

Questions to ask when looking for a care home

Looking for the perfect care home can at times seem a daunting task. There are lots of areas to consider such as the type of care available, facilities, fees and visiting policy.

Our handy checklist has been compiled to help ensure you ask the right questions before making any final choices.

First impressions

- Does the home feel inviting, uplifting and homely?
- Is the care home and its grounds clean and well maintained?
- Are the rooms attractive, clean and well decorated?
- Does the care home smell fresh?
- Does the care home have a garden and is it accessible?
- Are staff welcoming and approachable?
- Are staff well presented?

Location and accessibility

- Is the care home in a convenient location?
- Is the care home easily reached by public transport?
- Does the care home have places to park vehicles?
- What is the noise level like in the care home's surroundings?
- What are the views surrounding the home?
- Are there any shops, parks, places of worship, areas of natural beauty or other amenities close by?
- Is CCTV fitted in the care home?
- Is the care home designed to support all individuals, including those with an illness or disability?
- Is there wheelchair access throughout the care home, including sufficient space and wide doorways for wheelchair access?
- Is there a lift?
- Are accessible toilets available in all parts of the home and easy to get to?
- Do toilets have handrails, raised seats and other mobility aids?

Care

- What type of care does the home provide?
- Are members of staff trained in specific areas of care?
- Does the care home have suitable equipment and facilities for people with an illness or physical, learning or mental disability?

- Does the care home have access to other services, such as community mental health teams, chiropodists, opticians and dentists, and how often do they visit?
- Does the home link with a specific GP practice for residents to use?
- What happens if a resident becomes unwell or requires medication?
- Can a relative stay overnight if a resident is unwell?
- Are changes in medication discussed with the family?
- Are staff tactful, respectful and supportive in helping a resident with their personal needs?
- Will you be able to support my loved one if their needs change?
- What support is given to family members?

Staff

- Are staff available at all times throughout the care home?
- Is there a manager in post and a senior member of staff on duty at all times?
- What is your resident to staff ratio?
- Do staff interact well with residents?
- Do staff respect the privacy and dignity of the residents in their care?
- How will staff get to know residents personally?
- Can staff speak additional languages?
- Do staff take into account cultural and religious beliefs?
- How often do staff receive training?
- What training do staff receive?

Daily life

- Can residents choose their daily routine, such as when they get up, go to bed, get dressed, have meals or go out?
- Can residents decide whether they have a bath or shower and how often?
- Can residents choose which clothes they wear?
- Can residents go outside for fresh air when needed?
- Are residents' pets allowed in the care home?
- Do staff seem engaged and attentive?
- Do residents appear happy and occupied?
- Do residents have access to internet and telephone points around the care home?
- Do all rooms have a television, telephone points and Wi-Fi?
- Can areas and furniture be arranged to allow small groups to socialise?
- Does the care home arrange activities and visits into the local community?
- Can residents go to the local pub, shopping in town, a place of worship (if religious) if they wish.

Accommodation

- What is the overall impression of bedrooms?
- Do bedrooms have en-suite facilities. If not, are washing facilities close by?
- Are the facilities in the bedroom/bathroom accessible for residents, including those with a disability?
- Can residents bring their own furniture and personalise their bedroom?
- Do staff respect residents' right to privacy?
- Are there single-sex facilities?
- Can pets stay in the bedroom?
- Is there a double bed in the bedroom for couples?
- Does the bedroom have a telephone point or Wi-Fi connection?
- Is there an emergency pull-cord available?
- How do staff know if a resident has fallen in the bedroom – e.g. is falls detection technology in the bedrooms?
- Is there adequate storage space?

Communal areas

- Are there a variety of communal areas to choose from?
- Is there easy access to all communal areas?
- Is there an accessible and safe garden?
- Do the lounges or other sitting rooms have pleasant views?
- What activities are held in the communal lounges?
- Do the communal areas have televisions, Wi-Fi connections and telephone points?
- Do the communal areas have quiet areas?
- Are the communal areas arranged to encourage socialisation?
- Are toilet facilities within easy reach of the communal areas?

Food

- Is the food prepared on the premises?
- Is there an on-site chef?
- Can residents choose where they eat, whether it be in a dining room or in their own room?
- Do residents have a choice of menu?
- Does the chef/cook talk with the residents to discuss meal choices?

- How often is the menu changed?
- Can dietary and cultural requirements be catered for e.g. gluten-free, vegetarian, vegan, kosher, halal etc?
- Can residents receive assistance with eating if required?
- Do residents have access to snacks at any time?
- Can visitors visit during meal times and can they have meals?
- Can residents make food and drinks for themselves?
- Are there opportunities to eat out?

Activities

- Is there a range of activities designed to support individual needs?
- Are residents encouraged to continue with their hobbies and interests?
- Do staff consult with residents on the types of activities planned?
- Does the care home have activity coordinators?
- Do staff give residents the opportunity to help with activities within the care home, such as gardening or cooking?
- Do staff arrange entertainers and groups of interest to visit?
- Can residents attend events/activities in the local community?
- Are there accessible vehicles to transport residents?
- Are special events, such as birthdays and religious holidays celebrated?
- Do staff give residents regular exercise opportunities?

Visits

- Does the care home welcome visitors at any time?
- Are there any restrictions on visiting times or number of visitors?
- Are there facilities for visitors to stay overnight?
- Where can residents spend time with their visitors?
- Are relatives encouraged to become involved in the daily activities at the home?
- Can visitors accompany residents on outings and trips?
- Can visitors dine with residents?
- Are children welcome to visit?
- Does the care home allow family pets to visit?

Fees and contracts

- Can residents see a copy of the home's terms and conditions?
- What are the annual/monthly fees?
- Is there a membership fee payable for staying at the care home?

