

Acknowledgement: This is an adaptation of Counsel and Care's publication "What to look for in a Care Home". The original can be found at:

[http://www.counselandcare.org.uk/assets/library/documents/19\\_Care\\_Homes\\_What\\_to\\_Look\\_For.pdf](http://www.counselandcare.org.uk/assets/library/documents/19_Care_Homes_What_to_Look_For.pdf)

It is a good idea to visit several homes to see what they are like and what sort of facilities are available. When visiting the home you may not have a lot of time to decide if it is suitable. It is a good idea to prepare the questions you want to ask before you get there. You may want to use the following checklist.

### The fees

- Can you afford the fees?
- Will your relatives be expected to make up any difference between the fees and what the Trust will pay?
- How often does the home increase its fees? Will you be able to afford regular fee increases? Will you have to move out if you cannot pay?
- Do you have to pay any fees in advance or a deposit?
- What percentage of the fees would you still have to pay if you had to move out for a short time (for example, for a holiday or to go into hospital)?
- What does the fee include?
- Is there an extra charge for:
  - laundry;
  - hairdressing;
  - chiropody;
  - extra care;

- leisure activities;
- incontinence pads;
- newspapers;
- toiletries; or
- physiotherapy?

## **Information and Contracts**

All homes should produce a 'statement of purpose' to help you make a choice about the home you want to move into. The statement should set out the objectives, philosophy of care, services provided and the facilities and terms and conditions of the home. The home should also provide a service user's guide that includes

- A statement of the home's aims and objectives.
- The range of facilities and services it offers.
- Details of any special care or facilities it offers e.g. care for people with dementia.
- A copy of the latest inspection report should also be available for you to look at. If it is not you can request a copy from the Registration and Inspection Unit ( Tel. No 02890 563700 ).

You should also check the terms of any contract you have to sign and find out:

- Under what circumstances could the home ask you to leave and how much notice will they give you?
- How much will you have to pay if you are away from the home for any reason?
- Who would be responsible for finding you somewhere else to live?
- How much notice do you need to give the home if you want to move out?

- Is there a complaints procedure? Is constructive criticism encouraged to improve the services?

If you have any doubts about a contract or statement, you should contact the Care Manager or, alternatively, refer to the Citizen's Advice Bureau or your solicitor for legal advice.

If the Trust assessed your care needs, you should have a written care plan that says what care and support you need. Request a copy if you have not received one already. It would be difficult to find a home to meet your individual assessed needs if you do not know what they are. There should also be a contract drawn up between the Trust and the home. The contract should include your care plan and explain what they expect the home to provide for you. You should read all the contracts that relate to your care to check the conditions and make sure that the home is providing you with the correct level of care and support.

## Care Practices

These are some of the questions you may wish to consider about the type of care home you want to live in:

- Will you be involved in making decisions about your care?
- Will the home involve your relatives or other carers in looking after you? The home should only involve your relatives or carer with your permission?
- Can the home cope with your care needs?
- Would the home be able to cope with your needs if they got worse?
- Will you be able to look after yourself as much as possible, including being in charge of your own medicine?
- Would the home handle your personal matters in a private and confidential way?

- Does the home handle bathing, incontinence and giving medicine in a sensitive way?
- Can you see visitors at any time?
- Can you entertain visitors in private?
- How much freedom do you have to use the facilities and resources of the home?
- Can you go out when you want?
- What services do they provide, for example, physiotherapy?
- Do the residents get the chance to take part in making decisions about general life in the home?
- Is there a residents' committee?
- How much freedom would you have to choose what you can do, when you can do it and who you see?
- Will the home make it possible for you to vote in elections?
- Will the home regularly look at your needs and at how you are progressing?
- Can you take part in planning and reviewing your own care?
- Can you look after your own personal affairs (such as money and benefits), and will the home give you privacy to do this?
- Would you be able to spend time alone in your room if you wanted to?

## **Staff**

During your visit have a look at the staff of the care home.

- Does it look as if there are enough members of staff?

- Are the staff welcoming and are they friendly?
- Do the ones you see look rushed off their feet or do they have time to sit and spend time with residents?
- Do the staff help residents to do things for themselves rather than just doing things for them?
- Did you see any members of staff talking with or helping the residents?
- Do the staff treat residents with respect?

And you can ask the manager:

- Are the care staff expected to do domestic chores such as cooking or cleaning, or are there separate staff for this?
- What training is available to the staff?
- How many staff are on duty during each part of the day and night? What are their duties?
- Do the staff have formal qualifications? For example, do the care assistants have National Vocational Qualifications (NVQs) and are those involved in nursing Registered General Nurses (RGN) or State Registered Nurses (SRN)?
- Are the staff trained in handling techniques, for example, turning and lifting? If not, the staff are not trained correctly.
- Could you keep your own doctor?

## **Accommodation**

During your visit have a look at the home.

- Does it look well looked after?
- Do you like the decoration - would you feel comfortable living there?

- Are the furnishings and fittings homely and in a good condition?
- Has the home got up-to-date self-help equipment for the needs of the residents, for example, a lift, grab rails, minicom loop system for people with hearing difficulties, bathroom hoists?
- Is there easy access for wheelchairs or frames throughout the home?
- Could you take your pets?
- Who would you pay for any extra equipment needed for you, if your needs changed?

### **Residents' Rooms**

- Are the rooms single or shared? (If they are shared, how is privacy achieved?)
- Did the residents choose to share? People in shared rooms both have to make the choice to share, residents cannot be forced to.
- Are any rooms en-suite with bath, shower or toilet?
- Do the rooms smell fresh and clean?
- Can you lock your room?
- How many of items of furniture or personal possessions can you bring with you?

### **Communal Rooms**

- How many are there?
- Are there different sitting areas including quiet rooms?
- Is there a separate dining area?

- Are there toilets within easy reach of all parts of the home?
- Are there smoking and non-smoking areas?

## **Location**

- Is the home near to your family and friends?
- Is it convenient for shops, public transport and your doctor?
- What is the surrounding area like?

## **Meals**

- Can you look at copies of previous menus?
- Do the meals seem nutritious?
- Is the menu varied and interesting?
- Can you choose what to eat?
- Are the residents involved in planning the menu?
- Can they cater for you if you have a special diet? Does this happen for any of the current residents?
- Is the dining area attractive and large enough?
- Can you choose who to sit with?
- Can meals be brought to your room?
- How flexible is the home – would you be able to have a late breakfast should you wish to have a lie in?
- Can your friends, relatives or guests eat with you?
- Are there facilities for residents to make snacks and hot drinks?

- Before you move into the home, can you go there for a meal to see what it is like?

## **Leisure**

- Are there any organised leisure activities, for example, arts and crafts, games, days out?
- Can you choose to take part in these activities?
- How would you be involved in planning and organising these activities?
- Can you carry on doing the activities that you currently enjoy? Does the home have the space and equipment to allow you to do this? Would the staff help you?
- Would you be able to take part in any activities outside the home by yourself?
- Would the home help with transport or staff if you needed it?
- Does the home have its own transport?
- Does the home have its own garden?
- Will your religious needs be met, for example, do clergy call at the home, or can you be taken to church?
- Are there any volunteers who visit?
- Can your friends or relatives help with activities?
- What services does the home provide, for example, TV, library, the internet or hairdressing?
- Would you be charged extra for any activities or services?
- Would you not be able to take part if you cannot afford them?

## **Other important points**

- Are the current residents happy in the home? Speak to them. After all, you will be spending a considerable period of time with them.
- Is there a waiting list or a current vacancy?
- Can you arrange for an extended visit or trial period to make sure the home really suits you?