



What to consider when choosing a good care home

It will be important for you to first consider the care and support services that will allow you to continue living independently in your own home. If, however, after an assessment and/or proper consideration you require residential or nursing home care to meet your needs, this checklist gives a number of pointers and questions to help you make the right choice of care home. Some factors listed will be important for everyone, while others are a matter of personal taste and/or interest. To help you in this important decision, you can rate each care home you visit on a scale of 0-5, and where relevant yes/no.

Before visiting care homes, it is suggested that you read the advice and guidance in the West Sussex Care Guide. The choice of care home is an important decision, and you are advised to carefully consider which home will best meet your needs and preferences. It is suggested that you visit more than one care home, and visit more than once. Ask a lot of questions and trust your own feelings about the places you visit.

Home 1

Home 2

Home 3

Home 4

Home 5

Home 6

Home 1
Home 2
Home 3
Home 4
Home 5
Home 6

1. General impressions

Are you asked to sign in on arrival?						
Is the home's Care Quality Commission (CQC) certificate of registration and current rating displayed?						
Is the most recent CQC Inspection Report available/on display?						
Does the care home feel friendly and homely?						
Is the home well decorated and well maintained?						
Is the care home fresh, clean and odour free?						
Is the home a comfortable temperature for residents?						
Do residents seem active, content and engaged in activities?						
Are residents addressed according to the name they prefer e.g. as Mr, Mrs or by their first name?						
Are residents treated with respect?						
Do care staff seem caring and attentive towards residents?						
Do care staff wear name badges and uniforms?						
Is the home able to meet your communication/language needs?						
Are there sufficient staff on duty to give everyone individual attention?						
Is the call bell answered promptly?						
Do staff knock before entering rooms and wait for an answer?						
How do staff answer the phone when the home is called?						

2. Location of the care home

Is the home in an area where your family/friends can visit?						
Is it close to local amenities (library, shops, place of worship)?						
Is there good access to public transport?						

3. Environment

Can a person with limited mobility access buildings, rooms and facilities (including workers)?						
Are there places where electric wheelchairs can be stored?						
Is there more than one floor? If so, is there a passenger lift and level access or a stair lift to other floors?						
Are there call bells in the bedrooms, bathrooms and in the communal areas?						
Are rooms, stairs and corridors bright, light and airy?						
Are rails along corridors clearly visible so that people with sight problems can see them?						
Does the home have an accessible garden for residents' use?						
Are external doors secured?						

4. Accommodation

Bedrooms

Are you able to have a single room if you want one?						
Are there rooms with en-suite toilet, washbasin and shower?						
Are there rooms for use by couples?						
Can you go to your room freely at anytime?						
Can you bring some of your own furniture and belongings? Is there room for mobility aids?						
Is the door of your room lockable?						
Can you have your own television/radio in your room?						
Would people under 75 years old need their own TV Licence?						
Can you have a telephone installed?						

Bathrooms and toilets

Are toilets, baths and showers suitable for your needs?						
Can you choose between a bath or shower and the frequency?						
Is there a toilet in your room or within easy reach of your bedroom?						
Are toilets within easy reach of the lounge and dining room?						

Communal rooms (lounge and dining room)

Is the furniture in the lounge arranged comfortably?						
Is there a choice of lounge/communal areas?						
Is there more than one television room?						
Is there a quiet room?						
Does the home have a loop system (can people who have trouble hearing, hear the TV, radio or audio system)						

5. Daily Living

Home 1
Home 2
Home 3
Home 4
Home 5
Home 6

General

Will you be able to have a say in what happens in the home?						
Is there a residents' committee?						
Are there regular home meetings?						
Are relatives invited to home meetings?						
Will a particular member of staff take a special interest in your care?						
Are you comfortable with the 'house rules' e.g. smoking, alcohol or pets?						
Is a copy of the home's complaints policy displayed?						
Are the home's insurance certificates and food standards rating displayed?						

