

HOW TO CHOOSE A NURSING HOME: A GUIDE

When choosing a care home you are not only choosing a new home for yourself or your loved one but you are also making a choice about the people who will be providing your care. We understand that it is a very important decision and have therefore provided the following guide to assist you in making a fully informed choice.

Step 1 Initial research

Care homes provide different types of care for different care needs. Some homes may specialise in a certain area while others may offer a range of care services. The following information will help you understand what type of care is available. Once you have an idea of the type of care you require you can use the information sources listed below to make a shortlist of care homes in your area that will meet your needs.

Different Types of Care Homes

All Care Homes are must be registered and can only provide the type of care that they are registered for. In England the organisation responsible for registering and inspecting care homes is the Commission for Social Care Inspection

Care Homes can broadly be divided into two categories – Care Home (Residential only) and Care Homes with Nursing.

Care Homes (Residential only)

Care Homes (also referred to as Residential Homes) provide residential or personal care for their residents. People can live in them for either a short or long term. These homes provide:

- Accommodation
- Meals
- Laundry
- Personal Care including help with washing, dressing, eating, mobility etc

Care Homes with Nursing

Care Homes with Nursing (also referred to as Nursing Homes) also provide residential or personal care for their residents. In addition they also employ Registered Nurses who can provide care for more complex health needs. People can live in these homes for either a short or long term. These homes provide:

- Accommodation
- Meals
- Laundry
- Nursing Care as well as Personal Care including help with washing, dressing, eating, mobility etc

Different Types of Care

In addition to either providing Nursing or Personal care, Care Homes can also be registered to provide other more specialist types of care:

Dementia Care Services

Dementia-related conditions, such as Alzheimer's disease, are very common in older people. Care is usually available within a residential or nursing setting depending on the level of care required.

Respite Care and Short Breaks

Short term, or respite care can be provided in most care homes where residents stay for perhaps a week or two. Many care homes will only offer it if there is a room vacant, whilst others will have rooms set aside which can be booked well in advance. Respite Care enables carers to have a break or can cover periods of time when a carer is unavailable.

Convalescent Care / Post op Care

This is short term care for people recovering from illness or an operation. Care Homes with Nursing are able to offer both convalescent and post-operative care, whilst residential homes usually just provide convalescent care.

Independent / Assisted Living / Extra Care

Independent Living, often known as 'Assisted living' or 'Extra Care' is where you can live independently in an apartment or other dwelling. Care is usually provided by a dedicated Home care service.

Home care

Home care or 'Domiciliary Care' allows residents to live in their own home. Care and services are provided through a Domiciliary Care Agency to residents living in their own homes.

Day Care For Non-Residents

Some care homes provide day care for residents living in the surrounding areas.

Palliative Care

Palliative care aims to provide compassionate care aimed at improving the quality of life for those with a chronic or terminal illness which is no longer responding to treatment. Palliative care particularly focuses on the active control of pain and symptoms to improve quality of life.

Which type of home is best for me or my relative?

The type of home that will best suit you will depend on the type of care that you or your relative needs. It is therefore important to understand your particular care needs in order to choose the right type of home.

If you need assistance your GP will be able to help you understand the level of care you need. Your local Social Services department can also assess your needs and suggest the level of care you require.

How do I find the right care home?

In order to put together a shortlist of suitable homes in your area, it may be useful to speak to the following groups of people:

- The CSSIW has a comprehensive list of care homes in your area. You can search their database from their website which also provides information on the type of care that each home is registered for, inspection reports and ratings.
- Friends and relatives, for their recommendations.
- Your local Social Services department.
- Your GP
- Local Age Concern office
- The Elderly Accommodation Counsel

Step 2 Paying for Care

Understanding who pays for care and what funding you are entitled to can be confusing. The following information is a useful initial guide. We also recommend that you seek further independent advice.

Understanding the different care home charges

There are three main elements of cost covered by Care Home fees:

- Nursing care provided by a Registered Nurse (Care Homes with Nursing / Nursing Homes)
- Personal care, such as help with bathing, dressing, eating and mobility, provided by a Carer
- Accommodation including meals, laundry and housekeeping, heating, lighting and other living costs.

Residents in care homes are entitled to some financial support. The amount that you are entitled to depends on your individual care needs and on your financial status.

We work with an organisation called Care Aware. Care Aware are a non profit organisation who offer an independent advocacy service elderly care funding advice in the UK.

