

Choosing a Care Home

Your 5-Step Checklist



For many people, looking for a care home can be a confusing and daunting prospect. How do you know what questions to ask? What should you look for? We've put together a comprehensive, five-point checklist featuring the questions you should be asking and some key points to look for. Get in touch if you'd like to put the same questions to us. We're at gracewell.co.uk



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Step One: Your Personal Care and Nursing and Support Needs

First Impressions	Yes	No	N/A
Does it look and feel like the sort of place you or your relative could live in and be comfortable?			
When you first go into the home, does it strike you as pleasant and the atmosphere homely?			
Is the home well decorated, clean and well maintained?			
Did you receive a warm and friendly welcome from staff?			
Were you well looked after during your visit?			
Is the home pleasantly furnished?			
Is there a pleasant odour in the home?			
Is the outside area well-kept with attractive hanging baskets or pots?			
Is the home and reception area welcoming when you first enter?			

Care	Yes	No	N/A
Are the training and qualifications of staff suitable in relation to your care needs?			
If assisted bathing is required, is assistance available to you every day?			
Are your care needs likely to be reviewed on a regular basis?			
Are residents and relatives encouraged to contribute to care plans?			
Does the home have a regular visiting GP or can you make arrangements to see your own GP?			
Are the facilities you require available? For example: dentists, hairdresser, chiropodist, physiotherapy, etc.?			
Is your personal laundry taken care of?			
Are residents able to come and go, get up and go to bed when they want, within reason?			
Do residents seem happy and well cared for?			
Are you offered a trial stay, e.g. visit for lunch or to spend an afternoon at the home to see if it is right for you?			
Will the home be able to provide any future care needs you may have?			
Does the home offer/arrange complementary therapies?			
Is there a variety of living spaces, e.g. lounges and quiet rooms?			
Does the home have a number of bathrooms in easy accessible locations?			
Is there a lift to any upper floors?			
Are the corridors and doorways wide with easy access for those using wheelchairs?			
Are there handrails all around the home for those that need?			
Are there pleasant outlooks from around the home – nice views from bedrooms and lounge?			

People and Atmosphere	Yes	No	N/A
Do residents seem happy and look as though they are well cared for?			
Do residents appear occupied and interested in their surroundings?			
Did the manager or a member of staff greet you and take the time to listen to your requirements?			
Did you observe staff being friendly and caring towards residents and each other?			
Did they appear to spend time with the residents – for example talking to them or helping frail residents?			
Do staff receive regular training?			
Is there a qualified nursing staff on hand day and night?			
Do staff spend time to find out about a new resident and get to know their likes and dislikes?			
Do staff seem to treat residents as individuals and people?			
Is there a comments book or letters from residents or family members on display?			
Does the home undertake customer satisfaction research with its residents and if so can you see the highlights?			
Is there evidence of independence being maintained where possible and people treated with respect?			

Are relatives and friends encouraged to visit often?			
Are visitors welcome at any time?			
Are you encouraged to talk with other residents / visiting relatives / staff?			
Does each resident have a member of staff assigned for their care?			
How do staff get to know about a new resident's background, likes and dislikes?			
Did you feel that individual needs and preferences could be met by the home when you visited?			
What is the staffing ratio on each shift?			

Equipment - does the home have important equipment such as:	Yes	No	N/A
Assisted bathrooms?			
Pressure relieving mattresses?			
Furniture suitable for older people?			
Hoists?			
Walking aids?			
Wheelchairs?			
Electrically operated beds?			

Step Two: Your Personalised Bedroom

Bedrooms	Yes	No	N/A
Were you able to see a similar room to what you are requiring?			
Is it clean, warm, bright, nicely decorated and cosy?			
Are there en-suite facilities?			
Are residents encouraged to bring personal possessions from home, such as furniture, pictures, and photographs?			
Does the room have a television, television point and telephone?			
You may also want to know if the room has internet access or if it is offered elsewhere in the home?			
Does the room have a system for calling staff at any time of the day and night?			
Does the door have a lock and is there a secure lockable draw or cabinet for keeping your personal possessions?			
Does each room have a call system?			
Can residents keep pets in their room?			
Can you change rooms if you want to?			
Does the home offer single or shared rooms?			
Are bedrooms re-decorated before each new resident arrives?			
How often are the bedrooms cleaned?			
What furniture is provided for your room by the home?			

