

Care Homes



Finding and paying for a care home

Advice for older people

Endorsed by
The Relatives and Residents Association

R&RA
For Quality of Life of
Older People in Care

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- Staying Steady

Leaflets are free of charge and available from the Information Resources Team at the address on the back page, email adviceleaflets@helptheaged.org.uk or fax 0870 770 3282.

The advice given in this leaflet is endorsed by The Relatives and Residents Association. The information is correct at the time of printing in September 2008. However, things do change so it is always a good idea to get expert advice about your particular situation.

If you would find it helpful to speak to someone about your situation you can phone our confidential freephone advice line **SeniorLine** on **0808 800 6565 (0808 808 7575** in Northern Ireland). The **Relatives and Residents Association** also runs a helpline on **020 7359 8136**.

If you would like this leaflet in another format, such as large print or audio tape, please contact the Information Resources Team on **020 7278 1114**.

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Help the Aged produces other leaflets which you may find useful: for example, *Housing Matters* and *Help in Your Home*. We also produce a range of information sheets, including no. 2, *Sheltered Housing*; no. 10, *Paying for Your Care Home*; no. 13, *Care at Home* and no. 22, *Coming Out of Hospital*. For free copies contact the Information Resources Team at the address on the back page.

This leaflet should help you decide whether moving into a care home is the right choice for you. If it is, one of your main concerns may be how you will arrange and pay for your care. The first part of this leaflet looks at the help you can get from your local council and the NHS; and at arranging and paying for care yourself. The rules about funding are complicated, but remember that they won't all apply to you.

Whether or not you get help with your fees, you should have some choice about which home you move to. It is really important to try to find a care home that is right for you. The second part of this leaflet gives advice on how to find a care home and what to look out for; and outlines what steps you can take if you are unhappy once you have moved in.

Throughout this leaflet, when we talk about social services we refer to the **social work department in Scotland** and the **health and social services trust in Northern Ireland**.

Making your decision

Often a move into a care home is suggested because of a crisis – maybe an illness or a fall – but it is not always the only solution.

Think about why you are considering moving into a care home. Is it mainly because other people advise it? Or do you really want to make the move? Your family and friends, or people such as your doctor or social worker, can help you to work out what you want to do. **But it is up to you to make the final decision about what is best for you.**

Have you considered other options? Sheltered housing may be the ideal choice for you. Or you may prefer to get help to stay

in your own home. It is also possible to just have a short stay in a care home. This section looks at each of these options.

Help to stay in your own home

You may be able to receive help in your own home, such as meals-on-wheels, or help with bathing or shopping. Or it might be possible for you to have your home adapted or have equipment provided to help you to live at home. See our free advice leaflet, *Help in Your Home*, for more advice. A community alarm enables you to remain independent with the peace of mind that you can contact a response centre at any time of the day or night just by pressing a button on your phone or a pendant round your neck. See our free advice leaflet, *Housing Matters*, for more information.

Sheltered housing

Sheltered housing might be more appropriate for you. You would still have the independence of living in your own self-contained flat, but with an alarm system and warden or scheme manager on hand to assist in emergencies. Different types of sheltered housing provide varying levels of service and care. Some have communal areas and have group activities. Others, known as ‘extra care’ or ‘very sheltered housing’, provide meals and some personal care. Our information sheet no. 2, *Sheltered Housing*, has more information about the various types of sheltered housing schemes and who provides them.

Trial periods or respite care

A stay in a care home doesn’t have to be permanent. You might want to stay in a care home just for a short period to give you a chance to recover after an illness or to give your carer a break. Most homes keep beds free for respite care. If you are worried about whether

living in a care home is the right choice for you, you can arrange to stay in a home as a temporary resident to see how you get on.

Moving into a care home

If you think that a care home is the right choice for you, it is important to make the move as positive a step as possible. Moving into a care home can be a big relief if you have been struggling to cope at home or have become isolated. Care homes can offer a secure and comfortable environment and the opportunity to be in the company of other people.

Local council help

If you are thinking about moving into a care home the first step is to contact your local council **social services department** and ask for an **assessment** of your needs. If your local council agrees that you need to move into a care home, you may get help towards the cost of your care home fees (see pages 7–14 for more information on paying for your care home).



Once you have asked for an assessment, someone from the social services department should visit you to carry out this assessment. They will ask you about your personal situation, and they should discuss with you things such as your health, how you are currently managing at home and what sort of help you need. It is usually a good idea to have someone with you, such as a relative or friend, when you have the assessment.