Domestic arrangements

Can you choose when to go to bed?						
Will your room be cleaned every day?						
Will your bed be made for you or can you make your own bed with support if necessary?						
Can you help around the home if you want to?						
Is it possible to buy small items in the home e.g. toiletries, stamps, sweets?						
Are newspapers/magazines delivered?						
Are laundry arrangements explained fully?						

Personal possessions

Is there a secure place where valuables can be safely stored?						
Does the home have insurance for residents' possessions?						

Meals

What choice of menu is there?						
Do the menus appear to be balanced, tasty and nutritious?						
Does the home cater for special diets?						
Do menus include food that you particularly like?						
What time is the last meal of the day served?						
Are snacks or drinks available whenever residents wish?						
How flexible are meal times?						
Do you have the choice of eating meals in your own room?						
Are you given the opportunity to prepare a drink or food for yourself where appropriate?						

Leisure

Are social events and outings organised frequently? Is there an additional cost for these?						
Are there regular planned activities e.g. exercise, music, handicrafts?						
Will you be able to continue with the hobbies that you enjoy?						
Can you choose books from the mobile library?						

Religion

Can you practise your own religion?						
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Telephone/Internet

Is there a phone you can use in private? How much is the charge?						
Is there a phone you can use that meets any special requirements you may have e.g. amplification?						
Is there internet or Wi-Fi access available?						

Visitors

Are visitors welcome at any reasonable time?						
Are there places where residents can spend time in private with their visitors?						
Can you offer visitors refreshments or a meal? Can they stay overnight?						
What checks are done to stop unwanted people from entering the home?						

6. Care

Personal care

How will you have a say in the way you receive your care?						
Is there help with personal care e.g. washing, bathing or going to the toilet?						
Can relatives or friends help you with personal care if you want them to?						
Does a hairdresser visit the home regularly?						
What happens if your needs change?						

Home 1
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Home 4
Home 5
Home 6

Health care

Will you be able to keep the same doctor/nurse?						
Will your support plan contain the name of the nurse responsible for your care?						
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?						
Is the equipment available suitable for your needs?						
Does a chiropodist visit the home regularly?						
How can you access a dentist or optician?						
How are external health visits charged?						
Will staff accompany you to external health visits? Will this be at an additional cost?						

7. Management of the home

Who runs the home? Are they the owner or the manager?						
How long have they been running the home?						
Is the manager registered with the CQC?						
Is a manager/senior member of staff on duty/on call at all times?						
How many residents live at the home?						
Are night staff awake or sleeping-in and on call?						
Can families/friends be invited to care reviews?						
What are the arrangements for making sure that people are safe in the event of a fire?						

8. Terms, conditions and costs

Were you shown a copy of the home's Statement of Purpose and Service User Guide?						
Were you given a copy of the Home Agreement/Contract?						
Will you have a trial period?						
How many weeks' notice must be given if you want to leave the home?						
How many weeks' notice must be given to you by the home if you are asked to leave?						
How much is the weekly fee for the care you need?						
How are fees calculated?						
Is the fee breakdown clear?						
Do local authority funded residents and privately funded residents pay the same?						
How are fees collected?						
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 Internet/Wi-Fi
- Laundry Dry cleaning Chiropody Dentist Optician
- Clothing TV Licence Medical supplies Physiotherapy Newspapers
- Luxury or personal items Hairdressing

Are there any additional charges?						
Are fees payable in advance or arrears?						
Are fees payable monthly/weekly?						
How often do fees increase? When will you be notified of an increase?						
What happens about keeping your room if you have to go into hospital?						
In what circumstances might you be asked to leave?						
Were you recommended to access specialist financial advice about paying for long-term care to ensure you are able to continue paying the care fees for as long as needed?						
What happens if you run out of funds?						
What happens when you die? Are any fees payable?						

9. Problems

What happens if you are unhappy with the home after you have moved in?						
How do you make a complaint?						
Is there access to advocacy services?						
How does the home let family and friends know if you are taken ill?						