Take a look at the Care Aware Funding Flow Chart to see what your financial status might mean.

Who is involved?

The National Health Service

If your care requires ongoing input from a Registered Nurse then you will be eligible for some funding support from the NHS. If you qualify for the criteria under the NHS Continuing Care scheme then the NHS will fully fund the cost of your care. If you do not meet the NHS Continuing Care criteria but still require the ongoing input of a Registered Nurse then the NHS will still make a contribution to the nursing care element. This is known as the Registered Nursing Care Contribution (or RNCC) sometimes also called Free Nursing Care (or FNC).

Local Authority Social Services

The Social Services department of your local authority will provide an assessment of need to determine the most appropriate care package for an individual and also to undertake the financial means testing to determine will level of financial support the Local Authority will provide.

The Department for Work and Pensions

The DWP's main role is to administer the benefits system including Pension Credit and Attendance Allowance.

Who will pay for what?

Depending on your financial situation, your Local Authority may pay some of the costs of your care. This is dependent on a means test of your savings and assets which includes any income from your pension, benefits etc and possibly your home if you live alone or if you are both moving into a care home.

What benefits am I entitled to?

If you are paying for your care yourself, you may be entitled to the following benefits:

- Attendance Allowance: This is a non means tested benefit payable irrespective of capital or income to those needing help with basic tasks. It has two levels, a lower or daytime rate and a night time or higher rate.
- Pension Credit: This is the restructured alternative to Income Support and offers two basic types of benefit, one which is designed to ensure a minimum guaranteed income and the other which to a degree is designed to assist those who have savings or additional private income.
- NHS Continuing Care: Full funding for care provided by the NHS for those with an acute care need.
- Registered Nursing Care Contribution (RNCC): An NHS payment contribution towards the cost of providing input from a Registered Nurse. The payment is non means tested and banded to reflect the degree of nursing input required.

Step 3 Viewing Care Homes

It is a good idea to view as many homes as possible in order to compare what each has to offer. Make an appointment to view the Home Manager so that they can answer all your questions. When visiting the home, chat to residents, relatives and staff to get their views. Remember, regardless of who is paying for your care, you have the right to choose which home you prefer. If your care is funded by the NHS or Local Authority this is still true provided your choice of home accepts NHS and Local Authority funded residents. You can't be forced to go to a Local Authority chosen home. Our homes accept both NHS and Local Authority funded residents.

To assist you we have provided a checklist of questions and things to look for while you are viewing the home.

CHOOSING A NURSING HOME: CHECKLIST (1/2)

GENERAL	
Does the home have a good inspection report?	
Does the home have a good reputation?	
How long has the home been established and run by its current owners?	
THE LOCATION:	
Is the home in the right location for you?	
Can relatives and friends easily visit?	
Is the home easily accessible by public transport?	
Is there a car park for you to use?	
Does the setting of the home suit you e.g. close to shops / rural location?	
FIRST IMPRESSIONS:	
What are your first impressions of the home as you arrive?	
Is the outside area well kept and tidy?	
Is the home and reception area welcoming when you first enter?	
Is the home odour free?	
Is the home clean and well maintained?	
Are staff friendly and welcoming?	
THE ATMOSPHERE:	
Does the atmosphere feel right?	
Do the staff acknowledge you?	
Are you offered refreshments?	
Are you offered a trial stay e.g. to visit for lunch or to spend an afternoon at the home?	
Is there evidence of independence being maintained where possible?	
Is everyone's dignity and privacy being respected?	
Are relatives and friends encouraged to visit?	
Are visitors welcome at anytime?	
Does the home feel homely?	
Are you encouraged to talk with residents/visiting relatives/staff?	
THE BEDROOM	
Does the home offer the type of bedroom you want?	
Does the home offer single and shared rooms?	
Are you able to look at an available bedroom?	
Is the bedroom clean and bright?	
Does the bedroom have ensuite facilities?	
Is there a nearby toilet and bathroom?	
What furniture is provided by the home?	
Are residents encouraged to bring some of their own possessions?	
Is there an option for telephone and television access in the bedrooms?	
Does each room have a nurse call system?	
Can residents change rooms if they want to?	
THE FACILITIES	
Does the home have suitable facilities for your needs?	
Is there a variety of Living Spaces e.g. - lounges, garden rooms, dining room(s), outside areas?	
Does the home have a number of bathrooms with showers or specialist baths?	
Is there a lift to any upper floors?	
Are the corridors and doorways wide?	
Does the home provide easy access for people in wheelchairs?	
Are there handrails around the home?	
Are there accessible gardens and outlooks from the lounges and bedrooms?	
THE CARE	
Does the home provide the right type of care for your needs?	
Can the home cope with any future changes in needs?	
Are residents registered with the local GP Surgery / dentist / optician?	
Are residents and relatives encouraged to contribute to care plans?	
Are care plans reviewed regularly?	
Are you encouraged to contribute to any decisions made about the care of a resident?	

