

# Care home checklist

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Things to look out for  
and questions to ask  
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# First impressions

- Are the buildings and grounds well maintained?
- Is there an accessible garden or courtyard?
- Do the home and garden feel inviting?
- Are there pleasant views surrounding the home?
- Do the staff seem welcoming?
- Is the home clean and does it smell fresh?
- Are the rooms a comfortable temperature?
- Are the rooms well decorated?

# Accessibility

- Are friends and family able to get there easily?
- Are there enough parking spaces at the home?
- Are facilities such as shops, parks and places of worship within easy reach and accessible?
- Is there good wheelchair access into and within the building, including wide doorways?

# Staff

Are staff welcoming and interested?

Do the staff get to know about residents' lives and experiences?

Is there a manager in post and a senior member of staff on duty at all times?

Is there a suitable ratio of staff to residents during the day, at night and at weekends?

Can residents choose if they have a male or female carer?

How are staff trained, how often and by whom?

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Are all staff trained in caring for residents with dementia?

Do the staff have care qualifications?

Is there a high staff turnover? (If so, this could be a sign of low staff morale)

# Meeting care needs

- Does the home assess new residents' situations and needs before agreeing to accept them?
- Do staff have experience of caring for any particular health condition your relative has?
- Do residents have a named member of staff who is particularly responsible for their care?
- Are residents and their families involved in decisions about their care?
- Do residents seem to have a similar level of need to your relative?
- If your relative's needs change or increase, can they still be met in the same home?
- Do the bathroom facilities meet your relative's needs?
- Are accessible toilets available in all parts of the home and easy to get to?
- Are residents helped to the toilet, if needed?

Do toilets have handrails, raised toilet seats and mobility aids?

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

Does the home link with a specific GP practice for residents?

Do health staff such as opticians and chiropodists visit regularly?

Who decides when a health check-up is needed?

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Are there travel arrangements for regular hospital and clinic visits and do staff accompany residents, and is there a charge for this?

How does the home support those with sensory impairments or dementia?

How does the home let family or friends know if a resident is taken ill?

Can the home offer support for end-of-life care?

# Day-to-day considerations

What security arrangements are in place to make sure residents are safe?

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Is there a resident's call-bell system?

Does the home use signs or pictures to show where things are?

Can residents choose their routine, such as when they get up and go to bed?

Can residents choose what they wear?

Can staff ensure that clothes don't get mixed up between residents?

Can residents bring their own furniture and belongings?

Is there secure storage in the bedrooms?

Are there arrangements for handling personal money?

Would your relative have to share a bathroom or bedroom?

Can residents choose whether they have a bath or shower and how often?

Is there a mix of female and male residents?

## Food

Do residents usually eat together, or can they choose to eat in their rooms?

Is there a choice of food and can you see sample menus?

How often does the menu change?

Are snacks available during the day or at night?

Is food prepared on the premises?

Can the home meet your relative's dietary needs?

Can residents and visitors make their own drinks?

Can residents store food in their room?

# Social life and activities

- Are residents encouraged to stay active and do as much as they can for themselves?
- Is there an activities co-ordinator?
- Do residents seem happy and occupied?
- Are there lounges or social areas with furniture arranged to allow small groups to socialise?
- Are staff sitting and chatting with the residents?
- Would your relative feel comfortable socialising in the home's common areas?
- Do staff read to those with sight impairment?
- Does the home have its own pets, or can residents bring their own pets?
- Are there facilities such as: a radio, reading room, TV room, newspapers, books or a mobile library, public phone, shared computers, internet reception and hairdressing services?



Are there regular social activities such as: music or singing, reminiscence groups, exercise classes, gardening, celebrations for special occasions and visits from entertainers, and outings to shops, entertainment venues or places of worship?

## Having visitors

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

Are there facilities for visitors to stay overnight?

Are young children welcome?

Is there a space for residents to spend time with visitors?

Are visitors able to visit during meal times and can they have meals with residents?

# Contracts and fees

Can you see a copy of the home's contract and terms and conditions?

Can your relative stay for a trial period?

What happens if they're unhappy with the home once they move in?

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Are valuables covered by the home's insurance?

What are the terms for keeping the room if your relative has to go into hospital?

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Are notice conditions to terminate the contract reasonable?

What are the home's fees?

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Is it clear how the fees are structured, calculated and collected?

- Is a deposit or advance payment required?
- Are fees reviewed each year?
- If it's a nursing home, how are NHS-funded nursing care payments accounted for in the fee structure?
- Are extra items or services not covered by the basic fees clearly identified and accounted for?
- Are any fees payable after a resident's death?

## Feedback and complaints

- Are you encouraged to give feedback?
- Is the complaints procedure readily available?
- Are families encouraged to be involved in the life of the home?
- Is the manager accessible and approachable?
- Can staff explain the procedures if there are serious incidents, complaints or safeguarding concerns raised?



**Age UK Advice**  
0800 169 65 65  
[www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk)



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