



Choosing a care home



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Guide for choosing a care home

Introduction

Finding a care home for yourself or a relative can be an overwhelming and daunting task, and we understand this. You don't have to go through this process on your own - there are many different people who are on-hand to advise you, such as our care home managers. They meet families looking for care on a daily basis and are aware of just how difficult a time this can be for everyone involved.

Don't forget about friends, family members and local support groups of people who have also gone through this process. They can be a great source of experience and honest advice.

To simplify the situation for you, we have created this guide that covers every aspect of choosing a home to moving in. It gives details about the financial support that is available and includes a list of local organisations that may be useful for you to know about.



Decide what's important

Moving into a home is a huge lifestyle change, so it's imperative the one you choose for either yourself or someone else is the right one.

Do you need a home that provides [residential care](#), [nursing care](#), or one that offers specialist [dementia care](#)?

If you're unsure what the answer is, click on the above links to find out more about each one. Your GP, social services department or hospital discharge team can also help you to decide upon the one that is most suitable.

Once you've established this, you need to ascertain what your criteria is for a home. Different homes will have different priorities and knowing what's important to you before you visit them will help you in this process. Here is a list for you to consider:

- The quality of the care
- The location and accessibility of the home for you and/or your family
- The cost of the care
- The range of activities that are available every day
- The quality of the food and drink
- If you become ill or your circumstances change, can you stay in the home?
- The quality of the environment, gardens and general surroundings
- The management of the home
- Can you bring a pet?



In addition to these, certain charities produce useful information, which is listed later in this guide.

Once you have thought through this list, you can begin to browse homes on the internet and request brochures. You can then visit them to get a feel for the place - there's no need to book. Another common step at this stage is to contact your local authority to arrange an assessment.



Is there any financial support?

Unlike care provided by the NHS, you must pay for social care yourself. However, your contribution will depend on a number of factors.

Ask for a needs assessment from your local authority - this is a legal entitlement. This will normally provide assistance with care costs, benefits and allowances.

How much you pay depends on your assets and your income. If these are low, local authorities will contribute to the cost. Normally this won't entirely cover it and a top-up fee is required, which can be paid by family and friends, if willing. In Scotland, the whole amount can be paid if you are local authority funded.

Check with your care manager, GP or doctor if you are eligible for continuing healthcare payments. If you would normally require full-time NHS support, then your care and basic living costs will be funded. Independent Age has a useful fact sheet on this if you require more information. There is also an appeals system that many have used successfully.

You may still qualify for allowances that cover some of the nursing cost, even if you're not eligible for continuing healthcare payments - don't write this option off.

Furthermore, ask about benefits that could help with personal costs such as travel. Your care manager will know what you're entitled to and Age UK, Age Scotland and Age Cymru have fact sheets with more details.



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Who can help you?

The current payments and benefits system is a complicated one, so do not hesitate to contact the following organisations for help:

[Age UK](#) (0800 169 6565) is a large charity, help and pressure group for older people and can answer queries about residential care, benefits and allowances for England. Have a look at its website and brochures for more details. It has separate organisations for other parts of the UK, such as [Age Scotland](#) (0800 470 8090) and [Age Cymru](#) (0800 022 3444). As the situation on fees, benefits and allowances differs significantly across the UK, make sure you contact the relevant organisation.

[The Elderly Accommodation Counsel](#) and its sister organisation [First Stop](#) (both 0800 377 7070) form the UK's largest charity focused on housing for older people - and they include residential care. Its website is helpful and has a vast database that lists locations of homes across the UK. In addition, it will provide an advice package specific to your needs for a small fee.

[Independent Age](#) (0845 319 6789) has considerable experience on issues such as residential care and its finance. It also produces useful brochures and discussion papers.

Private advisors can also be sought out, although there will normally be a fee for this service.

In England and Northern Ireland, the [Care Quality Commission](#) will provide lists of local homes and inspections on them. [The Care Inspectorate](#) (Scotland) and the [Care and Social Service Inspectorate](#) in Wales are the regulators in their respective countries.

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for more details.'*



What to look for in a home

Here are some things to consider as you look around a home. Have a friend or family member come with you, as another pair of eyes can be very helpful.

Practical factors:

- Is it convenient for visitors?
- Can community links be upheld?
- Are there local pubs, shops and churches?
- Is there internet access, a TV and music?
- Can friends or relatives stay overnight?



Homeliness factors:

- Are bedrooms spacious? Can you bring your favourite furniture?
- Is there an en-suite bathroom? Can you take a bath or shower when you want to?
- Is the food cooked well with lots of choice?
- Does the home smell pleasant? Is it light and airy?
- Is laundry managed well?
- Is there a garden? Is it accessible?