Make a note of what you want to say in advance. For example, you might want to move to a different area to be near relatives, or live somewhere where you can keep your pet.

The assessment must take into account your own wishes, so don't be afraid of saying what you want. If you have a carer, they are entitled to an assessment of their needs too.

Many people find it helpful to get advice before their assessment. We give some guidance in our advice leaflet *Help in Your Home* or call **SeniorLine** on **0808 800 6565 (0808 808 7575** in Northern Ireland).

Once you have been assessed, your local council may suggest that the best way to meet your care needs is for you to move into a care home. If this is the case, your local council has a responsibility to arrange and pay for your care – unless you are able to do so yourself.

Local council complaints procedure

If you are unhappy with the result of your assessment, or how it was carried out, then you can make a complaint. All local councils must have a straightforward complaints procedure; contact your **social services department** for details. If you need help or advice with making a complaint, your local Citizens Advice Bureau or Age Concern may be able to help you. You may also find our information sheet no. 27, *How to Make a Complaint*, useful.

Paying for a place in a care home

The full cost of your care home place can be met by contributions from different sources. If your local council has agreed that you need to move into a care home, it may pay part or all of your fees, depending on how much income you get and what savings you have. It will work out how much you should contribute. If you are assessed as needing nursing care, the NHS may also make a contribution. In some circumstances you may get your care paid for fully by the NHS.

The financial aspect of moving into a care home can seem complicated, but there are rules for working out how much you will pay. We outline the basic rules in this section. For more details, see our free information sheet no. 10, *Paying for Your Care Home*, or call **SeniorLine** on **0808 800 6565** (or **0808 808 7575** in Northern Ireland).

Local council funding

If you've been assessed as needing to move into a care home, your local council will work out how much you should pay towards the cost.

This depends on your income and savings. There is a fixed upper limit to the amount of savings you can have and still get local council funding. For example, if you have £25,000 savings, you will have to pay the full cost of your care.

There is also a lower limit – any savings you have below this cannot be counted. For example, if you have £8,000 in savings, this should be completely ignored when your local council is working out how much you should pay.

Savings limits

The savings limits usually go up every April. The rates here are for 2008–09. The limits in each country are:

Upper limit	England and Northern Ireland	£22,250
	Scotland	£21,500
	Wales	£22,000
Lower limit	England and Northern Ireland	£13,500
	Scotland	£13,000
	Wales	£19,000

More than the upper savings limit

If you have more than the upper limit in savings you will have to pay the full fees for your care home.

If you own your home, its value will be disregarded for the first twelve weeks you are in care as a permanent resident. After that, the value of your home will usually be counted as capital. This usually means that you will be expected to sell it to pay the fees.

But your house will not count as capital if it is occupied by:

- your husband, wife or civil partner (or unmarried partner)
- if a close relative over the age of 60, or a relative under the age of 60 who is incapacitated
- your estranged or divorced partner and he or she is a lone parent with a dependent child; or
- a child under 16 you are liable to maintain and your house is the child's main home. The child must be either a relative of yours or a relative of a member of your family.

The local council may also ignore the value of the house if it is the permanent home of someone else, such as a carer; it doesn't have to do this, but it can choose to.

If your house is counted as capital, but you don't wish to sell it, the local council can allow you to **defer payment** of your contribution. It will effectively be giving you an interest-free loan to be paid back when your property is eventually sold. You might find it more difficult to do this if you live in Northern Ireland.

Get advice from **SeniorLine** on **0808 808 7575**.

Less than the upper savings limit

If you have less than the upper limit in savings, or when your savings drop to this level, then your income and what savings you do have will be taken into account to work out how much you will pay towards the home fees.

- When deciding how much you have to pay towards the fees, the local council must always leave you with some money to spend as you wish each week. This is called a **personal expenses allowance**. In 2008–09 this is set at £21.15 (£21.38 in Wales); this rate goes up every April. Most income you have over this level will go to the local council to cover your care costs, up to the full amount of the fees.
- Your **income** is worked out by calculating what money you have coming in each week. This includes the income from your savings, any pension you receive (state, occupational or personal), and any income from benefits, such as Pension Credit.
- Any **savings** you have below the lower limit are ignored altogether. Savings of between the lower and upper limits are converted into a weekly income using a simple formula.

