

A helping hand

Advice and inspiration
for families caring for
an older loved one



For family carers

Welcome



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Foreword from Suzanne Mumford

Care UK's Head of nursing, care and dementia



The 2011 Census showed that there are nearly seven million people in the UK who are caring for a disabled, seriously ill, or older friend or relative. They often provide this care largely unpaid, yet with huge love and commitment.

Support for you

Whilst caring for an older loved one can be very rewarding, it can be both physically and emotionally demanding. If you are a family carer, this 'helping hand' guide has advice and inspiration for you, whatever stage of the care journey you may be at. We hope you find it useful in helping you to continue delivering great care and support for

your loved one, while keeping yourself happy and healthy.

The time may come when your loved one's needs become too much for you to manage alone, so this guide also includes helpful information about choosing professional care, whether that's care at home or in a residential care home.



Help is at hand

It is important to remember that you are not alone. There are many forms of support, both online and in your local community – sometimes it is just a case of knowing where to look for help. We've included a list of charities and groups at the back of this guide who you may want to contact.

Care UK's care homes play a big part in their local communities, most host interesting, support and informative sessions for local carers that you may

find useful. Our teams care round-the-clock for thousands of older people so we do recognise the challenges of caring for an older loved one, as such, our friendly home teams are always happy to talk to family carers who need some extra help and advice. Please feel free to contact your local Care UK care home whenever you need to.

Suzanne Mumford
Head of nursing, care and dementia
Care UK

Introduction

Supporting family carers



Care takes a variety of forms. You might provide 24-hour care, be helping someone to get well after an operation or a stay in hospital, or you may pop in to see someone each day or a few times a week to have a chat or make them some food.

Everyone's journey through care is different because everyone is an individual. The needs of your older friend or loved one will be unique, and your approach to caring for them will be unique to you. Whether you're confident in your caring role, or are starting to feel that some extra help would be useful, it's important to know what support is available.

About this guide

At Care UK we care every day for thousands of older people in our 100+ care homes across the country. To create this guide we tapped into the wealth of first-hand experience of our residents' relatives. All of the people we spoke to had cared for their loved one and been through their own care journey. Their stories are honest, emotional and inspiring.

We've also included lots of tips and advice from Care UK colleagues who provide round-the-clock care for thousands of residents every day as well as ongoing support for their families. So, whether you need some inspiration for new activities to do with your loved one, you're looking for a day club for them, or you need help tackling the difficult conversation of residential care, you'll find it here.



Chapter one

The challenges of older age



"Grow old along with me! The best is yet to be."

Robert Browning, poet

- **There are now 11.9 million people aged 65 and above in the UK.**
- **With 3.2 million aged 80 and over and over 1.6 million aged 85 or over**
- **There are over half a million people aged 90 and over in the UK. 70% of these are women*.**



Education
Happy

Enhancing health and wellbeing in older age

As a person gets older, they may start to experience more physical and mental challenges. Here are some ways you can help them to stay fit, active and healthy.

Physical frailty from conditions such as arthritis or osteoporosis – as well as failing eyesight – can increase the chance of falls. A person may be living with complex ongoing health issues such as diabetes, cancer, or dementia, or a combination of different medical conditions all of which can bring their own highly individual challenges. Even a person who is mentally fit can feel less confident about getting out and about,

putting them at potential risk of social isolation and depression.

As their carer, it's easy to feel overwhelmed by what you need to do to help and support them. However, understanding their condition and ways you can make life easier for both of you will help you to feel more confident, making each day the best it can be.

1 Avoiding falls

Worn carpets and loose rugs can make a trip or fall more likely, so replace any that are old and make sure that they have an anti-slip grip placed underneath. Make sure that steps or stairs are well lit and that rails and bannisters are secure. Consider getting extra handrails fitted where necessary. Changes in vision often occur as we age, getting regular eye checks are important, and improving

lighting can help considerably.

- Take care of wet floors.
- Avoid spills by keeping regularly used items within easy reach in the kitchen and bathroom. If spills happen, wipe up as quickly as possible and dry the area.
- Think about footwear and check shoes fit well and have good grip. Make sure your loved one wears close-fitting slippers with a good tread around the home to aid grip and prevent slipping.

2 Eating and nutrition

A healthy, balanced diet is vital for maintaining energy levels, keeping bones strong and the mind sharp. Not eating enough can lead to weight loss and can make an older person vulnerable to infection, tiredness and reduced muscle strength. Our senses of smell and taste often change as we age, affecting our appetite and enjoyment of food. Preparing a meal for one and eating alone can often result in the older person losing interest in mealtimes and preparing food that requires the least effort, this might also reflect changes in ability to undertake once simple tasks.

