

HANDY GUIDE TO CARE HOMES

FOR ENCHANCED CARE

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1. INTRODUCTION

Choosing a care home for yourself or a loved one is huge life-changing decision. In order to help you make a well-informed decision, we have created this handy guide to care homes which covers all aspects of care homes that you will need to know before and during your selection process.

Types of care home

Care homes provide accommodation and meals for older people who are no longer able to live independently, even with the help of carers, family or friends.

There are three main types of care home:

1. Residential care homes

These homes provide living accommodation, which includes a room (usually en-suite), meals and help with **personal care**, such as help with day to day living i.e. washing, dressing and going to the toilet. Staff will give care during normal short illnesses but do not provide nursing care for special needs.

2. Nursing homes

Nursing homes provide all of the above care in a residential home, with the addition of **medical care** from a qualified nurse who is on site 24 hours a day.

3. Specialist nursing home such as Dementia Care Home

Some care homes offer specialist support for those people with specific health problems, such as dementia, mental health problems or physical disabilities.

One care home, such as Fellingate Care Home might provide a mix of different care types; for example, there might be a certain number of places for residents requiring personal care, a certain number for those people requiring nursing care, and others for those with dementia.

Changing needs

If your relative currently needs personal care, but has an illness or disability that may require nursing care in the near future, consider a home, such as Fellingate Care Home that offers RESIDENTIAL CARE, NURSING CARE and also care for DEMENTIA.

This way you can 'upgrade' your relative's care plan if their needs change without having to move him or her again.

Who runs a care home?

Care homes can be owned and run by:

- **Private (commercial) businesses**, who may own one or a group of care homes.
- **Non-profit organisations**, such as charities and housing associations.
- **Local authorities**, who mostly run residential homes rather than nursing homes. A lot of local authorities outsource care to non-profit organisations, and only about 10% of care home places are provided directly by local authorities.

Some people might have their care funded – in full or part – by their local authority. Others might have to pay for their own care out of their income or savings.

2. WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING A CARE HOME

It might be time to consider a care home if your relative is struggling to live alone even with the help of carers, friends and other relations.

With any of the following situations it might be time to start thinking about a care home for your relative:

- A recent significant deterioration, caused by an illness or a fall, in their physical health or mobility.
- A significant deterioration in their mental health, such as advancing dementia, which limits their ability to stay safely in their own home.
- Loss of help that a partner, relative or neighbour previously provided.
- Loneliness, isolation or depression.

If your relative needs help with personal care

A care home **without** nursing (also known as a **residential care home**) offers personal care, such as help getting up in the morning, going to bed at night, going to the toilet and eating meals.

Residential homes might be a good option for people who need regular or frequent help with personal care, and who can no longer have their needs met at home.

If your relative needs nursing care

If your relative is unable to leave his or her bed, or has any sort of medical condition or illness that requires frequent medical attention, their options are more limited. They will need to look for a **nursing home** which is a care home that provides personal care as well as nursing care.

The benefits and drawbacks of care homes

If your relative's needs can no longer be met at home, there are benefits to moving to a care home. Knowing what to expect can help you make realistic plans.

The benefits

- Safety: there is always someone around.
- Staff on duty 24/7: in a residential care home, someone is on call at night. In a nursing home, care is provided 24 hours a day.
- Own room: they can usually personalise this with their own furniture, pictures and ornaments.
- Meals: regular meals provided and nutritional needs met.

- Companionship: opportunity to socialise with others of their own age and take part in organised activities or outings, where available.
- Some peace of mind for family that a vulnerable older relative is being taken care of and is not living alone.
- Supervision of medication.
- No worries about household bills or upkeep.
- The physical environment may be better – safe, warm and clean.

