

Top Six Things to Consider When You or a Loved One Needs Care



6 ASPECTS TO MAKE THE RIGHT CARE DECISION

If the time comes when you or a loved one needs residential care, you will need to make some important decisions. People talk a lot about finding the best quality of care possible, but what does this mean and how will you know it when you see it?

To a large extent, the best quality care is the care that best fits the needs and preferences of the person receiving it. Inspection reports and ratings can help narrow down the options but ultimately it's a personal choice and has a lot to do with what 'feels' right.

To help you make your choice we've put together a list covering the six most important aspects to consider.



1 Facilities and Staff

Choosing somewhere to live always calls for a lot of thought.

Choosing a care home is no different to finding a house to buy or rent - it has to have all the things you need and to be somewhere you will feel at home. The freedom for people to have their own belongings and furniture around them can make a big difference to the overall experience.

We always recommend an unannounced visit to your home of choice, take a good look around the home and decide whether it looks well maintained. This might be an indicator of whether the home is well run and managed. Does it have the facilities to run a wide range of social activities and is there easy access to a garden or outdoor space? Homes should be set up so that residents can socialise in small groups and there should be additional facilities such as a reading room, TV room and internet access.

It's important to look at the home through the eyes of somebody with restricted mobility. Pay particular attention to wheelchair access and the presence of handrails and disabled bathrooms. Does the temperature in the bedrooms and communal areas feel like it would be comfortable for a less active person?

Do the staff seem friendly, welcoming and know what they are doing? How are they interacting with the residents? Do they seem overworked or stressed? You should ask whether there is a senior manager in post and a senior member of staff on duty at all times. It's worthwhile asking what steps the home takes to ensure that staff are all properly trained to carry out their duties.

Accessibility

A care home with wonderful facilities and staff might not provide the best experience if it will be difficult for people to visit.

Transport links and how close the home is to where family and friends live or work should be a major consideration in the choice. It's worth finding out whether there are fixed visiting times, whether children are welcome or whether it is possible for visitors to visit at mealtimes or stay overnight.

Think too about facilities such as shops, parks or places of worship and whether these are easily accessible for residents.

If residential care is needed, another option can be to arrange live-in care, where a carer comes to live in your home. This would probably mean that your home has to be adapted to help you live in it safely and to make it suitable for a live-in carer. You might be able to get financial help with this from your local council.

2



3 Care Needs

Some care homes specialise in different types of care and may be more or less suitable for people with specific needs such as nursing or dementia care.

As well as current care needs, it's worth thinking about how these could develop in the coming years. Making a longer-term choice could avoid the need to change care homes at a later date.

Family members should be involved in care decisions (assuming this is what the person being cared for wants). Find out how the care home manages this. Ask too about the arrangements for notifying relatives if a resident is taken ill or has an accident.



4 Health and Wellbeing

A care home isn't just a place to live, it's also the centre of residents' social life and somewhere that people want to feel happy and comfortable

A wide range of social and leisure activities, as well as complementary therapies, such as meditation and aromatherapy, are all part of improving wellbeing and enjoying life.

Ask to see the programme of activities for that month. Find out too whether there are frequent visits from a GP, physiotherapists, opticians, chiropodists and other practitioners.

Diet is also incredibly important. Meal options should be well balanced and include plenty of appealing choices. Find out how freedom of residents have over their daily routine such as getting up, going to bed and mealtimes.

5



Finances

Residential care can be expensive.

You need to be clear about the fees charged and what they cover and whether, for example, there are additional charges for activities, outings or regular visits to a hospital or clinic.

Take a good look at the terms and conditions in the contract, including notice periods. Ideally the home should offer a trial period so that you can be sure you have made the right choice.

If the council is paying for the care, the amount may not cover the full fees charged by the care home you would like to choose. It may be possible for residents to top up the payments from their own funds.



6 Safeguarding

If you are arranging care for a loved one because they can't continue living in their own home, it's possible that they will be vulnerable.

Quite naturally, you will want to be as sure as you can be that the care that they receive is safe, and that their personal needs and wellbeing are taken care of.

It's not unreasonable to ask for a copy of the home's safeguarding policy. You certainly shouldn't feel awkward asking the care home how you can be confident that your loved one will be kept safe. Consider how the home is kept secure, the measures in place to control access and whether residents have somewhere secure to store their personal belongings.



We hope that you found this guide helpful. If you would like to know more or see for yourself how a care home operates, we would be happy to welcome you for a visit at one of our homes.