

RESIDENTIAL CARE

Residential care is a term used to describe the general care and support provided in a standard elderly care home. It can often be referred to as “personal care” or even “assisted living” and usually involves help with basic needs such as washing, dressing and mobility assistance.

Moving into a care home is a big decision and it can cost a lot of money. Before choosing a care home for you or someone you know, it is worth considering all the options.

A CARE HOME IS NOT THE ONLY OPTION

A move into a care home is a big step. For many people, it is only considered when other care options have been exhausted or are no longer suitable.

Other people might tell you that a care home is the only option for your loved one, but do not just assume they are right. Solutions such as care at home or sheltered housing might be more suitable. Make sure that you research all the options with the person you are supporting before deciding.

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN NURSING CARE AND RESIDENTIAL CARE?

Sometimes, what people refer to as a ‘care home’ may in fact be a care home that only provides residential care, known as a residential care home. A residential care home is different from a nursing home. The main difference is that a nursing home always has a qualified nurse on-site to provide medical care.

WHY CHOOSE A CARE HOME?

It might be time to consider a care home if your loved one is struggling to live alone even with the help of carers, friends and other relations. Or it could be that following a stay in hospital a needs assessment indicates that a care home is the best place for your relative or friend to live.

GET A NEEDS ASSESSMENT

At the same time as exploring residential care options, it is important to ensure the person you are caring for gets a free needs assessment from their local council's adult social care department. It is especially vital if you think they might need financial help from the local authority, as councils will only fund care when someone has been assessed as needing it. Even if you think your loved one will end up paying for their own care, it is still worth getting a needs assessment. It provides a professional assessment of the type of care and support that is needed, which will help you choose a suitable care home. It may also highlight other care options that you might not have considered.

THE BENEFITS TO LIVING IN A CARE HOME:

Safety: there is always someone around.

Staff on duty 24/7: in a residential care home, someone is on call at night. In a nursing home, medical care from a qualified nurse is provided 24 hours a day.

A room of their own: your loved one can usually personalise their room with their own furniture, pictures and ornaments.

Meals: regular meals provided, and nutritional needs met.

Companionship: opportunities to socialise with others of their own age and take part in organised activities or outings, where available.

Peace of mind: for you and your family that your loved one is being taken care of and is not living alone.

Supervision of medication: if this is a problem for your family member, you can feel reassured that it will be taken care of.

No worries: about household bills or upkeep.

Better living conditions: the physical environment may be better – safe, warm and clean.

THE DRAWBACKS OF LIVING IN A CARE HOME:

Cost: care home fees can be very costly, particularly if the person you are looking after has to fund their own care. If relying on local authority funding, your family member must be assessed as needing a care home and the local authority might not meet the weekly cost of the fees in full.

Choice: there may be a limited choice of homes with a vacancy for your loved one, depending on their circumstances.

Unfamiliar surroundings: moving to somewhere completely new can be unsettling.

Loneliness: and loss of contact with neighbours and old friends.

Emotional effect: families can feel guilty that they are not looking after their loved one themselves, even though this may no longer be practical.

Your loved one may feel rejected: it can help if you talk things through beforehand, possibly explaining that you or other family members are unable to give them the care that they need. Regular contact once they have moved in will also help.

Loss of independence: although a good home should encourage your loved one to be as independent as they can be.

Lack of privacy: this might be difficult for your family member to adjust to.

Small living space: this means your loved one will not be able to take all their furniture and personal possessions with them.

Variations in care: all homes must achieve a minimum standard to ensure they can be registered, but quality of care may vary from home to home. Doing your research and asking around for recommendations when choosing a care home, should help you avoid the less suitable ones.



CONTACT SUITABLE CARE HOMES

Contact your shortlisted care homes and talk specifics from the first phone call. Discuss how the home can meet your loved one's needs directly with the manager of the home. Ask the home to be upfront about the fees, too, even if they are reluctant. This will help you to avoid wasted visits. They will want to know if your loved one is self-funding, local authority funded or a mixture. It could be that you do not know this yet, in which case explain the situation.

Also enquire about availability of places. Finding out about cost and room availability, will help you eliminate any homes that are not suitable either because they are out of your price range or are lacking spaces. Ask them to send you written details of costs together with a brochure.

VISIT THE CARE HOMES

It is important to visit all the homes on your shortlist to get as much information as you can.

Now is the time to consider what is important, ranging from practical issues, such as the social activities on offer, through to questions about the care home contract, your family member's potential room, and what else happens in and around the home.

If possible, visit the care homes with the person you are caring for, but if that is not possible, go with another family member or friend. If your loved one is unable to visit, ask a representative from the home to visit them to assess their needs face to face.



USEFUL ORGANISATIONS

There is a range of information and advice available on the website that can help in your search for advice and information regarding residential care and care homes, simply type in 'Residential Care' into the google search box and you will find advice and guidance offered from a range of different organisations. For example:

Age UK

www.ageuk.org.uk

Age UK can provide information guides and factsheets across a range of topics including residential care. You can also telephone the Age UK Advice Line on 0800 678 1602 (free to call 8am – 7pm 365 days a year) to speak to an adviser directly.

Independent Age

www.independentage.org/information

For information and advice about residential care, care at home, going into hospital, housing, NHS Continuing Healthcare and many more issues please call the Independent Advice line on 0800 319 6789 (8:30am to 6:30pm, Monday to Friday, closed on weekends and bank holidays) or contact via email at advice@independentage.org.

Officers' Association, Grants and Welfare

T: 020 7808 4175 | E: help@officersassociation.org.uk

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**EVERY OFFICER
EVERY FAMILY**



**OFFICERS'
ASSOCIATION**

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