- If your loved one is struggling to gain weight, encourage impulse eating: leave food out on tables so your loved one can eat what they like, when they like, rather than just at meal times.
- If you need to increase your loved one's calorie intake, add butter, milk and cream to soups, stews, casseroles and curries.
- Many older people find they like spicier or sweeter dishes, so try a curry or a chilli con carne, or flavour

foods with more herbs.

- Don't overload their plate as this may be off-putting, little and often is often more successful than one large plateful. It can help to use different coloured ingredients to stimulate and entice.
- Involve your loved one in preparing meals as the sights and smells can stimulate their appetite. Baking is another great option too. Recognising when a person's tastes have changed may be reflected in them adding more salt than usual which in some instances can impact on the older person's health, our hotel services manager James Clear recommends:

"Herbs and lemon or lime can add flavour to a dish so try using those instead of salt when you are cooking from fresh."

There are many more helpful tips in the Care UK Eating as we age guide, plus recipes and real life stories.



3 Keeping active

Enabling a loved one to keep busy and engaged with everyday life is vital to help them maintain a sense of independence and purpose. That can mean anything from encouraging them to do small household tasks, like watering houseplants or doing the washing up, or maybe doing an activity together like baking, completing a jigsaw puzzle, or going on a special outing.

- Joining your local library where you will be able to find large-print books and audio books, and perhaps visiting local museums can help engage and stimulate (they are also naturally quiet which is often beneficial). You could take a trip together to choose what to borrow. Many libraries and museums now host events ranging from music to craft sessions that can offer a little social interaction.
- Have a supply of word search and crossword puzzle books to hand to keep brains agile.
- Get all the family involved in a traditional games evening, playing

“Helping your mum or dad to continue enjoying their hobbies will make a huge difference to them. Knitting or playing an instrument are often skills that endure. Someone who has always enjoyed DIY may enjoy putting up a shelf, helping to put up a shelf or simply being in charge of the spirit level.”

Family carer

- snap, dominoes, Scrabble, snakes and ladders and many more.
- A hand massage can feel like a real treat, and physical touch can have a very calming effect on a loved one who is living with dementia. Think about using a scented lotion that they might like.
- Work together to create a life storybook, including their career and family history, favourite films, books and places they've been.

Care UK's Easy as ABC guide contains 100 hints and tips on how to build activity into your loved one's care and everyday life.



4 Communication and reminiscence

If the person you care for is living with dementia it's possible that the condition will, at some point, affect their ability to speak. Being more considered and specific in the words you use, and being more alert to body language will help you to understand what they are trying to tell you.

- Remember that your loved one's perception of reality is the only one that matters. If they say the wall is black when it's white, accept that it's black, as contradicting them can cause distress.
- Establish where the person is in their own mind when you are talking to them as their mind will travel back in time. Work with them to engage happy memories and a positive experience that you will both enjoy.
- Bringing the person back to the present may cause distress, confusion and frustration. Instead, let them be wherever they are in their minds and aim to engage feelings of hope and joy.

- Keep questions and choices simple and where possible include the words they might use in the answer within your question.. Rather than saying "what do you want to wear today?," ask "would you like to wear the red cardigan or the blue cardigan?"
- Communication isn't just about conversation, simply doing something your loved one really enjoys is a great way to communicate that you care. Be prepared that it is not the finished product of an activity that matters, but the doing together and the sense of purpose the activity gave that becomes the most important.

The Care UK Listen, talk, connect guide provides hints and tips to help you to continue having meaningful conversations and shared moments with your loved one.



5 Getting out and about

Caring for an older loved one can be a full-time job, and when you're planning meals, organising doctor appointments and your own commitments, the idea of enjoying some fresh air and an outing may seem too much. If your loved one is living with dementia, the risks of leaving home can feel like they outweigh the benefits, meaning that you probably don't go.

However, studies have shown that there are many benefits. Keeping active can actually slow the progression of dementia, it improves sleep, enhances appetite and can even reduce the risk of developing Alzheimer's by up to 40%.

- Keep it simple, doing things that the person recognises, perhaps with a walk around the garden doing a little weeding, talking about the different plants, or to the local park, sitting watching children or wildlife can be very beneficial. Maintaining routines like picking up a newspaper or milk from the local shop can really help maintain a person's sense of normality.

- Involve your loved one: show them images in a magazine of a park, or of the seaside to gain their interest.
- If your loved one tells you that they want to go for a walk, do everything you can to do it at that time, as you don't know when they will ask again.
- Go to the same place a few times so you both feel more confident, then try venturing further afield.
- If you're going out for the first time, don't go it alone. Call in some help from a friend or neighbour.

Care UK's Good to Go guide helps you to rediscover the benefits of getting out and about with a loved one who is living with dementia, but there are lots of hints and tips you might find helpful if your loved one isn't living with the condition.



