

Questions to ask when you visit a care home

Finding out about homes

This checklist gives you a number of questions that you might want to ask about life in a home. Some of the issues raised are important for everyone, while others reflect personal interests and tastes.

Some questions will be answered by what you observe when you visit, or by what you read in the home's brochure, but other questions you will want to put to members of staff and residents. It may be helpful to visit a home more than once, perhaps at different times of day.

Inspection of homes

Homes are inspected by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). You can get copies of inspection reports from the CQC website at cqc.org.uk or by phoning 03000 616161.

Qualifications for care home staff

Nursing staff should have a recognised nursing qualification, and you might expect care staff to have, or to be working towards, NVQ2, NVQ3 or NVQ4 in Health and Social Care. Managers should have a management qualification, such as NVQ4 in Leadership and Management for Care, or the Registered Manager's Award. Staff in homes for people with physical or learning disabilities may have NVQ3 in Promoting Independence.

Care for residents with dementia

If you are looking for a care home for someone with dementia, the 'Care' section of the checklist gives specific questions about dementia care, and you may wish to add others of your own. You may also want to adapt other questions in the checklist to take account of the person's specific needs.

Names of homes visited

Home 1

Home 2

Home 3

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

	Home 1	Home 2	Home 3
Is the atmosphere friendly and homely?	☐	☐	☐
Is the home well-decorated and well-kept?	☐	☐	☐
Does it smell okay?	☐	☐	☐
Does it seem to be a comfortable temperature for the residents?	☐	☐	☐
Do the residents seem active and content?	☐	☐	☐
Do residents seem happy with the way the staff address them?	☐	☐	☐
Are different residents addressed in different ways according to what they want (for example, as Mr or Mrs, or by their first name)?	☐	☐	☐
Are residents treated with respect as well as in a friendly manner?	☐	☐	☐
Do the staff seem caring and attentive towards residents?	☐	☐	☐
Are there enough members of staff on duty to be able to give everyone individual attention?	☐	☐	☐
Are there other people of your age or gender or with a similar disability?	☐	☐	☐
Are there plenty of residents who can carry on conversations?	☐	☐	☐



	Home 1	Home 2	Home 3
Have the staff asked about you and your interests?	☐	☐	☐

LOCATION

Will it be easy for you to keep in touch with your family and friends?	☐	☐	☐
Is it easy to get to local shops or to a pub or to church or to other places/events that you want to go to?	☐	☐	☐
Is there transport to help you get where you want to go?	☐	☐	☐

THE BUILDING

Can someone in a wheelchair move around the home easily?	☐	☐	☐
Are there places where electric wheelchairs can be stored?	☐	☐	☐
Are there call bells in the bedrooms, bathrooms and in the communal areas?	☐	☐	☐
Are rooms, stairs and corridors suitably lit?	☐	☐	☐
Are rails along corridors clearly visible so that people with sight problems can see them (for example, painted a different colour)?	☐	☐	☐
Is there a garden that residents can use?	☐	☐	☐

ACCOMMODATION

Bedrooms

Are there rooms with their own bathroom and toilet en suite?	☐	☐	☐
If you share a room, can you meet the other person beforehand?	☐	☐	☐
Are there screens in shared rooms to give privacy?	☐	☐	☐
Is there provision for married couples?	☐	☐	☐

Personal possessions

Can you bring some of your own furniture and belongings?	☐	☐	☐
Can you lock the door of your room?	☐	☐	☐
Is there a secure place where valuables can be kept?	☐	☐	☐
Does the home take responsibility for insuring residents' possessions?	☐	☐	☐
Can you have your own television in your room?	☐	☐	☐
Are there enough power points in bedrooms to take everything you need: lamps, tape/CD/DVD player, radio, television, computer?	☐	☐	☐

Telephone

Is there a telephone you can use without people overhearing what you are saying?	☐	☐	☐
Is there a telephone you can use that meets any special requirements you may have (for example, amplification)?	☐	☐	☐
Can you have a telephone installed in your room?	☐	☐	☐

Bathrooms and toilets

Have toilets, baths and showers been adapted to make them easy and private for residents to use?	☐	☐	☐
Is there a toilet within easy reach of your bedroom?	☐	☐	☐
Are there toilets within easy reach of all the communal rooms?	☐	☐	☐

Communal rooms

Is the furniture in the communal rooms arranged in a comfortable way?	☐	☐	☐
Is there a choice of lounges?	☐	☐	☐
Is there more than one television room?	☐	☐	☐

	Home 1	Home 2	Home 3
Is there a quiet room with no television?	☐	☐	☐
If you are a smoker, are there designated areas for smoking?	☐	☐	☐
Is there a loop system so that people who are hard of hearing can hear the television?	☐	☐	☐