The drawbacks

- There may be a limited choice of homes for your relative, depending on their circumstances.
- There may be a limited choice of homes with a vacancy for your relative, depending on their circumstances.
- Unfamiliar surroundings.
- Loneliness and loss of contact with neighbours and old friends.
- Families can feel guilty that they are not looking after their relative themselves, even though this may no longer be practical.
- Your relative may feel rejected: it can help if you talk things through beforehand, possibly explaining that you or other family members are unable to give them the care that they need. Regular contact once they've moved in will also help.
- Loss of independence, although a good home should encourage your relative to be as independent as they can be.
- Lack of privacy: this might be difficult for your relative to adjust to.
- Small living space: your relative won't be able to take all of their furniture and personal possessions with them.
- Variations in care: all homes have to achieve a minimum standard to ensure they can be registered, but quality of care may vary from home to home. Doing your research, and asking around for recommendations, should help you avoid the less suitable ones
- Care homes can be very costly, particularly if your relative has to fund their own care. If relying on local authority funding, your relative must be assessed as needing a care home. Sometimes you and the local authority might disagree on what is needed.

Get a needs assessment

Before you start researching the cost of care, it is important to get **a professional assessment** of your relative's care needs. At the same time, explore the options for paying the care home fees.

If your relative is considering moving to a residential care home or a nursing home, the first step is to get a free needs assessment from the social services department of your local authority.

Push for the assessment

Local authorities have a legal duty to assess the needs of anyone who they think might need community care services, regardless of funding. Don't be fobbed off if they seem reluctant to carry out an assessment.

The needs assessment is especially vital if your relative needs financial help from the local authority, as councils will only fund care it has assessed your relative as needing.

Even if your relative plans to arrange, or pay for, a care home themselves, a needs assessment is really important. It gives a professional assessment of the type of care and support needed, which will help your relative choose a care home best suited to their needs. It can also make you aware of other care services available in your area that you might not have considered before.

3. CHOOSING A CARE HOME

When it comes to choosing a care home for your relative, you'll naturally want to do everything in your power to make sure their needs are met and they will be happy living there.

Choice of care home

Local authorities have a responsibility to find a suitable home for anyone they have assessed as needing a care home place and, in theory, everyone should have a choice of care home. In reality, though, the options open to your relative might be limited. The choice they have will be determined by:

- Location: what care homes are in the chosen area?
- Time: how urgently your relative needs to move.
- Availability: the type of care that your relative needs, and if there are vacancies.
- Funding: your relative's financial situation, and how they plan to fund care home costs.

Making an informed care home choice

Choosing a care home is a big decision. To help you and your relative make an informed choice, it's important to find out as much as you can about the care homes you are interested in.

If care is needed urgently you might not have time to research as thoroughly as you would like. But, in an ideal world, there are three key steps to follow.

1. Shortlist suitable care homes

First, you need to find care homes in your chosen area that provide the type of care your relative needs. This might be residential care only, nursing care, or specialist care for dementia or a specific illness or disability.

To find care homes in your relative's area that have been approved by the [Care Quality Commission \(CQC\)](#) enter the postcode in our local care services finder tool on the website and then use the 'Care home providers' tab on the resulting page.

Each country in the UK has its own independent regulatory body responsible for keeping a register of care homes, and for checking them to ensure that they meet national standards:

The CQC new inspection ratings

From October 2014 the CQC is implementing its new inspection ratings, looking at the quality and safety of the care provided in care homes, most specifically if it is safe, effective, caring, responsive to people's needs and well-led. The new ratings assess each area and also give an overall rating, ranging from outstanding through good and requires improvement to inadequate. To read more about these ratings, use the website link above.

2. Contact suitable care homes

Contact suitable care homes and ask them to send you a brochure, statement of purpose and written details of costs. You could also enquire about availability of places that suit your relative's needs. This will save time and help you eliminate any homes that aren't suitable either because they are out of your price range, or are lacking spaces.

3. Visit the care homes

Try to visit all the homes that are on your shortlist. When you visit a care home it's important to get as much information as you can. Where possible, both you and your relative should go together. If your relative is unable to visit, ask a representative from the home to visit them and talk things through.

Before you go, sit down with your relative and discuss what's important to them. What do they consider 'essential', and what do they consider 'desirable'? Using this conversation as a starting point, write down a list of questions that you want answers to. Use our **Checklist for things to consider when visiting a care home**, to get you thinking about what's important.

Checklist for how to research care homes

Planning ahead and being methodical in researching care homes will help you and your relative make an informed choice. Use this checklist as a guide when researching care homes.