The local council should tell you how it has worked out how much you will pay. **Ask for this information in writing.**

Make sure you understand exactly what is included in the fees and what you will have to pay for yourself. For example, will you have to use your personal expenses allowance to pay for toiletries, phone calls, outings or clothing? Or are any of these things included in the fees?

Giving away property and savings

It is illegal to give away property or savings to another person in order to qualify for financial help from your local council. This is called **deprivation of assets**. If the local council believes that you have deliberately given away assets to reduce or avoid care home fees it may try to claim the fees back.

It is important to remember that if you give away your home, you may lose control over what happens to it. Although you

may feel protected if you give it to your children or other relatives, you may have no legal rights if things change. As the majority of older people don't need to move into a care home, you may wish to hold on to your home and capital, and preserve your independence and control over your own money.

What happens next?

If your local council is funding all or part of your fees, it is responsible for paying the fees directly to the home. If you are contributing part of the fees, you will have to refund this amount to your local council.

If the local council decides you can pay the full fees, it will probably expect you to arrange your own care home place. If you're not able to manage this, or don't have someone who can help you, the local council must arrange a place for you.

We give advice on finding a care home on pages 19–22 of this leaflet.

Nursing care contribution in England, Wales and Northern Ireland

If you are assessed as needing care from a registered nurse, the NHS should make a contribution towards your care home fees. Before you move into a care home, you should arrange to have an assessment. In England and Wales, the NHS is responsible for carrying out the assessment. In Northern Ireland the health and social care trust will carry out the assessment. If the NHS (or health and social services trust in Northern Ireland) thinks that you need nursing care, it should organise for you to be assessed by a registered nurse.

If the nurse agrees that you need nursing care, the NHS (health and social care trust in Northern Ireland) will pay an amount directly

to your care home. If you pay your own care home fees this should mean you see a reduction in how much you have to pay.

The amount the NHS will pay towards your nursing care costs is different in each other country. The following figures usually go up every April.

- In England, the rules about how much funding you will get towards your nursing care changed in October 2007. As from 1 October 2007 the amount the NHS will contribute towards nursing care costs for care home residents **in England** will be a flat rate of £103.80 per week for those newly assessed as needing nursing care. There are **transitional arrangements** for existing claimants; people who were assessed as needing a higher rate of nursing care will continue to get the higher rate of £142.80 per week. Those getting the middle or lower rates of nursing care, will receive £103.80 per week towards their care.
- In Wales, your local health board may contribute a flat rate of £117.66 per week towards your nursing care. However, each individual health board can decide how much it will contribute towards your nursing care. This amount may differ from the flat rate of £117.66.
- In Northern Ireland, the health and social care trust will pay up to £100 a week, depending on how much it has already contributed towards your fees.

If you disagree with the decision made by the nurse, you can ask for a review.

If you're assessed as needing nursing care, it is worth checking whether you have been properly assessed for continuing NHS health care first (see page 13).

Help with nursing and personal care in Scotland

If you are paying all or part of your care home fees you may be able to get help with the costs of nursing and personal care from your local council.

- If your local council assesses you as needing nursing care it will pay £67 a week towards your fees.
- If you are aged 65 and over and it agrees that you need personal care, it will pay £149 a week towards your care.
- If you are aged 65 and over and it agrees that you need personal care and nursing care, it will pay £216 a week towards your care.

Your local council will make these payments directly to your care home. You should then see a reduction in the fees you have to pay.

Fully-funded NHS care

If your needs are considered to be primarily complex, healthcare needs, you may get completely free care from the NHS. This is known as **continuing NHS health care**. You should be assessed for continuing NHS health care before you move into a care home which provides nursing care, or when you are being discharged from hospital. You can also ask for an assessment if you live in a care home which doesn't provide nursing care.

Unfortunately, it can be very difficult to qualify for fully-funded NHS care.

To find out whether you are eligible for continuing NHS care, in England, you need to contact your local primary care trust for an assessment. In England, the primary care trust will use a framework called *The National Framework for NHS Continuing Healthcare and NHS-Funded Nursing Care* which was introduced on

1 October 2007. The framework looks at four areas when making a decision about whether you are entitled to NHS continuing care: The nature of your needs, (including the type of interventions or help you require); intensity (the extent and severity of your needs, including the need for constant care); complexity (how your needs arise, are they stable or is monitoring required); and predictability (the extent to which your needs change and the level of risk, if adequate and timely care is not provided).

Scotland and Wales have their own set of **eligibility criteria** for deciding who gets this type of care. In Wales, this will be dealt with by your local health board. In Scotland, this could be dealt with by a number of health or social care professionals: for example, your doctor or social worker.