Medical factors:

- Can the home manage your particular needs?
- Do staff discuss care planning and review dates with you and your family?
- Are GPs, nurses, dentists, opticians, chiropodists and other therapists available?
- Is the call system answered quickly?
- Is there space for wheelchairs in corridors and bedrooms?




Dignity factors:

- Do staff take a personal interest in you and use this information to tailor your residency?
- Do staff address you as you wish?
- Is privacy upheld? Do staff knock before entering a bedroom?
- Are visitors welcomed?
- Can you cook and/or wash for yourself if you want?
- Are links with friends and family actively encouraged and facilitated?
- Can you come and go as you please?
- Are complaints dealt with well?

A good home will not object to you asking a long list of questions like this, so don't be nervous.

[Click here](#) to download our handy guides for 'Selecting your ideal care home' and 'Choosing a dementia care home' which have more details on what to look for when visiting homes.

Freelance advisors can arrange care packages or home admissions for a fee, which can remove a lot of administrative work on your behalf. At present, this is not a well regulated area, so do take caution.



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Trial visits and contracts

If possible, arrange a trial visit before you commit to a home. This could be a daytime trip, but ideally an overnight one, as this will give you a better picture of whether or not the home is right for you.

You should receive a contract if you're paying for your own care, which will detail what you'll contribute and what you're entitled to receive. If the council is funding it, they will have this document, but you should be given a written statement that sets out the terms and conditions clearly. Contracts or terms and conditions need to include these points:

- Fees and what they cover
- The deposit (if applicable)
- Details of administrative charges
- Additional services (eg hairdressing)
- Any NHS contributions
- Notice period
- How temporary absences are charged for
- Any charges that may be levied after an individual dies

Make sure you keep your contract or written statement safe.



Moving in

While some people may instantly feel at ease in a home, this is not always the case, so do not be worried if it takes you a little longer.

All good homes will have written advice or be able to talk you through the initial process to enable your first couple of days to go smoothly.

Here is some basic preparatory advice for you:



Take all of your medicines with you - such as topical and alternative ones - and discuss with staff whether you'd like to manage them yourself or not.



Label your clothes. Most homes have communal washing facilities and having your name visible can prevent items going astray.



Take in any aids you need, such as walking sticks, hearing aids and glasses.



Ensure staff record any property that you bring in with you.



Check beforehand if you can bring in personal items for your bedroom - pieces of furniture, pictures, books etc - and make arrangements for these to be brought in with you.



Devise a list of contacts so you can stay in touch with friends, family members, your church etc. Ensure staff know about your next of kin.



Be prepared to discuss sensitive issues such as resuscitation and funeral arrangements. These may seem obtrusive and uncomfortable, but homes need to agree these with you and sign them off.



Decide what to do with any pets, especially if you can't take them with you.



Don't forget to redirect your post.

Your right to comment, suggest and complain

Good care providers will have a simple procedure for you to make comments and suggestions.

At Barchester Healthcare, we encourage service users, family and other advocates to express their opinions about the quality of care and services we provide. Whether it's positive or negative feedback, we welcome it.

Initially, we prefer issues to be raised with the home's general manager to resolve it as quickly as possible. If this is not feasible, then the regional manager's details are provided in every one of our homes.

You can raise concerns or issues with us verbally, on the phone, via post or through our dedicated email address.



About Barchester

Barchester Healthcare is recognised as a major UK care provider that is committed to delivering high-quality care across its care homes and hospitals.

The organisation has adapted and grown over the last 22 years, focusing on older people needing nursing care in high-quality environments and providing personalised support for adults of all ages with a range of disabilities.

We pride ourselves on our expert dementia care. Our Memory Lane Communities are designed to encourage people living with dementia to stay as independent and active as possible. We understand that no two people are the same and take a person-centred care approach, recognising and celebrating each person's individuality.

Barchester employs almost 17,000 people to care for more than 10,000 individuals at more than 200 locations in the UK. We are the only care provider listed in The Sunday Times 25 Best Big Companies To Work For 2014 and are certified as one of Britain's Top Employers for 2014.

For more information on choosing a care home [click here](#)

Disclaimer

This Barchester Healthcare Guide provides information and resources and while Barchester Healthcare tries to ensure that material included on the Barchester Healthcare Guide is correct, reputable and of high quality, it does not make any warranties or guarantees in relation to that content. If we are informed of any inaccuracies in the material on the Barchester Healthcare Guide, we will attempt to correct the inaccuracies as soon as we reasonably can.