Download our free, helpful guides

To download your copies of any of these guides visit [careuk.com](https://www.careuk.com) or email care.supportteam@careuk.com with your postal address.

Chapter two

Making caring easier



“One day, Mum and I visited a local charity shop. There were quite a few old games and vintage bits and bobs in there that immediately caught her eye and got her reminiscing. I hadn’t seen her that bright for weeks. Visiting charity shops soon became a regular outing for us – I don’t know why I hadn’t thought of it before.”

Elaine, family carer



Tips to ease the pressure on you

Many people don't think of themselves as carers. However, if you look after your partner, spouse, relative or friend who is ill, elderly or disabled, you are a carer.

It can be a stressful role, and many of the relatives we spoke to for this guide said they had let their own health suffer when they became focused on caring for a loved one. In fact, in a recent survey we did of 1,000 people who care for or have responsibility for someone over the age of 55, we found 36% neglect their own wellbeing due to time being taken up by

caring responsibilities.

When you put another person first, it's easy to forget about your own needs – particularly if you have a spouse or children whose needs you'll also be prioritising. This section is dedicated to you and to helping you maintain your own health and wellbeing.

1 Look after yourself

It might seem difficult to do but try to make sure you have some time for yourself to do the things you enjoy, like socialising with friends, seeing a film or having a meal out with your partner. Don't put pressure on yourself to do more than you can manage.

Eating healthily, sleeping well, taking

some exercise and regularly enjoying some fresh air will help to keep your energy levels up.





2 Take a step back

Take time to regularly review your options and think about how you're coping. It can be easy to lose sight of your own needs and, if you do feel overwhelmed, you may feel guilty and ashamed about admitting it. Our survey of carers found 41% of people felt 'overwhelmed' by their caring responsibilities. Be honest with yourself and others about what you can and cannot cope with. Don't wait for things to get too much.

When you're caring for an older loved one – particularly if they have a dementia diagnosis – it's natural to feel out of your depth and even afraid. It's important to be open with how you're

feeling to friends, relatives, your GP – but you may also find it helpful to talk to a counsellor. As an impartial listener, they won't judge you but they will help you to process the many different feelings you're experiencing.

Top Tips

Charities like the Alzheimer's Society and Carers UK have helplines and online forums.

Set aside some time just for you each day – even if it's just ten minutes to go outside for a walk.



3 Know your entitlements

It's important that you know exactly what benefits and credits you are entitled to as a carer. You have a legal right to a carer's assessment – it's just a chat with an advisor who will help you to find the best support for you and the person you care for, including any benefits you're entitled to. You can arrange one via your local social services department.

If you spend at least 35 hours a week caring for a disabled person you may be entitled to a Carer's Allowance.

You can call the Carer's Allowance Unit on **0345 608 4321** to request a claim pack or visit **gov.uk** to download a claim form.



What else could you receive?

- Carer's Credit: this helps build your entitlement to basic and additional state pension
- Carer's Direct Payment: this is a one-off cash payment up to the value of £500 which you can use to buy services for yourself.

Are you still working?

If you're still in paid work, you have rights as a carer – including the right to request flexible working arrangements (for example, part-time working, working from home, flexible starting and finishing hours). Talk to the HR team at your workplace in the first instance.

4

Get your home adapted

If you're caring for an older person in your own home, different types of equipment or changes to your home could make your home safer, your life easier and provide independence for the person you're caring for.



Have an assessment with an occupational therapist who will advise you on what you will need. Contact your local council's adult social care team to find out how to book an appointment.



Grab rails, raised toilet seats, chair raisers and even a stairlift are options for easier mobility, Age UK can often advise. Equipment can be bought privately, or, for those that qualify, obtained through the NHS or local council.

You may also qualify for a Disabled Facilities Grant, which is a local authority grant, to help towards the cost of adapting your home. These are administered by your local housing department, so contact them for an application form.

Carers UK has more information at www.carersuk.org, in their help and advice section.



5 Think creatively about sources of help and support

Try not to feel that you must do everything yourself. Caring for an older person is a huge responsibility, and not something one person should do alone. Accept help when it's offered and ask for it if it isn't.

- If you need some shopping, can a relative or neighbour pick up some things for you?
- Does your loved one have a friend who could spend an hour with them so you can have a break?
- Are there carers' charities in your area? They can help you access the support you need, including local carers' groups where you can meet other people.
- Have you called on GPs and mental health professionals for help and advice? Make sure you register as a carer with your GP so they are aware of the extra pressure you are under and can offer appropriate assistance. Your surgery should have a form for you to complete.

6 Finding advice and support

In chapter one we looked at how to enhance the health and wellbeing of an older person by getting out and about and keeping active.

