Care home checklist

Things to look out for and questions to ask

Age UK
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Making the most of your checklist

We've put this checklist together to help you find the best care home for you.

The first section (page 3) covers some of the things it's worth thinking about when you're considering a move. It suggests questions you might like to ask when you're visiting care homes.

The second section (page 13) is there for when you've picked a care home that's suitable for you. It covers some of the things you might need to do before making the move. We've also included space for you to jot down a plan for moving day (page 15).

Visiting care homes

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? ☐

Accessibility

- Are friends and family able to get there easily? ☐
- Are there enough parking spaces? ☐
- 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 the 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, if necessary? ☐

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 accepting them? ☐

Do staff have experience of caring for any particular health conditions? ☐

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 you? ☐

If your needs change or increase, can they still be met in the same home? ☐

Do the bathroom facilities meet your needs? ☐

Are accessible toilets available 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? ☐

Is the home linked 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?

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

Does the home support those with sensory impairments or dementia? ☐

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?

Is there a residents' 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? Should clothes be labelled? ☐

Can residents bring their own furniture and belongings? ☐

Is there secure storage in the bedrooms? ☐

Are there arrangements for handling personal money? ☐

Would you 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? ☐

Will your language needs be met (for instance, if English isn't your first language, or you use sign language)? ☐

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? ☐

Do menus change often? ☐

Are snacks available during the day or at night? ☐

Is food prepared on the premises? ☐

Can the home meet your 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 you feel comfortable socialising in the home's common areas? ☐

Do staff read to those with sight impairments? ☐

Does the home have pets, or can residents bring their own pets? ☐

Are there facilities such as: a radio, a reading room, a TV room, newspapers, books or a mobile library, a public phone, shared computers, internet, and hairdressing services? ☐

Are there regular social activities such as: music or singing, reminiscence groups, exercise classes, gardening, celebrations for special occasions, 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 you stay for a trial period? ☐

What happens if you're unhappy with the home after moving in?

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Are valuables covered by the home's insurance? ☐

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

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Are the 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, are NHS-funded nursing care payments accounted for in the fee structure? ☐

Are any 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 available and approachable? ☐

Can staff explain the procedures if there are serious incidents, complaints or safeguarding concerns? ☐

Making the move

Let people know you're moving

Before you move, think about who'll need to know you've moved into a care home. In particular, you should let the following know:

- your GP ☐
- any support or care service providers ☐
- the local council (for Council Tax etc.) ☐
- any relevant benefit department for benefits you receive – for example, Pension Credit ☐
- TV Licensing ☐
- your bank ☐

Sort your bills and utilities

End any contracts you don't need anymore, such as broadband ☐

End or update any utilities contracts ☐

Sort out insurance

End any policies that are no longer relevant ☐

Find out whether the care home has an insurance policy and whether you need to take out any additional cover, such as contents insurance ☐

Set up any relevant empty house cover ☐

Sort out what you'll bring with you

Set up or update any delivery services you might need ☐

Arrange for any unwanted items to be sold or donated ☐

Arrange storage for things you want to keep that you aren't bringing with you ☐

Make necessary arrangements

Ask someone to collect any post for you ☐

Cancel or amend any regular deliveries, such as meals or milk ☐

Plan for the day

Moving can be stressful. There's always a lot going on – and it can be a really emotional time. We've left some space below for you to make some notes to plan for the day, jot down any reminders, or make any lists that might be useful.

0800 169 65 65
www.ageuk.org.uk

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