

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 www.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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the home well-decorated and well-kept?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does it smell okay?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does it seem to be a comfortable temperature for the residents?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do the residents seem active and content?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do residents seem happy with the way the staff address them?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are different residents addressed in different ways according to what they want (for example, as Mr or Mrs, or by their first name)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are residents treated with respect as well as in a friendly manner?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do the staff seem caring and attentive towards residents?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there enough members of staff on duty to be able to give everyone individual attention?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there other people of your age or gender or with a similar disability?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there plenty of residents who can carry on conversations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Have the staff asked about you and your interests?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

LOCATION

Home 1 Home 2 Home 3

Will it be easy for you to keep in touch with your family and friends?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there transport to help you get where you want to go?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

THE BUILDING

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

ACCOMMODATION

Bedrooms

Are there rooms with their own bathroom and toilet en suite?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If you share a room, can you meet the other person beforehand?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there screens in shared rooms to give privacy?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there provision for married couples?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Personal possessions

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

Telephone

Is there a telephone you can use without people overhearing what you are saying?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a telephone you can use that meets any special requirements you may have (for example, amplification)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can you have a telephone installed in your room?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Bathrooms and toilets

Have toilets, baths and showers been adapted to make them easy and private for residents to use?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a toilet within easy reach of your bedroom?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are there toilets within easy reach of all the communal rooms?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Communal rooms

Is the furniture in the communal rooms arranged in a comfortable way?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a choice of lounges?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there more than one television room?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a quiet room with no television?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If you are a smoker, are there designated areas for smoking?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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?

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)?

Can relatives or friends help you with personal care if you want them to?

Does a hairdresser/barber visit the home?

Health care

Home 1 Home 2 Home 3

Can you keep the same doctor that you have now?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is there a local doctor who accepts patients from the home?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does a doctor visit the home regularly?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If your health gets worse, can you continue to live at the home?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
What aids are supplied?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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?	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Are they the owner or the manager?	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
How long have they been running the home?	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
When can they be contacted?	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
How many residents are there?	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
How many staff are on duty:			
in the morning?	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
in the afternoon?	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
in the evening?	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
at night?	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Are night staff awake or on call?	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
What training do staff get?	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
What qualifications have staff got?	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

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?	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
What are the arrangements for making sure that people are safe in the event of a fire?	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

TERMS, CONDITIONS AND COSTS

Is there a written contract/agreement?	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
How long a trial period can you have?	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
What notice must be given if you want to leave the home?	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

TERMS, CONDITIONS AND COSTS (CONTINUED) Home 1 Home 2 Home 3

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	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	transport	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	meals for visitors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
use of home's telephone	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	laundry	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	dry cleaning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
incontinence pads	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	chiroprody	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	clothing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
medical supplies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	physiotherapy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	newspapers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
luxury or personal items	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	hairdressing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

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?