Charities such as the Alzheimer's Society, as well as local authorities and care homes, often run 'drop in' sessions for local family carers and their loved ones, to give them a break and a change of scene. The sessions often run for an hour or two and involve activities for loved ones so family carers can relax.

Why attend a drop in session?

- They are a good opportunity to meet with people in a similar situation as you and to share experiences.
- You can tap into the help and expertise of professional carers.
- Sessions are often free, or very low cost.

Get in touch with local care homes, charities and your local authority to see what they offer.

"Any task can be turned into an activity and a chance for meaningful shared moments together. Making a cup of tea can be an opportunity for reminiscence about tea times from your loved one's childhood; about a mother's 'best china' or the cakes you used to make together. A walk around the garden can lead to discussions about a person's favourite flower, scent, colour or time of the year."

Jon Sneath, regional lifestyle lead

Many Care UK homes hold talks and other events for family carers, all led by experts. Subjects range from funding care and understanding dementia to eating and drinking well as we age, and preventing falls. Visit [careuk.com/care-homes](https://www.careuk.com/care-homes) to find your local Care UK home and check out its events page to find out what's on.



Chapter three

Some time for you





“We looked around a number of care homes to investigate respite care for my mother. After we had seen Mountfitchet House she stayed a couple of times and then became a resident. Caring for her had become my purpose – it felt like giving up a child – but her full-time care had taken its toll on me and my family. Much as I felt guilty at the time, it was definitely the best thing I could have done for her wellbeing and my own.”

N, daughter of a resident of Mountfitchet House

Options for taking a break

The relationship between you and the person you care for will be a close one, whether they are a family member or a friend. Despite that, there will be times when both of you will benefit from some time apart, and a change of scene.

There are a range of options that you may want to consider, from having a care worker come to your home so you can go out for the day or the evening, through to day clubs where you can drop off your

loved one for a few hours or the whole day. Respite care, either delivered in your home by a care worker, or in a residential care home, is also an option if you would like to take a break.



1 Day clubs

A day club may be the perfect option if you would like a few hours to yourself, or even a full day or two each week. Some care homes run day care centres and others are run by charities like the Alzheimer's Society. In some areas the local authority run day clubs.

Care UK day clubs are run by experienced care teams and enable your loved one to enjoy a range of fun activities plus a good meal, and drinks and snacks. Some clubs have visiting hairdressers and chiropodists and can help your loved one with personal care.

The great thing about day clubs is that they are flexible – there's no fixed contract – and it's relatively inexpensive.

Benefits for both of you

- Your loved one enjoys a change of scene and a sense of independence
- They meet new people and make new friends
- They enjoy entertaining activities

tailored to their interests

- You both benefit from flexible and affordable professional care you can trust
- You have time to yourself to meet friends and go to appointments

To find out about our day clubs go to [careuk.com/types-of-care/respite-day-care](https://www.careuk.com/types-of-care/respite-day-care)



2 Short breaks

Respite care is any form of care that gives the carer a break. It might involve a care worker caring for your loved one in your home at night to allow you to sleep. It also includes day care. You may want to organise regular respite care so you can catch up on sleep. There are various ways you can organise respite care to suit your circumstances.

You can search for local respite services online at www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/Carers/LocationSearch/1796



Even if you don't feel you need a break right now, it is worth researching the local options just in case you are ever unwell and unable to carry out your normal caring role.





3 A longer break

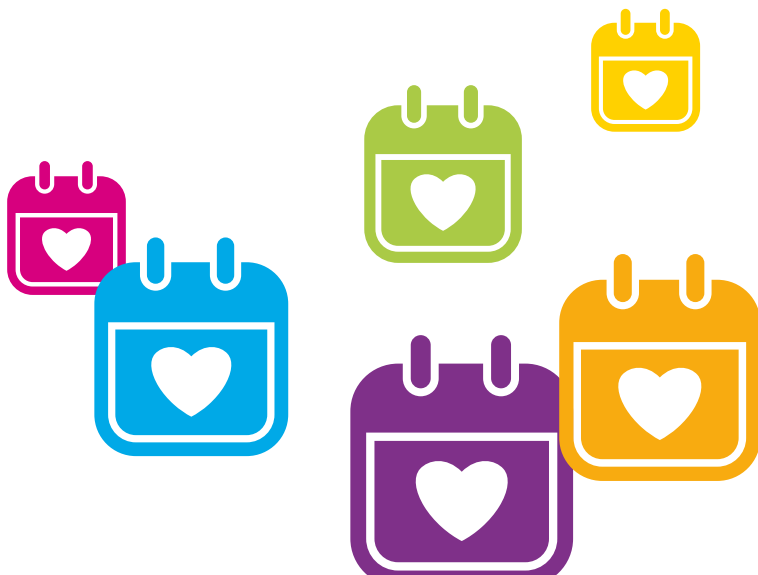
Having a good break to recharge your batteries means you'll return to your caring role refreshed and rejuvenated, and residential respite care is an effective option if you need more time to yourself to have a family holiday. Our survey found over a fifth (22%) of people last took a holiday two to three years ago, and 62% said their caring responsibilities limit the amount of time they have available to get away.

