and activity.
- Is it accessible? Is there a lift? Is it wheelchair friendly?
- Is there a sitting-out area?

## Personal needs

- Is there a choice of rooms? Are all the rooms en-suite?
- Are personal belongings and furniture allowed?
- Can residents have their own TV or telephone?
- Daily routine - is there a choice regarding getting up and bedtime, having meals in your room, bathing?
- Will it be necessary to change GP?
- Are there facilities for hairdressing, chiropody etc.?
- Can pets be accommodated? Can pets visit?

## Life in the home

- Do residents seem happy, cared for and interested in what's happening?
- An opportunity to chat to residents may provide useful comments.
- What are the meals like? A visit at mealtimes will give an idea of the quality, quantity and service of food.
- Is there a choice of menu? Are special diets catered for?
- Are there any restrictions on visiting times or numbers of visitors? Can visitors have meals or stay overnight?
- What leisure activities are available? Does the home offer outings?

## Staff

- How are you greeted? What is your first impression?
- How do staff talk to residents – are they friendly and polite? How do residents respond? Are there staff who speak your language?
- Do staff respect privacy - knock/ask permission before entering residents' rooms?
- Ask about staffing levels – day and night.
- What about training? Are staff trained to deal with particular conditions such as dementia or sensory impairments?

## Further questions

- Does the home have a waiting list? If you really like a home, it's worth joining the list – if necessary, join several waiting lists.
- Are there any extra charges – outings, laundry, hairdressing etc.?
- Are there trial stays? If so, for how long?



## Further questions *continued*

- What happens if someone becomes more dependent through illness or becomes incontinent, for instance?
- What support does the home provide in relation to end-of-life care?
- Do they provide copies of their specification for care or written contract for residents? (If a local authority were to provide funding, they would have the contract with the home).
- How much notice is needed if someone wants to leave?

## Further information

National organisations which can provide information on finding and paying for care include:

<b>Age UK</b>	<b>0800 055 6112</b>	<b>ageuk.org.uk</b>
<b>Care Quality Commission</b> (Monitors, inspects and regulates care homes)	<b>03000 616161</b>	<b>cqc.org.uk</b>
<b>Independent Age</b>	<b>0800 319 6789</b>	<b>independentage.org</b>

If you need further information or would like to discuss any aspect of your caring role, please contact Carers' Resource:

**Harrogate 01423 500555**  
11 North Park Road, Harrogate, HG1 5PD

**Bradford 01274 449660**  
15 Park View Court, St Paul's Road, Shipley, BD18 3DZ

**Ripon 01765 690222**  
Community House, Sharow View, Allhallowgate, Ripon, HG4 1LE

**Skipton 01756 700888**  
Ronaldsway House, 36 Brook St, Skipton, BD23 1PP

**info@carersresource.org**      **www.carersresource.org**

We can provide this information in another format. Please contact us to discuss your requirements.

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