Step Three: your personal interests, social life and companionship

Setting and Location	Yes	No	N/A
Is the home in a reasonably pleasant setting? Are the grounds neat and tidy and the outside of the building well cared for?			
Is the home in the right location for you?			
Are there gardens and spaces for residents to sit outside?			
Is it near to shops, the Post Office and other facilities you might want – restaurant, tea rooms, social clubs etc.?			
Is it convenient for visitors to get to and is there parking available in the grounds or nearby to the home?			
Is the home easily accessible by public transport?			

Communal Areas	Yes	No	N/A
Are there facilities for residents to socialise with friends and family; watch TV with other residents or relax and read in peaceful and quiet surroundings?			
Are there plenty of toilet facilities, so residents don't have to keep going back to their rooms?			
Are there handrails in corridors and wheelchair access? If not needed now these may be considerations for the future.			
Are there arrangements for people who wish to smoke?			
Is there a licensed bar?			
Does the home offer single or shared rooms?			
Are bedrooms re-decorated before each new resident arrives?			
Are the bedrooms cleaned regularly? (Check how often.)			
Can the home provide high quality furniture if you don't bring your own?			

Step Four: your favourite meals and dining choices

Meals	Yes	No	N/A
Is there plenty of choice of what to eat and when to eat?			
Are menus rotated on a regular basis?			
Are snacks available at any time of the day?			
Does the chef consult the residents on their preferences, dietary needs or religious requirements?			
Is the food freshly prepared in the kitchen of the home?			
Can you choose to eat in your room if you want privacy?			
Can residents sit where they wish in the dining room with other residents of their choice?			
Are visiting family and friends able to have a meal with you?			
Are there facilities to make a drink or snack, or have one provided for you if you want one late at night?			
For residents who need help eating, are staff trained to do this sensitively?			

Step Five: your family updates, visits and activities

Activities	Yes	No	N/A
Does the home have a weekly events and activities plan?			
Are residents asked about any hobbies or interests they might wish to participate in?			
Are there various hobbies groups at the home?			
Is there a residents' committee?			
Is there a variety of trips and activities organised outside of the home?			
Are special events, e.g. birthdays celebrated in the home?			
Are there exercise groups you could participate in, if you wish?			
Would the care home be able to help with transport to these?			
If you have religious needs are they met?			
Does the home have access to transport?			
Does the home have dedicated activities staff?			
Are there individual activities for people who can't join in group activities?			
Do external entertainment groups entertain the residents at the home?			
Are daily newspapers available for residents?			
Does the home have access to a library facility?			
Can residents take part in the daily activities within the home, if they wish such as cleaning, gardening and cooking?			

Visitors	Yes	No	N/A
Are you happy with the arrangements for family and friends to visit?			
Are there set visiting times or are visitors welcome at all times?			
Can children visit?			
Is there a facility at the home (or nearby) where visitors could stay overnight if you have been taken ill and they have travelled a long way to be with you?			
For residents who need help eating, are staff trained to do this sensitively?			

Other Key Considerations:

General	Yes	No	N/A
Was the home happy to answer all your questions and were you satisfied with the answers they provided?			
Do you feel you could continue with your current way of life to a reasonable extent in the home?			
Can a trial stay be arranged for you to experience life in the home?			
Is there a waiting list?			
Is there a complaint's procedure?			
Does the home insure a resident's personal possessions?			
Is there a welcome booklet for new residents?			
Are quality checks of equipment and procedures carried out in the home?			
Is there a resident group that meets regularly?			

Contracts	Yes	No	N/A
Can you add further services to the basic fee?			
Is there a notice period if you want to leave the home?			
Are levels of care and associated fees reviewed regularly?			
Is there a notice period if you want to leave? (Note how long this is.)			
Are the costs clear and fully explained?			