CHOOSING A NURSING HOME: CHECKLIST (2/2)

THE STAFF	
Does each resident have one member of staff (key worker) who are responsible for aspects of their care from the moment they move into the home?	
What training do the staff receive?	
What qualifications do the staff have?	
What is the staffing ratio on each shift?	
Does the Home Manager give you confidence?	
Can the staff be seen around the home?	
Are staff with the residents in the lounge areas?	
Do staff interact well with residents e.g. show respect, knowledge of the residents?	
Do the residents seem happy?	
EQUIPMENT	
Does the home have important equipment such as:	
Hoists?	
Walking aids?	
Wheelchairs?	
Height adjustable beds?	
Pressure relieving mattresses?	
Furniture suitable for older people?	
DINING SERVICES	
Is there a current menu on display?	
Is there a choice of menu at all meal times?	
Can meals be taken in a resident's room?	
Are there snacks and drinks available at all times?	
Is food freshly prepared in the kitchen?	
Does the chef speak to the residents regularly to discuss their preferences?	
Are special diets catered for?	
How are residents who need help with eating assisted?	
ACTIVITIES	
Is there a regular activities programme?	
Did you see a current copy of the planned activities?	
Does the home have staff with responsibility for organising activities?	
Are residents consulted on the activities programme?	
How do staff find out about residents' hobbies and interests?	
Are there individual activities for people who are not able to join in group activities?	
Are there any outings for residents?	
Does the home have access to a mini bus?	
Are external groups and entertainers invited to the home on a regular basis?	
How are residents' religious needs met?	
Are special events such as anniversaries and birthdays celebrated by the home?	
Are there exercise opportunities for residents?	
Are relatives and friends encouraged to participate in activities?	
Does the home display details and photographs of recent activities?	
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES	
Does the home have written policies and procedures?	
Is the home's statement of purpose available?	
Is there an admissions pack for new residents?	
Does the home have a philosophy of care?	
Are quality audits carried out in the home?	
Is there a regular relatives meeting?	
Did you see an example of a contract between the home and the resident?	
Is it clear what is included in the fee and what items are extras?	
Does the home make available their latest inspection report?	

If you have decided that you would like to come to one of our Care Homes then the first thing to do is to contact the Home Manager. Contact details for our home are found at www.glaishouse.com.

The Home Manager will talk you through the admission process. We will carry out a thorough pre-admission assessment to assess the level of care you require.

Advocacy Services

We work with an organisation called Care Aware. Care Aware are a non profit organisation who offer an independent advocacy service elderly care funding advice in the UK. You can get to their website from here.

Useful Links and Contact Details

The following organisations will be able to provide you with advice on care funding and your entitlement to financial support.

Local Authorities:

- Swansea County Council (<http://www.swansea.gov.uk/>)
- Neath Port Talbot County Council (<http://www.npt.gov.uk/>)
- Pembrokeshire County Council (<http://www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk/>)
- Powys County Council (<http://www.powys.gov.uk/>)
- Blaenau Gwent County Council (<http://www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk/>)
- Bridgend County Council (<http://www.bridgend.gov.uk>)
- Caerphilly County Council (<http://www.caerphilly.gov.uk>)
- Cardiff County Council (<http://www.cardiff.gov.uk/>)
- Carmarthenshire County Council (<http://www.sirgaerfyrddin.gov.uk>)
- Merthyr Tydfil County Council (<http://www.merthyr.gov.uk>)
- Monmouthshire County Council (<http://www.monmouthshire.gov.uk/>)

Other:

- The Department for Work and Pensions (www.dwp.gov.uk)
- Age Concern (www.ageconcern.org.uk)
- Help the Aged (www.helptheaged.org.uk)
- Care Aware (www.careaware.co.uk)