



Choosing a residential care provider

A comprehensive list of questions you may want to ask in order to help you find the right provider for you

Introduction

When you visit a care home to assess whether it might be the right place for you or your relative, what should you be looking for? What questions should you ask about the home? How can you assess how well it might meet the needs of the person who requires care?

The following checklist is designed to help you find out what you really need to know about each of the care homes or residential care settings that you are considering, so that you can more easily compare them, knowing that you have been thorough in your search.

We aim to help you think about which things matter most to you and/ or the person who is looking for care. Some of the questions may not be relevant to your situation or may not be important to you, and can be ignored, but this list should help you to assess the homes you are visiting, and may include some questions you would not otherwise have considered. By jotting down your answers and impressions for each home, you can then compare notes after you have visited all of the homes you are considering, helping you to be clear about which ones best meet your needs.

The column on the right of the checklist is for you to use in whatever way you see fit – perhaps ticking to show that you have covered that question, putting a star against the questions that are of most importance to you, or simply recording a score out of 10 to indicate your general impression of that aspect of the provider.

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YOUR CHECKLIST OF QUESTIONS

Home (name, address and contact details):

First Impressions

Are the grounds and buildings well maintained?	
Are the views in and from the home pleasant?	
Was a member of staff quick to meet and welcome you when you first arrived?	
Do the staff seem warm, friendly and polite? What impression did they make?	
Do the residents seem happy, active and sociable? Are they talking to each other?	
Is the environment homely and welcoming?	
Is it fresh, clean and comfortably furnished?	
Is the manager approachable?	

Notes/comments

Location

Is the home in the locality or community that the person needing care has been used to?	
Is the home easy to get to for relatives and friends?	
Are there good public transport links nearby?	
Is parking available? Is it affordable or free?	
Are local amenities such as shops, churches or pubs nearby?	
Are there pleasant parks or gardens around the home or nearby?	
Is it a noisy or quiet area? Which of these would be preferable?	
Are there interesting things to see or do outside?	

Catering

Can you join residents for a meal as part of your visit, to see what the food is really like?	
How much choice is available? How frequently does the menu change? Can you see a sample menu?	
Are special diets catered for?	
Is the choice of food interesting, varied and good quality?	
Are residents able to influence/ suggest what meals are available?	
Can residents take meals in their own room if they want to?	
Can residents eat with guests if they wish?	
Are snacks and drinks available at any time of the day or night? If so, what choices are available and how accessible are they?	
Is alcohol available if residents would like it?	

Notes/comments about catering:

Day to day living

Are any of the existing residents already known to the person who needs care? If so do they have a positive relationship?	
Do residents look happy and well cared for?	
Do they talk to each other? Are they animated and sociable?	
Does the home use signs or pictures to help residents know where things are?	
Are residents involved in decisions about their life in the home?	
Can residents have their own telephone in their room with a direct dial number? If not, can they have and use a mobile phone? Is there good reception inside the home?	
Can residents use a telephone in private and in comfort?	
Does each resident have their own personal care plan?	
Are there any rules and restrictions e.g. going out, time to return etc? If so are you happy with the restrictions/ freedoms in place?	
Are there set times for, getting up, going to bed, or having a bath, or can residents choose when to do these things?	
Are there designated smoking as well as non-smoking areas in the grounds if this is relevant to you?	

Fees	
How much are the fees and are they paid in advance?	
Are there any up-front fees charged, for example towards the upkeep of specific facilities and communal areas? If so, are they proportionate to the time likely to be spent in the care home?	
Is a deposit required? Is this deposit returnable? What is it for?	
Is there a standing order or direct debit facility to avoid any delayed payments?	
Is it clear exactly what is included in the weekly/ monthly charges?	
Are fees altered or reviewed annually?	
Ask for information about the care home's cost increases over the past few years - this will give you an indication of potential cost increases in the future.	
Are fees altered or reviewed according to increasing needs?	
How much notice will the home give if it is going to raise the fees?	
What services are charged for as 'extras'? How much do they cost?	
Are the fees affordable on a long- term basis?	
Will you have to make up the difference after any state contribution?	
Will the home continue to accommodate you on state support if your income/assets fall below the means tested threshold?	
Will the home provide a written contract of the care they will provide for the fees charged?	
If you're considering purchasing care insurance (an immediate or deferred needs annuity), ask the care home if they will consider agreeing to maximum fee increases (e.g. of no more than 5% over 5 years) on the basis that you run no risk of running out of money and thus, can continue paying the care home fees for as long as needed.	
Does the home require any fees to continue after a resident has died?	
Notes/comments about fees:	

Notes/comments about safety/security

Covid-19

Does the home have any confirmed cases of Covid-19 in the home at the point of admission?

What is the process for isolating known Covid-19 cases within the home and shielding other residents?

What is the home's policy for visiting?

What is the homes policy for admitting new residents?

How often are you testing staff and residents?

What is the coronavirus and flu vaccination rate amongst staff?

What Infection Control Measures do you have in place?

- Are you using air filtration and/or air purification devices within the care setting?
- What measures does the home have in place to identify and trace contact between people in the care setting?
- How, how often and to what extent are staff trained to use measures which prevent and control infections?
- Has the home been independently assessed in respect of their approach to infection control?
- Has the home been assessed by the care regulator in respect of its approach to infection control and what was the outcome?
- Is the home using sterilisation and/or disinfection devices within the care setting?

Is the home participating and supporting the S.A.F.E initiative (Symptom Assessment for Everyone)

www.autumna.co.uk/home-search/safe-care-providers/

Notes/comments about Covid 19 and infection control

