

A Checklist for choosing a Care Home

It is worth taking the time to visit a few care homes, look at their brochures and talk to their staff and your family before you make a decision. Make a list of questions to ask before you visit. Don't be embarrassed to ask a lot of questions - this is an important move for you. Talk to the other residents. Ask if you can spend a day there. Most homes offer a "trial period", and if you change your mind later on and you want to move to another care home, then that is your choice. However, the contractual arrangement for placements made by social care services may differ and it is worth clarifying this point at the beginning. Similarly, if you are paying for the stay in a care home yourself you need to check the terms of the contract first.

These are some of the questions that you may wish to ask.

Location and general arrangements

- How will you be able to keep in touch with friends and relatives?
- Does the care home's registration match your needs?
- Does the home provide specialist care?
- When would you need to make the decision about giving up your own home?
- Are there any restrictions? For example, on visiting and smoking.
- Can you come and go as you please?
- Are there shops nearby?
- Is public transport available?
- How can you participate in decisions about the running of the care home?
- Ask to see the latest **Inspection Report** or order a copy from the web site www.cqc.org.uk

Accommodation arrangements

- Is there a choice of accommodation - single or shared rooms?
- If you are sharing: Is this your free choice? Have you met the other occupant?
- Where are the bathrooms and toilets?
- Does the care home have a lift and wheelchair access?
- Can you take some of your own furniture to the care home?
- Could you fully furnish your room?
- Can you decorate your own room if you wish to?
- Is the care home clean and well maintained?
- Does the care home accept pets?
- Is there a telephone which you can use in private?
- Is there a garden? Does it have easy access?

Care arrangements

- Do you feel comfortable with the staffs' ability to care for your needs?
- Are the staff friendly and helpful?
- Can the care home meet your religious, cultural and dietary needs?
- Are residents encouraged to be independent?
- Will you have some choice in meal arrangements and menus?
- Are there facilities for you to have a cup of tea or make snack?
- Can you still have your favourite meal?
- Can you choose when you have a bath?
- Are laundry facilities available? Is there an additional cost?
- How will you get help with shopping if you need this?

Health arrangements

- Can you keep your own doctor?
- What will happen if your health deteriorates?
- Will you be able to see your **Care Plan** and will you be involved in compiling it?

Social and Leisure arrangements

- Consider your current leisure activities - can arrangements be made for these to continue?
- Does the care home arrange activities, outings and provide facilities for hobbies?
- Can visitors call at any time?
- Can you entertain visitors in your room or is there a private facility available?
- Will you get on with the other residents?

Terms and conditions

- Does the home have a brochure detailing objectives, life-styles and practices?
- Ask for a copy of the “**Service User’s Guide**”.
- If you are privately funded, ask for a copy of the **Terms and Conditions** or **Contract** to take away and study. Compare the terms with the recommendations of the booklet “**Fair terms for care**” published by the Office of Fair Trading and available on www.offt.gov.uk
- Make a particular check of:
 - What is included in the fees and what are extras?
 - How do fees increase with time or additional needs?
 - Is there a 'trial period' and what are the terms?
 - If you wish to leave in the future, how much notice is required?
 - What happens if your funding changes later on from private to social services?
 - What happens if your health deteriorates?

There are commercial agencies that will offer help to select a suitable care home but their suggestions will usually be limited to those homes that have agreed to pay them a commission.