You cannot get fully-funded NHS care if you live in Northern Ireland.

If you are told you do not meet the criteria for continuing NHS health care, and you are unhappy with this decision, you can use its complaints procedure. It will help you if you get advice first: for example, from your local Citizens Advice Bureau. If you think this applies to you, contact **SeniorLine** on **0808 808 6565** for more advice. You may also find our information sheet no. 27, *How to Make a Complaint*, useful.

If you do receive free continuing NHS health care, the choice about where the care is provided is up to the NHS, although it does have to take your views into account.

We give more information about local council and NHS funding rules in our information sheet no. 10, *Paying for Your Care Home*.

Your right to choose a care home

Even if the local council is arranging and paying for your care home, you should have some choice as to which home you move

to. It should **not** be a case of you moving to where you are told there is a place.

Your local council may suggest a particular home to you, or offer a choice of homes. However, you may not like the suggested home when you visit it, or you may have a particular home in mind. If so, you can ask the local council to arrange a place for you in the home that you prefer. If you do move to a home outside your local council area it will still be responsible for arranging payment.

If you choose a home that is in another country in the UK you will need to ask your local council if it can make a special arrangement. You will be assessed under the rules from the country you are moving from. However, if you are in Northern Ireland and you want to move to England, Scotland or Wales the situation is more complicated. Contact **SeniorLine** on **0808 808 7575** for advice.

Apart from the restrictions mentioned above, you should be able to move to the home of your choice as long as:

- your chosen home has a place available;
- it is suitable for your assessed needs;
- the home will enter into a contract with the local council under the council's usual conditions; and
- it doesn't cost any more than the local council would usually expect to pay for someone with your needs.

Top-up fees

You may want to move to a home that **does** cost more than the council would normally pay. In this case, someone else (usually a relative or a charity) will need to make up the difference. However, if this is an option for you, check what will happen if

the fees go up in the future. Will the third party be able to meet the costs? Will the local council have a responsibility to cover part of the increased fees?

You cannot usually top up your own fees. In England, and Wales you can only do this if:

- you have a deferred payment agreement with your local council; or
- if your property is being disregarded for the first 12 weeks of entering into care.

In Scotland, you can only do this if you meet one of the above criteria, or if you are better off as a result of free nursing care or free personal care (and have arranged to have your care arranged by the council).

In Northern Ireland you can't top up your own fees, you can only get help from a third party. For more information about this contact our free advice service, **SeniorLine** on **0808 808 7575**.

The local council in England **cannot** expect a relative such as a son or daughter to contribute towards the fees if the home costs no more than the local council would usually pay.

For more information on top-up fees check with our free advice service **SeniorLine** on **0808 800 6565** (**0808 808 7575** in Northern Ireland).

Liable relatives rule

The council may ask your spouse to make a contribution towards your care home fees, depending on which country of the UK you live in. In England and Wales the only person the council can ask to contribute towards your fees is your husband or wife. (If you are in a civil partnership, you are not affected by the liable

relatives rule.) The law in England and Wales is due to change so that the council cannot ask your husband or wife to contribute towards you fees, but the government has not yet given a date when this will happen. Until then, the Department of Health and the Welsh Assembly Government recommend that local councils do **not** ask your spouse for a contribution. The local council does **not** have a right to assess your spouse's finances. If it wants your husband or wife to make a payment, the local council has to ask him or her to agree to a sum that they can afford.

In Northern Ireland, the local health and social care trust can ask your spouse to make a contribution if you are unable to pay yourself. Seek advice if your spouse is asked to make a contribution.

Scotland has **abolished** the liable relatives rule, which means your local council cannot ask your husband, wife, or civil partner to contribute to the fees.

If no agreement is reached then the local council will have to go through the courts to set a 'reasonable' amount.

Going to court is seen as a last resort. The local council will only do this if it believes that your spouse has sufficient money to contribute towards your care without suffering any hardship.

Even if the requested payments are not being made, the local council still has to provide the accommodation you have been assessed as needing.

For more information about the liable relatives rule, call **SeniorLine** on **0808 800 6565** (**0808 808 7575** if you live in Northern Ireland).

Moving into a care home from hospital

Many older people being discharged from hospital will have a care assessment from their local council. This is to decide if you

can get help to return to your own home, or whether your needs can be best met in a care home. The hospital staff should contact social services and arrange this for you, if it looks like you still need help and care.