- Talk to your relative and make a list of their requirements. This might involve location, facilities or specialist care for a specific health problem.
- Ask friends and family for recommendations. Does anyone that you know have an older relative/friend who is already in a care home? A recommendation from a happy resident is worth its weight in gold.
- Make a shortlist of care homes that seem to meet your criteria.
- Contact care homes to ask for brochures, and check prices and availability.
- Write down a list of questions to ask each care home you visit. Our **Checklist for considerations when visiting a care home** will help.
- Visit every care home on your shortlist to look around, and meet with the care home manager.
- Always ask to see a copy of the contract/terms and conditions before coming to a final decision.
- Look at recent inspection reports from the health watchdog [Care Quality Commission](#)

As well as the overall ratings of care homes in the inspection reports, check:

- Whether points raised by inspectors have been addressed or whether they reappear on subsequent reports
- If reports mention high staff turnover, this could indicate unsettled, unhappy staff.
- If there a high frequency of inspections, this may be a sign of problems

Before you make a final decision

There are a few things you or your relative may want to consider before making a final decision as to which care home he or she will move to.

Arrange a trial stay at a care home

If your relative really wants to see what a care home is like, it might be possible to arrange a 'trial stay'. Everyone is different, so only do this if you think your relative would understand the reasons for the visit and benefit from it. If you are interested in this, ask for details when you visit.

You might also be able to arrange a short-term stay for respite care to give you or another carer a break. This could be a good opportunity for your relative to see what it's like to be in a care home, even if it is only for a week or two.

Check the small print

Once you have decided on a care home, a contract will have to be signed. This is always between the care home and the funder. So if your relative's place at the home is being funded by the local authority, that is who will sign the contract.

If it is your relative who is paying, they will be asked to sign a contract covering such things as:

- the care to be provided
- the charges and,
- the terms and conditions of occupancy.

Ask to see a copy of this contract before you make your final decision. Read it very carefully and ask a solicitor to explain any clauses that you don't understand. If your relative is responsible for paying part or all of their fees, you may be asked to act as a guarantor. This will also happen if you have power of attorney for your relative; the care home will discuss the arrangements with you for paying the fees.

Make a surprise visit

Before you and your relative decide on a particular home, it can be useful to make a second unannounced visit. You can see how the staff interact with the residents, how many people are around, and what activities are going on. Of course, this won't always be practical or possible, but it's worth doing if you can.

4. QUALITY AND REGULATIONS

By law, all care homes in the UK must provide services to minimum standards of safety and quality.

Every care home in the UK must be registered with the [Care Quality Commission \(CQC\)](#)

The Care Quality Commission is an independent watchdog in England responsible for:

- Setting national minimum standards for care homes
- Monitoring and inspecting care homes to make sure that the services they provide come up to scratch.

Minimum standards

The Quality Care Commission has set minimum standards that a resident of a care home should expect.

These standards are documented and can be downloaded from the respective regulator's website, www.cqc.org.uk.

The following represents a broad summary of the type of rights expected for residents in a care home. Your relative should be:

- treated politely and with dignity
- able to have privacy for themselves, and with relatives and friends when they visit
- able to deal with their own finances and spend their money how they choose
- able to eat food prepared in line with their faith and to worship when and where they want to
- able to choose food, and given the time and space to relax and enjoy the meal
- able to choose when they get up in the mornings and go to bed at night
- able to complain if they are unhappy with their care.

Care home inspections

Care homes should be inspected regularly to ensure that they meet minimum standards and are delivering quality care. How often they are inspected depends on the rating they received at the last inspection, and the feedback given by care home residents and local authorities. Generally, those care homes with poor ratings or negative feedback will be inspected more frequently than those that are doing well.

Care home inspection reports

Following an inspection of a care home, details of the findings are written into a report. These reports are publicly available – you can request a copy from the care home or the regulator, or view reports on the regulator's website www.cqc.org.uk

In the report each care home is rated against a detailed list of requirements to show where:

- standards are being met
- improvements are required
- enforcement action has been taken.

These reports can be very useful when choosing a care home.