



A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO FINDING A CARE HOME

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Types of Care Home

- **Residential care homes** look after a person's general living requirements, such as accommodation and meals, as well as helping with personal care, such as washing and bathing.
- **Nursing homes** provide nursing care as well as personal care. They have a registered nurse on site 24 hours a day.
- Some care homes are registered as **dementia care homes**. They specialise in providing care and support for people with dementia. These can be either residential or nursing homes.

Looking for the right care home can be particularly **stressful**, especially when you don't know where to start or have to do it quickly due to a rapid deterioration in a person's health who requires care. In my experience **people do tend to be reactive rather than proactive** and leave it too late and seek to find a care home when there is a critically need.

The first step to finding a suitable care home is to find a **list of care homes in the area**, that are able to **support your loved ones care needs**, this can be done a number of ways but a very good tool for this is.

www.carehomes.co.uk This is a website that provides full details of the care homes in your area but also operates a trip advisor style review system, where residents and families can leave a review of the service. This gives you a very **good insight into** what the **service** is like to live in and the **kind of care you loved one is likely to receive**.

www.cqc.org.uk This is the **regulatory body for England** and here you can find the most recent report on the care homes which will detail any regulatory issues the home might have and give you a good overall indication of how the home is run. The CQC currently focus on 5 key lines of enquiry to establish if the home is **Caring, Safe, Effective, Responsive and Well Lead**.

Who arranges the care home placement.

Deciding who **arranges a place in a care home will depend on who is paying**. Sometimes the **local authority, health and social care trust or the NHS** will fund a person's care. In this case, **these organisations may organise a care home placement**.

If the person is **paying for their own care**, they or someone acting on their behalf, can **arrange a place independently**. Someone paying for their own care can also **ask the local authority to arrange it for them but there will be administration costs**.

If the **local authority, health and social care trust or NHS is funding the person's care**, they will usually provide a **list of suitable care homes that the person can choose from**. In this instance a care home is suitable if it:

- meets the person's **needs**
- meets the local authority's or health and social care trust's **budget**
- has a **place** available.

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The **choice** of suitable care homes may be **restricted because of the cost of the home**, but the **primary focus** should be on **meeting the person's needs**. The **care home** must also be **willing to sign a contract with the local authority or trust**.

Finding a care home independently

Once you have a **list of the homes in your area** that can support the care needs of your loved one. You will need to try and **narrow down which ones would be most suitable** to the individual requiring care, the following tips should help with this process.

Start by **calling those care homes you have shortlisted** to find out the following information.

- **Type of care** they provide and if they could meet the individual's needs.
- **Cost of the care** home placement and **what that covers**.
- Whether there is **availability** and if there is a **waiting list**.

Once you have this information you can then **choose the care homes you wish to visit**, this is an **essential step as all care homes are very different** and can have a substantially **different feel from one home to the next**.

When **visiting the homes**, you have selected it will give you a **good overall feel for how the home is run**. You may want to arrange for a **second or third visit** and **alter the times** of the visit, so you get to **see the home at different times**.

You can also **turn up unannounced** to have a look around, but **homes are very busy places** and although any **good home** will do their very **best to accommodate a viewing** I would always recommend **calling ahead** particularly in light of **Covid-19 restrictions** and managing the **home safely**.

If you are visiting **with the individual who requires care**, take some time prior to the visit to ensure you log details about the **persons interests, likes and dislikes** to ensure the home can **meet their needs in a person centred way**. Ensure the **person is involved as much as possible in the visit** and **gain feedback** about how they **feel about the service** as **your** feeling and **theirs** may well be **quite different**.

First impressions can be a good sign of how the home is run.

- Are you **greeted in a friendly way** when you arrive?
- Is the atmosphere **homely and welcoming**?
- Is the home **clean**, and **pleasantly decorated and furnished**?
- Is the **decoration appropriate**? For example, not too much **clutter, plain carpets and walls, good use of contrasting colours** especially on walls and furniture.
- Are there any **unpleasant smells**?
- Is the environment **stimulating for residents** –for example, are there **features or activities** that the person can **engage** with?
- Is there appropriate **signage to support people with dementia**? For example, **signs with pictures and words for toilets**.
- Does the home have plenty of **natural light**, and is the **lighting suitable**? For example, **not too bright or too much glare**.

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The best way to tell if a home is good is to look at how well the **residents are treated and their general wellbeing**. You may want to **speak to residents and those who support them to find out about this**.

- Are residents treated with **dignity and respect**? For example, are they **addressed by their preferred name**, and in a **friendly and respectful manner**?
- Are they involved in **meaningful activities**, such as **listening to music** they enjoy or **socialising** with one another?
- Does the home **see the person as an individual** and take an **interest in their hobbies and relationships**, rather than focusing on their condition? This is sometimes known as providing **'person-centred care'**.
- What are the **home's routines** like? Can people **go to bed when they want**? What if they **get up at night**? What if they are **hungry at night**?
- Do residents have a **care plan** (a document that summarises how staff can meet the needs of the person)? **How often is it reviewed**? **Who is involved** in the review?
- Does the home use **digital or electronic care plans**? Can these be **shared with relatives**?

Washing, dressing and personal care

A good care home will ensure residents **look well and attend to their personal grooming**, things to consider might be?

- How **often do residents bathe or shower**? Can a **person decide** what they would prefer? Can the person **choose when they bathe**?
- Are residents' **clothes clean**? Can they **choose what they like to wear** and **get help with getting dressed**, if necessary?
- If **aspects** of a person's **appearance are important to them** because of **religious or cultural reasons** such as covering their hair or wearing a crucifix, **do staff respect this and know what to do**?