Many care homes offer respite care for as little as a week through to a few months. It's a flexible option that also gives your loved one a holiday too. Respite care is also used by families to enable an older loved one to have some extra support and rehabilitation after a stay in hospital and before they go home. Talk to your local home, or visit their website, if you'd like to find out more.



Chapter four

Helping you to care in the longer term



“Families know when they are ready to consider a change in their loved one’s care. Every family copes differently. It’s all about what you and your relative’s needs are. Nobody can predict that.”

Jude, senior team leader, Abney Court

Knowing the options that are available

There may come a time when the needs of the person you're caring for start to become too much for you to manage on your own at home. It's easy to ignore the warning signs because of feelings of guilt or fear, and simply not knowing where to start. Residents' relatives often tell us they wish they had talked to someone about their challenges much earlier on in their care journey to help them feel more in control of the situation.





What are the signs to look out for?

- Your loved one is starting to have falls more frequently – you may soon need to start manually moving them.
- They are living with dementia and it's progressing to a point where you're starting to find their behaviour difficult to understand, distressing and upsetting.
- Their irregular sleep patterns are disturbing your sleep, and that of other family members.
- Your loved one seems lonely and depressed.
- The challenges of caring for your loved one are starting to impact your own health and wellbeing, or that of other family members.
- The pressure of your caring role is having a negative effect on your family relationships.
- You are finding it increasingly hard to juggle work and your caring role.
- You are concerned about your safety or that of your loved one.

Options for longer-term care



• Domiciliary care/care at home:

If your loved one wants to stay in their own home, you can arrange for one or more carers to come in during the day to provide care. They can help them to get up and dressed, give them a meal, and/or put them to bed. It's a flexible option that you can adapt as your loved one's needs change. If you decide that a live-in carer is the best option, you will need to provide them with a bedroom to sleep in, but this usually doesn't mean they will be available all day, every day.

Your local authority can help you to arrange care at home, and, depending on your circumstances, they may also fund at least part of it. They can also help with adapting your home with suitable equipment.

• Residential care:

A care home provides the peace of mind that your loved one is being cared for by a team of professional carers, often in purpose-built surroundings. Many care homes provide a full range of round-the-clock care services, from residential care, through to nursing care and specialist dementia care, so your loved one can continue being cared for by people they know and trust, even as their needs change. The best care homes will ensure that your loved one can enjoy a superb quality of life in luxurious surroundings, with impressive facilities such as en-suite bedrooms, hair salons, cafés and gardens, a range of fun activities to keep them busy, plus tasty and nutritious food.





Chapter five

If a care home is the best option



“Please don’t wait until things are too hard for you to handle. Get involved with what’s happening in your local homes – join in events – it’ll give you things to do with your loved one too. You’ll start to feel more positive about care options and if you do need to make a move at some point in the future, it will be much easier.”

Shona Bradbury, home manager, Appleby House

Making the decision

It's very likely that, deep down, you'll know when it's the right time to consider permanent residential care for your loved one – there may be a single trigger that tips the scale.

Initially you might feel guilty that you're letting your loved one down. You may feel like you've failed, particularly if you once promised them that you'd never 'put them in a home'. It's important to understand that all of these emotions are absolutely natural and normal, and that many families experience them.

Tackling the subject with your loved one

If your loved one is against moving into a care home it's likely to be because they are afraid. They may have preconceived

ideas about care homes, they may be scared of losing their individuality, or even of being forgotten about. What's important is to be tentative when discussing it. Listen to their fears and reassure them that they would only move somewhere that was right for them, and where they would be happy. Focus on the positives of a care home and try not to rush things.

Here are some ideas you might find helpful in your conversations.



1

Enjoy life again:

Many people find that moving into a care home gives them a whole new lease of life. When they're receiving round-the-clock, quality care, tailored to their needs, they can relax, make new friends, enjoy all the activities and get involved in everything that's going on in the home. If your loved one has started to feel isolated and depressed, this could be an attractive option.



2

Reclaim your relationship:

Explain that you want to go back to being their friend/spouse/child/sibling, rather than their carer. With someone else doing the practical job of caring for your loved one, you can enjoy quality time together, like you used to. A good care home won't impose visiting hours, so you will be able to visit your loved one and stay all day if you wish, doing activities together or enjoying a meal.