DAY-TO-DAY LIFE

Domestic arrangements

Are you comfortable with the 'house rules' (for example about smoking, alcohol or pets)?	☐	☐	☐
Can you influence what happens in the home?	☐	☐	☐
Will there be a member of staff whose job it is to take a special interest in your welfare?	☐	☐	☐
Can you get up and go to bed when you want?	☐	☐	☐
Will your room be cleaned every day?	☐	☐	☐
Will your bed be made for you?	☐	☐	☐
Can you help around the home if you want to?	☐	☐	☐
Is it possible to buy small items in the home (for example, stamps, sweets)?	☐	☐	☐
Are daily papers delivered?	☐	☐	☐

Meals

Do today's menus give a choice of dishes?	☐	☐	☐
Do the menus seem to you to be balanced and nutritious?	☐	☐	☐
Can special diets be catered for?	☐	☐	☐
Can menus include food that you particularly like?	☐	☐	☐
What time is the last meal of the day served? Can you have/make a snack or drink whenever you want?	☐	☐	☐
Is it possible to have meals other than at set times?	☐	☐	☐
Can you have meals in your own room?	☐	☐	☐

Leisure

Are social events and outings organised frequently?	☐	☐	☐
Are regular classes held (for example, exercise, handicrafts)?	☐	☐	☐
Is there scope for you to continue with the hobbies that you enjoy (for example, gardening, music, games)?	☐	☐	☐
Can you choose books from the mobile library?	☐	☐	☐

Religion

Can you practise your own religion?	☐	☐	☐
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Visitors

Can family and friends visit you without restriction?	☐	☐	☐
Are there places where residents can spend time in private with their guests?	☐	☐	☐
Can visitors stay for a meal?	☐	☐	☐
Can you make/offer your guests a drink or a snack?	☐	☐	☐

CARE

Personal care

Can you have a say in the way you are looked after/helped?	☐	☐	☐
Is there help with personal care (for example, help with washing, bathing or going to the toilet)?	☐	☐	☐

	Home 1	Home 2	Home 3
Can relatives or friends help you with personal care if you want them to?	☐	☐	☐
Does a hairdresser/barber visit the home?	☐	☐	☐
Health care			
Can you keep the same doctor that you have now?	☐	☐	☐
Is there a local doctor who accepts patients from the home?	☐	☐	☐
Does a doctor visit the home regularly?	☐	☐	☐
If your health gets worse, can you continue to live at the home?	☐	☐	☐
What aids are supplied?	☐	☐	☐

Dementia care *You may need an extra sheet of paper to record answers to some of the questions in this section.*

How do staff make sure that residents with dementia are able to do what they choose (for example, walk in the garden) without coming to any harm?

What training have staff had in caring for people with dementia? What therapeutic activities are there for residents with dementia (for example, reminiscence work)?

How do staff encourage residents with dementia to eat a balanced diet with plenty of fluids?

Home 1 _____

Home 2 _____

Home 3 _____

You may need an extra sheet of paper to record answers to some of the questions in the following sections.

HOW THE HOME IS RUN

	Home 1	Home 2	Home 3
Who runs the home?			
Are they the owner or the manager?			
How long have they been running the home?			
When can they be contacted?			
How many residents are there?			
How many staff are on duty:			
In the morning?			
In the afternoon?			
In the evening?			
At night?			
Are night staff awake or on call?			
What training do staff get?			
What qualifications have staff got?			

See front page for details of the kinds of qualifications that you might expect.

Are families/friends invited to reviews of the care a resident needs?

What are the arrangements for making sure that people are safe in the event of a fire?

TERMS, CONDITIONS AND COSTS

Is there a written contract/agreement?

TERMS, CONDITIONS AND COSTS (CONTINUED)

Home 1

Home 2

Home 3

How long a trial period can you have?

What notice must be given if you want to leave the home?

What is the weekly charge for the care you need?

What does the weekly charge cover? *(Tick items included in the charge.)*

Outings and social events ☐ ☐ ☐

Transport ☐ ☐ ☐

Meals for visitors ☐ ☐ ☐

Use of home's telephone ☐ ☐ ☐

Laundry ☐ ☐ ☐

Dry cleaning ☐ ☐ ☐

Incontinence pads ☐ ☐ ☐

Chiropody ☐ ☐ ☐

Clothing ☐ ☐ ☐

Medical supplies ☐ ☐ ☐

Physiotherapy ☐ ☐ ☐

Newspapers ☐ ☐ ☐

Luxury or personal items ☐ ☐ ☐

Hairdressing ☐ ☐ ☐

Is anything else charged for additionally?

Are fees payable in advance or arrears?

Are fees payable monthly/weekly?

How often do fees increase?

What are the terms for keeping your room if you have to go into hospital?

In what circumstances might you be asked to leave?

What happens if you run out of funds?

PROBLEMS

What happens if you are unhappy with the home after you have moved in?

How do you make a complaint?

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