Staffing

A good home will ensure it has **helpful and friendly staff**, who are able to **assist** the individual who requires care.

- Do staff interact in a **friendly and caring manner** with the people who use the service.
- Does the **Manager** have a **friendly interaction with the staff** in the home.
- Do staff **talk to you freely** as you look around the home and are they able to **answer questions about the home**.
- Does the home **use agency staff to cover shortfalls** in the rota.

Visitors

It is important for those close to the person, such as **family and friends**, to be able to **visit them regularly**.

- Are **visitors welcome at any time**?
- Are there **quiet areas** where visitors can **spend time with residents**?

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- Are visitors **encouraged** and supported to **take residents out**, or **join them for a meal**? Some homes **allow visitors** to come and **eat with their relative**.
- Are those close to the person **supported to become involved in the life of the home** – for example, is there a **relatives' support group**?
- Can residents use **Skype (or other similar technology)** as a way of **keeping in touch with relatives and friends**?

Location

Where a home is **situated** can be an important factor in deciding whether it is suitable.

- Is the home in a **good location** for the person with **dementia** and **people who will visit them**?
- Are there **shops, a park, a pub or place for worship** nearby for residents who enjoy going out?
- Do other **people from the community** come into the home – for example, a **local choir, religious leader, schoolchildren, or volunteers**?

Security and safety

It's important to know that a **person with dementia** will be in a **safe and supportive environment**. However, life can never be completely risk-free and they should also be supported to **take appropriate risks** and live as **normal a life as possible**. A care home can help a person stay safe.

Consider the following.

- Are people **overly restricted**? Are they **prevented from doing lots of things** to keep them safe? Are **restrictions applied to everyone** in the home in the same way **without their individual circumstances** being thought about?
- What measures are taken to **reduce the risk of falls**? Does the home use **motion sensors or pressure mats** to help **prevent falls**?
- Are **call systems** in place if the person needs help?

Bedrooms

The person requiring care should have a bedroom that is **comfortable and meets their needs**. They should feel that the room is **their own**, you may want to ask if...

- Are residents **encouraged** to bring in some of their **own furniture and possessions**?
- Is there an **en-suite toilet or an en-suite shower** with the room? **If not**, where is the **nearest toilet or shower**?
- Are the **bedrooms well-lit and appropriately decorated**? Can residents **decorate their room** if they want to?
- Can residents **go to their rooms when they want to be alone**?
- Does the home **provide the T.V**
- Is there a **phone** in the room?

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Living areas

The communal living areas of the home may be where a **person spends most of their time**. These should be organised, so people **feel engaged and supported**.

- Are **chairs** arranged in small groups to **encourage socialising**, rather than placed around the **outside of the room**?
- Is there **more than one room** where residents can sit? Is there **somewhere** they can **have some quiet time or see visitors**?
- Are there **areas** for the person to do things like **read or play a card game**?
- Is there **outdoor space** for people to use? Is it **user friendly** – for example, having a **clear path, places to sit and shaded areas**?

Food and drink

Many people need some **support** to make sure they are **eating and drinking properly**

- Does the home cater for people with **special diets**? Are residents' **likes and dislikes** as well as **medical, religious and cultural requirements** taken into account? For example, how do they **support** people who are **vegetarian or vegan**, or living with **diabetes**?
- Is a **choice of food** offered at mealtimes? Ask whether you can **see the current menu**.
- Are **meals** offered in the home **healthy and well balanced**?
- Can residents **eat in their rooms**, or eat at **different times** if they prefer? **How is this managed**?

Health and wellbeing

People who are living in a care home are likely to have a **range of health and care needs**. The right home should be able to **support** these.

- **What happens** if residents are **unwell or need medication**?
- What **medical services do residents have access to**, for example, **doctors, community mental health teams, continence advisers, physiotherapists, opticians and dentists**?
- Can the person **remain with their own GP**, or will they need to **register with one that the home uses**?
- Will residents have **regular sight and hearing tests**? How are these **carried out**?

Activities

Residents should have the **opportunity to take part in stimulating activities**, both **individually** and in **groups**, if they want to.

- Does the home provide **personalised activities** that are **suitable and engaging** for the person?
- Is there an **activities programme**? Is it **varied and enjoyable** for residents? Does it **make allowances for individual needs** – for example, **seated exercises** for less mobile residents?
- Are residents supported to **continue with past hobbies and interests, and begin new ones**, if they want to?

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- Are there opportunities for residents to **help staff with tasks**, such as **setting the tables or gardening**?
- Do staff support residents to **get outside the home** and do things outside of the home – for example, going to a **place of worship or visiting their local pub** – if they want to?
- Are there any **organised trips and outings**? Do they **celebrate** special events such as **birthdays** or cultural events like **Easter**.
- Are residents **encouraged and supported to exercise**?
- Are residents able to **choose what they want to do when they feel like it** – for example, **listening to music or taking a walk outside**?

Contracts

If the person's place at the home has been arranged through **the local authority**, there will be a contract between the **home and the local authority**. You can **ask to see a copy**.

If you are arranging a home **independently**, make sure you have a **contract with the home**. If you need to, **get advice** from a **solicitor or Citizens Advice** before signing any agreement.

- Is there an **up-front charge** that needs to be paid when the person moves in? Is the **deposit refundable**?
- What is **included in the weekly fee**? What may be charged as **'extras'**?
- How much **notice** is given if the **fees are raised**?
- What kind of **care and services** can **residents expect**?
- What happens if a **resident's condition worsens**? Can they **remain in the home** and, if not, **how are alternative arrangements made**?
- What is the **notice period to terminate the contract** from either side?

Further Information

For further advice, please speak to your Group Almoner or our specialist Care Home Advocate:

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