3

Independence

- always:

Many older people are worried about losing their freedom, individuality or ability to make choices about their life. A quality care home will involve your loved one in all aspects of their care and lifestyle and support them to enjoy as full a life as possible. That might include outings and activities, all tailored to their individual interests - even the freedom to continue going to clubs and groups in the community.



4

Just like home:

If your loved one is very attached to their home, explain that they can move their favourite items of furniture and treasured possessions, pictures and photos to their room in the new home. A good care home will encourage residents to personalise their room however they wish, to help them feel more settled.



"It's very difficult to give a loved one 24-hour care. In his care home my father has round-the-clock care, he's enjoying wonderful food and lots of stimulation and he's made lovely new friendships. No matter how hard I tried, I could never give him all that at home. I'm still caring for him, but as his daughter again, and we spend wonderful, quality time together now."

S, daughter of a resident of Priors House

"Look upon your loved one's move to a care home as letting us take care of the main job of practical care while you continue the job of their emotional care. Residents enjoy the best possible care when we can work in partnership with them and their families."

Care UK colleague

"Mum had fallen a number of times at home. She'd had a heart attack, so it was a huge weight off my mind when a place at Mildenhall Lodge came up. The home team are like a big extended family to us. Mum loves it there and I am still as involved in her care as I want to be."

Marion, daughter of a resident of Mildenhall Lodge

"When my mother moved into the home, even though I went every day to see her, I missed her. I missed chatting to her and putting her to bed, but I'd become exhausted and ill. I had to put myself first. It took a while for me to adjust. She was fine though and we now have a much stronger relationship as all the stress has been taken out of it."

S, daughter of a resident of Mountfitchet House



Chapter six

Choosing the right care home



“Read a care home’s reviews on [carehome.co.uk](https://www.carehome.co.uk). These are from other relatives like you. They’re independent and give you a good idea of what a home is like. Take a look at a home’s Facebook page if it has one, so you can see what residents get up to. You’ll soon know whether your loved one’s days will be fun and fulfilled.”

Pamela Wilson, customer relations manager, Abney Court

Some tips to help you get started

Deciding to move a loved one into permanent residential care can be one of the biggest, and most difficult decisions you'll make in life. But once you've made that decision, you'll want to find the best possible home for them. Where do you start? Who will pay? What should you ask when you visit a home?

1 What are your loved one's care needs?

There are many different types of care home. Some simply offer a safe and comfortable home for people who need a little extra help day-to-day, while others provide specialist nursing or dementia care 24 hours a day. There are many that provide a full range of care so that a person can stay in the same place, surrounded by the carers they trust, even if their needs change. Talk to your loved one's GP and other healthcare professionals to understand what care they'll need. Most homes will undertake a full care assessment of your loved one's needs before they move in too.

Your local authority's social services department will arrange a free care needs assessment, and a financial assessment. The latter will identify what financial support you may be entitled to.



2 Is location important?

Will your loved one be keen to stay in the local community where they may have friends? Or is it more important that their home is closer to members of your family, to make it easier for them to visit and provide additional support? If they are still fit, will they want to be able to walk to a shop or park, so is a home in a town a better

option? In our carer survey, 33% of people said location was the most important factor when selecting a care home with their loved one.



With an understanding of the type of care your loved one needs, and the best location, you can start to develop a shortlist of homes.

3 Starting your search

- **Care regulators:**

The established independent regulator for care homes in England is called the Care Quality Commission, or CQC. They undertake regular inspections of all care homes to ensure they meet government standards. The CQC's website is www.cqc.org.uk

In Scotland, the independent regulator is the Care Inspectorate, www.careinspectorate.com

In Wales, it is the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW), www.careinspectorate.wales

You can search on the relevant regulator's website for local care homes.

They will also have the latest inspection report from each home for you to read.



- **Online care home directories:**

Online directories can provide a good place to start. These include carehome.co.uk. A few Google searches will also help you to narrow your search.

- **Word of mouth:**

Talk to friends and family, as well as your GP and healthcare professionals, to see if they know of a good local home. Doctors and district nurses – even physiotherapists and opticians – will visit local care homes on a regular basis, so they'll have a good idea of which homes are worth visiting – and which to avoid.



4 Visiting shortlisted homes
Nothing beats a visit to your shortlisted homes to get a feel for everything, from the care home team and how they approach care, to the general buzz of the place.

"Since I've been here and joined in, I've really improved and I can feel the difference, which makes me feel so much better. When I look around and see everyone so busy and enjoying themselves, it makes me feel so good."

G, resident of Priors House

Make an appointment to look around, meet the manager, speak to staff and residents and get a feel for life in that home. And remember that you can go back as many times as you wish – the team should always be pleased to see you and keen to help.