However, you may continue to get completely free care from the NHS, depending on your medical needs. This is known as continuing NHS health care (see page 13). You should be assessed for continuing NHS health care **before** you have a local council care assessment. If you get it, the NHS will decide which care home you will move into.

If you don't get free NHS care **it is your right to make your own decision about which home you will move to**. This applies whether you are going into a care home from home or from hospital. Finding the sort of place you'd be happy living in can take a while. Hospital staff should understand that you need time to make such an important decision and should not put pressure on you or your relatives to choose a home quickly.

You can find more detailed advice on hospital discharge and the NHS complaints procedure in our information sheet no. 22, *Coming Out of Hospital*. You may also find our information sheet, no. 27, *Making a Complaint*, useful.

Arranging and paying for your own care

If you can afford to pay for a place in a home yourself, you don't have to go through the local council. Instead, you can approach the home you would like to live in directly and sort out the financial arrangements yourself.

However, if there is any chance at all that you might need help with fees in the future, **we strongly recommend that you have your care needs assessed by your local council before you make any private arrangements**.

This is because a time may come when you can't afford to pay the fees yourself. If you then ask the local council to assess you, its assessment of your needs might not include paying for the home of your choice.

Your local council can also help you if you want to find out what level of care you need, but do not need financial help from it.

If you do decide to make your own arrangements, **The Relatives and Residents Association** produces a useful leaflet called *The contract*. It's aimed at carers and relatives, but if you are arranging your own care, you may also find it useful. You can get a copy by calling its advice line or download it from its website. Its contact details are in the 'Useful contacts' section, starting on page 28. The **Office of Fair Trading** produces a leaflet called *Fair terms for Care*. It includes information about care home contracts. You can order a copy by calling it on **08457 22 44 99**.

If you have some capital you may want advice on the best way of investing it to pay for care. The **Care Fees Advice service**, operated by Help the Aged, is designed to help you plan your finances so that you can meet any future care costs. Its contact details are in the 'Useful contacts' section, starting on page 28. You could also, of course, talk to a financial advisor or solicitor.

Finding a care home

You have a right to choose which home you move into. Therefore, you will probably want to find out what homes there are in your area and visit a few to get an idea of what they are like. As a first step, try asking around – perhaps friends or relatives know of a home with a good reputation. But remember, although a personal recommendation is a good starting point, homes can change, and what suits one person may not suit another.

There are different ways of finding out about care homes in your area:

- Care standards authorities, which register and regulate care homes, can give you information about the homes registered in your area (see page 31 for their contact details).
- In England the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) can provide you with a list of care homes in the area you wish to move to. You can also search on its website at www.csci.org.uk. It has recently introduced a three star rating system to assess the quality of care homes which may help you decide whether a care home is suitable for your needs. See page 31 for its contact details.
- In Northern Ireland contact The Regulation, Quality and Improvement Authority. See page 31 for its contact details.
- A charity called **Counsel and Care** can give you information and advice on how to go about finding a home and what to look for; see page 29 for its details.
- **Elderly Accommodation Counsel (EAC)** has a comprehensive database of care homes in the UK. Check the EAC website: www.housingcare.org or call 020 7820 1343.

Who are care homes run by?

Care homes can be run directly by: **local councils**; **voluntary organisations** (registered charities or religious bodies); or **privately**, by individuals or companies on a commercial basis.

Homes run by voluntary organisations may have special rules about who they can admit: for example, in some areas there are homes especially for people who have served in the armed forces, or for people from particular ethnic groups or religions.

Who regulates care homes?

Care homes are registered and regulated by the following care standards authorities:

- the Commission for Social Care Inspection in England
- the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales in Wales
- the Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care in Scotland
- The Regulation and Improvement Authority in Northern Ireland.

In England, a new three star rating system was introduced in May 2008. The frequency at which a care home is inspected depends on which star the care home is awarded. If the care home does not get any stars, it will get two inspections a year; if it is awarded one star it will get one inspection a year; if it is awarded two stars, it will get one inspection every two years; and if it is awarded three stars, it will get one inspection every three years. A care home can be inspected more than this if it is felt necessary. In Wales, care homes must be inspected at least once every year, although they can be inspected more often if it is felt necessary. In Scotland, care homes are inspected once every year; and in Northern Ireland, care homes are inspected twice a year. After each inspection an inspection report is produced, containing information about how the care home operates. You should be able to get copies of these reports from your care standards authority. See the 'Useful contacts' section, starting on page 28, for their contact details.

