

Our guide to choosing a care home



Our guide to choosing a care home – where do I begin?

Our impartial, step-by-step guide on how to choose the best care home for yourself or a loved one.

Choosing the right care home for a loved one is such a big decision. How do you know if the care will meet their needs, will the food be up to their standards or is there enough going on to keep them engaged and most importantly, happy?

Proudly part of a not-for-profit organisation, at Sanctuary Care we have over 20 years' experience of providing affordable, high-quality care. Our guide will walk you through the process, one step at a time – with a handy checklist at the end for inspiration.

Or if you'd like to talk to someone right now, our **Enquiry Support Team** advisors are available on **0800 140 4953**.



The starting point...

What are the things that are most important in this decision? Write them down.

What type of homes you need to look at depends on someone's care needs. In a nutshell there are three main types of care home:

residential – where residents are supported with day-to-day living and personal care

dementia – supporting people living with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia

nursing – with a nurse on hand around-the-clock to support with medical needs.

Some homes provide all types of care, while others offer a combination. If you're not sure, simply call the home and they'll be happy to advise you.

Or if you are unsure about your loved one's needs, your local authority will be able to do a free needs assessment.



Do your research...

Ask for recommendations. Do you know anyone who's moved their relative into a home in this area?

Is there a GP or local healthcare professional you could ask? Your local authority will also be able to support with recommendations.

Or independent care home reviews website carehome.co.uk is a great place to search for care homes and read honest reviews from the people who matter most – the residents and their loved ones.

In England homes are inspected by the **Care Quality Commission** (CQC), and their ratings should be clearly displayed on the homes' websites, as should the equivalent **Care Inspectorate** (CI) ratings for Scottish homes.



Once you've got **your shortlist...**

Now you're ready to start calling the homes. The care home manager will be able to tell you the type of care needs they can support, if the home is within your budget and if there's availability.

If you don't know how you'll be financing the care, be completely honest.

Or why not make the most of our free advice by reviewing our free **Paying for Care Guide** on our website if you need support or call our **Enquiry Support Team** on **0800 140 4953**.



Below is a handy checklist, with lots of ideas of things to consider during your first visit to a care home. And don't be afraid to ask lots of questions.

the basics – first impressions

how does it feel?

- **Are the home** and grounds well-maintained?
- **Is the home** warm, clean and does it smell pleasant?
- **Is there a secure** door entry system?
- **The atmosphere** – is it warm, friendly and inviting?
- **Does it feel comfortable** in terms of furnishings, decoration and indoor spaces?

the home and surroundings

- **Are there pleasant communal lounges** and dining areas to socialise in, plus quiet areas for relaxation?
- **What are the bedrooms like** – furnished, pleasant views, garden access, can they be personalised?
- **Are there special areas** like a hair salon, garden room, namaste room, or cinema room?
- **What are the gardens like** – secure, well-maintained, landscaped, wheelchair accessible, plenty of seating areas to relax in?

the team

- **Is the manager** knowledgeable, caring and well-respected by their team?
- **Are the staff** friendly and happy and are they interacting well with the residents and each other?
- **Do the staff** appear to know their residents well as individuals?
- **Do they treat residents** with respect and dignity?



How are they enriching lives?

A good care home goes beyond meeting residents' care needs, it's about meeting their social needs and enriching their lives.

- When you are visiting, try to talk to residents and their loved ones to get a feel for life in the home.
- How do they create a care plan for residents and do they involve loved ones?
- What does the team do to look beyond someone's care needs?
- How do they provide truly person-centred care?
- Do they look at a resident's life history, who they are and what they love to do?
- How does the whole team get involved in providing person-centred care?
- How often are care plans reviewed and are they electronic?





activities

- Are there engaging and stimulating group activities?
- How are activities decided – do the residents choose?
- Are there activities that are meaningful to residents individually, for example supporting favourite hobbies and pastimes?
- Is the local community a big part of the home – for example during 'normal times' are there visiting school children, entertainers and more?
- Does the home invest in technology to support with activities and iPads for video calls?



dining

- Excellent food should be an essential part of life in a care home, with the 'dining experience' often a highlight of the day.
- Does the home have its own chef to prepare home-cooked food on-site?
- How are the menus decided and how are the residents involved?
- Are the menus seasonal with plenty of choice?
- How do the chefs meet the individual dietary needs of their residents?
- How is the dining area laid out for mealtimes and what if someone doesn't like sitting down with others?
- How do they support residents who live with dementia to stay well-nourished and hydrated?
- Are there freshly baked cakes for afternoon tea and for birthday celebrations?
- Are food and snacks available outside of mealtimes?





finances

- The home manager might not be able to give you an exact fee but should be open about approximate prices based on someone's needs and the type of bedroom they are looking for.
- What is the weekly fee for the specific type of room?
- What does this include?
- Are there any additional charges?
- Do they need a deposit, how much and is this refundable if you change your mind?

We hope this checklist has given you some ideas and helped you to navigate the process of choosing a care home for your loved one.

Don't forget we have a team of friendly and knowledgeable **Enquiry Support Team** advisors who are only a phone call away on **0800 140 4953**.





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