"I soon realised that, in the home, my wife was being cared for far better than I ever could."

Glenn, husband of a resident of Silversprings

5 What to ask

As you may visit a number of homes, make sure you keep a note of your thoughts, so you can refer back later. If there are a couple of homes you really like, feel free to visit them several times, to feel confident about your decision. Involve other family members to gain second opinions.



There is a helpful home visit checklist on the Care UK website on the 'Choosing and funding care page – helpful guides and information'. You can also pick one up from your nearest Care UK care home. Below are some of the key questions to ask.

First impressions

Is the outside of the home well kept and tidy? Is the home clean, fresh smelling and well maintained? Are the staff friendly and welcoming?

Personal care

Does the home provide the right type of care for your loved one's needs?
How often are care needs reviewed?
Are residents and relatives involved in

decisions made about their care?

Care home team

Does the care team appear to interact well with residents? Do carers appear to respect residents' privacy and dignity?

Bedrooms

Can residents bring their own possessions and furniture? Can residents choose their room? Are the bedrooms clean and well decorated? Do the bedrooms have en-suite facilities? Do bedrooms have a nurse call system? Are there lifts in the home?

Dining

Can residents eat when they want to? Are residents offered a choice of meals? Are special diets catered for? Does the chef consult with residents regularly to discuss meal preferences? Are snacks and drinks available at all times?



Activities and hobbies

Are residents encouraged to continue with their own hobbies and interests? Is there an activities programme and dedicated activity co-ordinators in the home? Are there regular outings and trips? Are one-to-one activities available? Are residents consulted on what activities they'd like?



Outdoor space

What are the gardens like? Are residents involved in gardening? Are there raised flower beds?

"The atmosphere here is one of happiness. It's infectious! Every time anyone visits, they remark on it."

J, resident of Priors House

"Look for photos around the home of residents enjoying different activities, including artistic pastimes. Is their artwork displayed? If so, it's great evidence that residents are given free rein to express their creative side, which helps to enhance their mood, wellbeing and sense of achievement."

**Shona Bradbury, home manager,
Appleby House**

"The staff are amazing - so supportive, caring and kind. Nothing is too much trouble for them, and everyone has a smile and a hello for you, and time to talk. Dad's carers are like our family now. On difficult days they're ready with a hug. We can talk to them about anything we're worried about, but they're great fun too. Dad adores them."

**J, daughter of a resident of
Priors House**



Chapter seven

How much does a care home cost?



“Funding care may not be as expensive as you think when you take state benefits into account. For example, if your loved one needs nursing care, they are entitled to Registered Nursing Care Contribution even if they’re funding their own care. Many families say they wouldn’t have left it as late as they did to move their loved one into residential care if they’d known about the funding options available.”

**Sharon Butler, customer relations manager,
Snowdrop House**

The different ways of funding care

So you've found the right care home for your loved one, but who will pay for their care and what will the fees cover? There are various funding options available, and what your loved one is entitled to will depend on the income and capital that they have, the type and level of care they need as well as where they live.

Typical weekly fees

The cost of residential care varies hugely across the UK. If your loved one needs nursing care, these fees rise. When you contact a care home you may find it frustrating that they may not tell you their care costs upfront. This is because everyone's needs are different. However they should give you an indication of what the fees will be.

Getting an assessment

Depending on your loved one's circumstances, they will probably be responsible for paying some, or all, of their care home costs. It is also possible that the NHS or their local authority will provide funding.

Advice you can trust

Everyone's financial situation is different, and we recommend that you discuss your loved one's funding options with a SOLLA registered financial adviser who will take your individual situation into account and give you tailored advice.

What is SOLLA?

SOLLA stands for the Society of Later Life Advisers. SOLLA can link you to a financial adviser with the specialist knowledge to advise on issues such as funding long-term care.



Included or extra?

Care homes price their services differently, so it's important to check what the fees of your chosen care home will cover, and what will be charged as an extra cost – ask for their pricing policy if you haven't been given it. It is possible that entertainment, hairdressing and additional wellbeing services may be extra.



- If the local authority or the NHS is contributing towards your loved one's care, their attendance allowance is likely to stop. If your loved one is paying for their own care, it is likely to continue.
- The same applies to the care component of the disability living allowance. If these stop, so too will any carer's allowance that you receive.
- Any housing and council tax benefits your loved one receives are likely to stop when they move out of their own house and into a care home. Anyone still living in their home will need to claim any benefits in their own name.

A word about benefits

The benefits you and your loved one are entitled to can change when they move into permanent residential care.