What kind of care do you need?

Care homes have to make it very clear what level of care they provide and how they will meet each resident's care needs. All care homes should be able to give you



help with personal care if you need it – this could include help with washing, dressing and going to the toilet.

If you are extremely frail or are unable to leave your bed, or have any sort of medical condition or illness that means you need a lot of attention from a doctor or nurse, you will probably need to look for a care home that can provide nursing care. This type of home should have a qualified nurse on duty 24 hours a day.

Finding a home for someone with very specific care needs: for example, someone with severe dementia, can sometimes be difficult. If you can't find a home that provides the sort of care you, or your relative or friend, needs, ask your local council to help; it has a responsibility to find a suitable home for anyone it has assessed as needing a care home place. The **Alzheimer's Society** can give advice to people with dementia on what they should look for in a care home and also give information on suitable homes which are available for someone with dementia. Other specialist groups, such as the **Parkinson's Disease Society**, can offer specialist advice and guidance.

What to look for in a care home

Care homes have to abide by care standards which cover all aspects of living in a care home. These standards include rights to privacy and dignity, how staff handle medicines, heating and lighting levels and handling residents' money. Your library may have a copy of these minimum standards. Or you could ask one of the care homes that you are interested in for a copy. You could also contact your care standards authority for a copy. Their details are in the 'Useful contacts' section, starting on page 28.

Once you've found out about homes in your area, get in touch with a few and ask them to send you a brochure. Then arrange to

visit some of the homes that appeal to you so that you can get an idea of what is available. You might want to visit with a member of your family, or a friend; a second opinion can be very useful.

If it is impossible for you to get out to see the various homes, ask if someone from the home can come and visit you. You can then ask questions and get some idea of what the home is like. You could also ask someone whose judgement you trust to make a visit on your behalf, and then report back. Make sure that the person visiting on your behalf has a good idea of what you are looking for in a home, and of your particular care needs.

When you visit a care home there are lots of things you might want to look out for and ask about. Make a list before you go of things you want to know. If you have strong religious beliefs you might want to ensure that the home will accommodate these or find a home which is run by people who share your beliefs.

Don't be embarrassed about asking lots of questions. It is only sensible to do as much research as you can when you are making such an important decision about your future. If you can speak to people who already live in the home. This will give you an idea of what life is really like there.

Everyone has different ideas about what they want from where they live. What is especially important to you? Listed below are just some of the questions that you might want to ask and things to look out for.

General rules

When you are choosing a care home, it is important to make sure you know exactly what to expect. Here are some of the most important questions you need to consider.

- Will there be a contract between you and the home?

- What exactly will your fees cover and what extras will you be expected to pay for? For example, will you have to provide your own toiletries, cosmetics or continence pads?
- Will your place in the home be secure – could you be asked to leave at short notice?
- In the event of the home having to close, or be transferred to another provider, how would the home ensure your interests are a priority?
- How does the home handle problems and complaints? Is there a residents' committee and a relatives group?
- What would happen if you fell ill and needed more care – would you have to move?
- Is there a policy on smoking?

Staff

You might find it useful to watch how staff behave – are they always rushing around or do they spend time talking to individual residents? Are people encouraged to do what they can for themselves, or do staff take over? Are members of staff friendly and helpful?

Meals

Are you offered a choice of meals and can you choose when and where you eat? Does it cater for special diets? Does it vary the menus? Are the meals nutritious and are the servings generous? Are there facilities for you to make a snack as and when you want?

Location

Do you like to visit the shops, social club, library, park or any other places? If so, you will want to ensure that the home you choose is within walking distance or that transport is available.

Pets

You may have a pet which you wish to bring with you; will this be possible? If not, does it allow people to bring animals into the home when they visit? The **Cinnamon Trust** can give details of care homes that allow you to take pets. It produces a book called *Pet friendly care homes*, priced at £3.50, plus postage and packing, which gives details of care homes that allow you to take pets. Your local social services may have a copy you can look at or call the Cinnamon Trust for details on how to order a copy. The Cinnamon Trust can also help to re-home your pet if you are unable to take it with you. See page 29 for its contact details. The **Elderly Accommodation Counsel** may have details of homes in your area that allow you to take pets.

Visitors

Are there set 'visiting times' or are visitors welcome any time? Is there anywhere for visitors to stay overnight? Are children welcome?

