

Care homes

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What are care homes?

There are hundreds of care homes across the UK but no two will be the same. Care homes could be run by big companies who own many homes across the country, or they may be managed by one person.

It might have 300 bedrooms over three floors and different 'wards' for people with mental health issues, dementia, or people who just need personal care, or they might have 5 rooms and just cater for people with learning disabilities.

No type of home is considered 'better' than another. The key is to identify what type of residential care will suit the person who is moving to a care home. For example, would they prefer to live somewhere where there are lots of new people to meet, or would they find it easier to be in a quieter environment?

You might also like to think about where they live now. Remember, when someone is moving into a care home permanently, the care home will become their new 'home'. It needs to feel that way to them.

It is advisable to speak to your local council about having an adult social care assessment before you move into a care home. Even if you don't think that you will be able to get help with funding your placement, they may be able to give you other ideas which you haven't already considered.

Generally, residential homes are split into two categories:

Care homes (personal care only)

If you are looking for a care home but you don't need any nursing care, you are likely to be looking at care homes which only offer support with things like washing, dressing and moving around. This type of residential home is usually called a care home or a residential home. Staff in care homes will be trained to help you get in and out of bed, provide assistance with eating and to get ready for your day.

Depending on which residential care home you choose, there may also be an activity schedule for the residents.

Nursing homes

Traditionally called a nursing home, but now often referred to as 'care homes with nursing', this type of residential care generally offers personal care, like a care home, but also has nurses on the staff.

To be considered a residential nursing home, there must be qualified nurses on duty 24-hours a day.

This means that as well as care staff who help with moving and washing, nursing staff can administer medicines and provide medical care in the care home at any time of day or night. If you are assessed as needing the level of care a nursing home provides, you might get a contribution towards your fees paid by the NHS. This is to help cover the cost of the nursing care.

It is called Funded Nursing Care (FNC) or Registered Nursing Care Contribution (RNCC). The amount of FNC is set at a standard rate, which changes every April. For the current amount, view the NHS Choices website or contact your local council.

All care homes are inspected and regulated by the CQC. You can view inspection results and reports on care homes on the CQC website.

Activities in care homes

Gone are the days when living in a care home meant endless days of watching TV. Now, residential care homes put on a variety of activities, often centred around the things their residents enjoy.

What types of care home activity are there?

The word 'activity' can imply many different things but in a care home it should mean everything a resident does from when they open their eyes in the morning until they go to sleep at night. Care home activities should stimulate residents emotionally, physically and mentally. They can range from choosing what to wear, to helping with tasks around the home or garden.

Activities for care homes could include:

- listening to the radio
- joining in with an art class
- exercise classes for the elderly or disabled
- laying the table for mealtimes
- helping to fold the washing
- themed evenings

Above all, activities provide a point of interest, fun and challenge to each day. They should enable people to participate in daily life, be engaged and maintain hobbies or activities they have enjoyed throughout their life, as well as offering the opportunity to try something new, if they wish.

Activity co-ordinators

Lots of care homes now employ an activity coordinator. What activities coordinators do and how they do it varies from one home to another. Often, they play a key part in developing care plans and ensure that all the other care workers in the home keep residents stimulated and entertained.

Ensure you speak to any potential residential homes about what's on their care home activity schedule.

Choosing a care home in a different area

If you are thinking of moving into a care home, or your elderly parent needs a nursing home, you can choose a care home in a different area to where you, or they, live now.

You may want to choose a care home closer to your friends or family, or you might just want to move to another part of the country because you like it there. Whatever your reasons, you can choose a care home outside your home county.

Who pays my fees?

This depends on whether you've been assessed by your council as needing care in a care home. If you have, and the council is currently contributing financially to this support, they should continue to pay towards the cost of your care home even if it's in another county.

The home you choose must be suitable for your assessed needs and comply with the terms and conditions set by the authority. The fees that your local authority may pay could vary.

If you are living in a care home but the council isn't contributing towards the cost of your care, then you are likely to have to pay the cost of wherever you move to.

You should seek further advice before making your decision and speak with your local authority about this. If you are paying for your own care and support, you can choose any care home that can meet your needs and accommodate you.