Atmosphere

You will often be able to get an idea of how well a home is run just by your first impressions. Does it smell clean and fresh? Is there a homely feel or does it seem formal and institutional? Do you like the decoration? Do people seem alert and occupied or are they just dozing in chairs with the TV on in the background?

Activities

A good home will provide a range of activities and it will often have a particular member of staff responsible for organising events for residents. It might have visitors that come in to arrange activities or it might organise day trips out. If you have a

particular interest make sure the home you choose will provide for this, or maybe you can set something up yourself. If you enjoy gardening you might want to choose a home with a garden. Contact the **National Association for the Providers of Activities for Older People (NAPA)** which can provide information on arranging activities in care homes. Your local **Age Concern** may also be able to give you more information. See the 'Useful contacts' section, starting on page 28, to find out how to contact your local Age Concern.

Your room

Will you have your own bathroom or do you have to share? It may be important to you to be able to entertain visitors in your own room – can you have your own kettle or tea making facilities? Can you have a phone in your room or is there a private room where you can make and receive phone calls? Can you bring your own furniture? Will you be able to decide for yourself what time you get up and go to bed?

Facilities

It is very important to make sure that the home you choose can meet all your care needs. If you have been assessed as needing care in a home by your local council you may want to take a copy of the assessment with you when you visit the home, so that staff understand what sort of help you will need. If you have any particular needs and require special equipment such as bath aids, a special bed, a stair lift or wheelchair access, check that these will be available.

Inspection reports

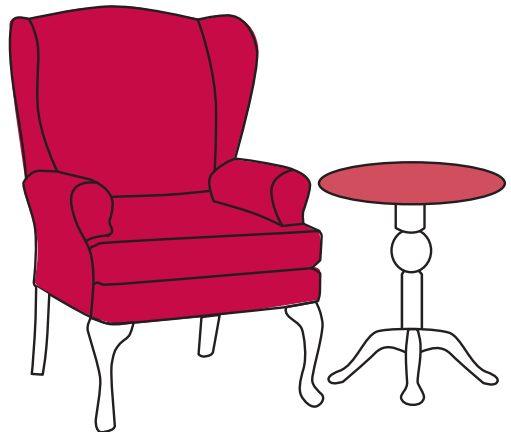
Before making a final decision on a home, you may want to look at a recent **inspection report**. These often contain a lot of information about how the home operates. For copies of inspection reports contact the manager of the care home or the care standards authority for your country (see page 31 for contact details).

Living in a care home

Once you have moved into a care home, it can take a while for you to settle in. A big change like this can take quite a lot of getting used to. However, if you are worried about anything in particular, or are not sure about any aspect of life in your new home, do try to talk to a member of staff about your concerns. Getting any sort of problem out into the open is usually the best way of solving it.

The same principle applies if you are the relative or friend of someone living in a care home. If you have any worries about the care they are receiving, as a first step try to talk to the manager or whoever is in charge. This can often clear things up.

If you would like to talk to someone about what you should be able to expect from a care home, or how best to tackle any problems you encounter, contact **The Relatives and Residents Association**. The Relatives and Residents Association is a charity set up to support care



home residents and their relatives. It operates a telephone advice line, and has a network of local groups.

You could also refer to the national care standards for care homes for details of what rights you have. You may find a copy of these at your local library; or the home you are in should provide you with a copy. You could also call the care standards authority for your area.

If you can't resolve a problem informally, you may wish to make a formal complaint to the home, and also to the body which registers and inspects it. Contact your care standards authority for more information. Your local Citizens Advice Bureau or Age Concern group may also be able to support you in making a complaint of this kind.

It is important to know how to tackle any problems you may encounter. But it is equally important to remember that life in a care home can have positive aspects as well. Care homes can provide a safe environment where you get the care and support you need. You may find that you form new friendships; and in a good care home you may have the opportunity to enjoy new interests and activities.

Useful contacts

Age Concern

A network of groups providing services for older people. These can include information, advice and advocacy. Check your phonebook for your local group.

Alzheimer Scotland

22 Drumsheugh Gardens, Edinburgh EH3 7RN
Helpline: 0808 808 3000 Web: www.alzscot.org

Alzheimer's Society

Devon House, 58 St. Katherine's Way, London E1W 1JX
Helpline: 0845 300 0336 Web: www.alzheimers.org.uk

Alzheimer's Society and Alzheimer Scotland offer specialist advice for people with dementia, their carers and families.

Cinnamon Trust

10 Market Square, Hayle, Cornwall TR27 4HE
Tel: 01736 757900 Web: www.cinnamon.org.uk

Specialist charity for older people and their pets. Can help to re-home your pet if you're unable to take it with you into a care home.

Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

Free, confidential and independent advice, face-to-face or by telephone. Your local CAB should be listed in your phonebook.

Counsel and Care

Twyman House, 16 Bonny Street, London NW1 9PG
Advice line: 0845 300 7585 Web: www.counselandcare.org.uk
Email: advice@counselandcare.org.uk

Gives advice and information on how to go about finding a care home and what to look for.

Elderly Accommodation Counsel

3rd Floor, 89 Albert Embankment, London SE1 7TP
Advice line: 020 7820 1343 Web: www.housingcare.org

Provides free advice to older people on their housing options. Has a comprehensive database of care homes in the UK.

Help the Aged Care Fees Advice

FREEPOST LON18542, Oxford OX29 4BR
Tel: 0500 76 74 76

Provides free, impartial financial advice to help you plan your finances so that you can meet any future care costs.

NAPA (National Association for the Providers of Activities for Older People)

Bondway Commercial Centre, Unit 5.12, 71 Bondway,
London SW8 1SQ

Tel: 020 7078 9375 Web: www.napa-activities.co.uk

Provides information on what activities to look out for in care homes.

Parkinson's Disease Society

215 Vauxhall Bridge Road, London SW1V 1EJ

Helpline: 0808 800 0303 Web: www.parkinsons.org.uk

Offers specialist advice and guidance for people with Parkinson's, their carers and families.

Relatives and Residents Association

24 The Ivories, 6–18 Northampton Street, London N1 2HY

Advice line: 020 7359 8136 Web: www.relres.org

Charity set up to support care home residents and their relatives. Operates a helpline and has a network of local groups.

Stroke Association

Stroke House, 240 City Road, London EC1V 2PR

Helpline: 0845 30 33 100 Web: www.stroke.org.uk

Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland

65 North Castle Street, Edinburgh EH2 3LT

Advice line: 0845 077 6000 Web: www.chss.org.uk

The Stroke Association and Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland offer advice and guidance for people who have had a stroke, their carers and families.

Care standards authorities

For inspection reports and care standards for care homes.

Commission for Social Care Inspection (England)

St Nicholas Buildings, St Nicholas Street, Newcastle NE1 1NB

Tel: 0845 015 0120 Web: www.csci.org.uk

Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales

National Assembly for Wales, 4–5 Charnwood Court, Heol

Billingsley, Parc Nantgarw, Nantgarw CF15 7QZ

Tel: 01443 848450 Web: www.cssiw.org.uk

Scottish Commission for the Regulation of Care

Compass House, 11 Riverside Drive, Dundee DD1 4NY

Tel: 0845 603 0890 Web: www.carecommission.com

The Regulation, Quality and Improvement Authority

9th Floor, Riverside Tower, 5 Lanyon Place, Belfast BT1 3BT

Tel: 0289 051 7500 Web: www.rqia.org.uk

SeniorLine

SeniorLine is a free advice service run by Help the Aged for older people, their relatives, carers and friends.

Trained advice workers offer free, confidential and impartial advice and information about issues including care at home, residential care, welfare and disability benefits and agencies offering local practical help.

Tel: **0808 800 6565** Textphone: **0800 26 96 26**

If you are in **Northern Ireland**, contact SeniorLine on **0808 808 7575**.

Help the Aged distributes over 3 million advice leaflets a year. This service is currently provided free of charge, thanks to the generosity of our supporters. If you found this leaflet useful and would like to make a donation, phone 020 7239 1983 quoting ref **IRT** or send a cheque or postal order, for the attention of Information Resources, to the address below.

September 2008

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Fighting for disadvantaged older people in the UK and overseas,

WE WILL:

COMBAT POVERTY wherever older people's lives are blighted by lack of money, and cut the number of preventable deaths from hunger, cold and disease

REDUCE ISOLATION so that older people no longer feel confined to their own home, forgotten or cut off from society

CHALLENGE NEGLECT to ensure that older people do not suffer inadequate health and social care, or the threat of abuse

DEFEAT AGEISM to ensure that older people are not ignored or denied the dignity and equality that are theirs by right

PREVENT FUTURE DEPRIVATION by improving prospects for employment, health and well-being so that dependence in later life is reduced

Head Office, 207–221 Pentonville Road, London N1 9UZ

T 020 7278 1114 F 020 7278 1116

E info@helptheaged.org.uk www.helptheaged.org.uk

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