Powers of attorney, deputyships and guardianships

If your loved one still has capacity, they may want to put decisions about their finances and/or health and care into the hands of family members or professionals who they trust. In this case they can set up a power of attorney. There are different types of these depending on whether you are in England and Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland.

If they are unable to make decisions about their own affairs, and they don't have a valid power of attorney in place, the only legal way for another person to make decisions on their behalf is through a deputyship (England and Wales). Again,

there are different types of these in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Find out more

There's more information on our website about funding care in the section 'choosing and funding care'.

"Many relatives are worried about whether they'll have the funds to pay for care. Care is funded in many different ways, and if you're paying for your loved one's care and the funds are running down, talk to us and a SOLLA-accredited financial advisor well in advance."

Care UK colleague

Chapter eight

Preparing for the move



“We always suggest that a potential resident comes for a visit and has a coffee and some cake with us in our café. They might then come back again and spend a few hours here, getting a feel for the home and getting to know some of our team. Once they’ve spent some time here, most people are asking when they can move in – families too!”

Pamela Wilson, customer relations manager, Abney Court

Three ideas for preparing your loved one

You've found a care home that you believe is the right one for your loved one. The next step is to show your loved one around and to help them to get used to the idea of moving in. Here are three approaches you might want to consider.



1 Have a look around

Showing your loved one around the care home without any pressure can help them to see that it's a nice place to be. The home team will make a fuss of them and make them feel special – even involving them in activities if it seems appropriate.

Many people have a perception of care homes as they were thirty or forty years ago – today the best ones are more like hotels, with cinemas, coffee shops and even their own pubs. Your loved one may be very pleasantly surprised at what they find.

Many homes run regular events and drop in sessions that you might want to join to get you and your loved one familiar with a home and the team there.



2 Resident for a day



One option that some care homes offer is for loved ones to be 'resident for a day'. They can experience daily life in the home without any pressure, joining in with activities, enjoying meals, getting to know their way around and meeting residents and carers.

3 Holiday time

A short stay is also a good option to get them familiar with the idea of living in the home.

"Some relatives talk about a respite stay as being a holiday for their loved one. The loved one often really likes that idea as it brings back lots of positive, happy memories. Family carers are also welcome to bring their loved one to our events and clubs, so they get used to the home."

Care UK colleague

Chapter nine

Settling in



“When you see your loved one enjoying a great quality of life, you’ll be reassured that you’ve made the right decision for both of you. Remember that the move is to help you to regain quality time with your loved one, and for you to regain your energy.”

Care UK colleague

“I now spend meaningful time with my wife – before I was too busy caring for her to do that. I do get involved in her care in the home but I’ve got my own life back too. I now volunteer for the Alzheimer’s Society. I’m using my experience to give something back.”

Glenn, husband of a resident of Silversprings

Helping your loved one to feel at home

Moving in to a care home can be the start of a positive new life. Some residents take up new hobbies or rekindle interests; they also make new friends and learn new skills which enable them to live happy and fulfilling lives.



What to bring

Spend time with your loved one before they move helping them to decide what to take. Bring in the belongings that mean the most to them. Some homes will redecorate a room for a new resident so it's fresh and in their favourite colours. They should also be happy to put up paintings and pictures, and add items of furniture that your loved one wants to bring from home.

Photos are important, and small trinkets that have sentimental value are key. However, it's not uncommon to completely refurnish a new resident's bedroom with all their own furniture, if that's what will help them to settle. The home will want to check that any furniture is safe and in good condition.

On the day

Your loved one's first day in a home can be all about settling them in and putting them at ease.

Different members of the team will pop in during the day to introduce themselves and the team are likely to start introducing your loved one to one or



two residents they may get along with. If there's an activity underway, they might want to sit in and get their bearings. You may like to have lunch or dinner with your loved one. What's important is that everything is at their pace so that they don't feel overwhelmed.

"We like to spend time one-to-one with a new resident doing their favourite hobby or interest with them. It's a way of starting to form a bond with them and of getting to know them, and it reassures them that we feel they're important. We might involve another resident so they start to get to know others and they have someone to talk to who has been in their position."

Jon Sneath, regional lifestyle lead

Common worries

It's normal to have some "what happens if?" questions when your loved one embarks upon life in a care home. Below

are some of the common worries that relatives and residents say they had at the start, and how a home should aim to resolve them.

1 "What happens if he falls?"

A home should regularly check on residents 24 hours a day and pay special attention to checking new residents. Those at risk of falling, or

falling out of bed at night, should be monitored frequently, and if a person does fall, a team should be on hand to immediately help and assess them, calling an ambulance if they have the slightest concern about their health.

2 "I'm not a big 'joiner' in activities. Will I just be ignored?"

New residents should be encouraged to get involved and there should be an option of one-to-one activities for a person who isn't keen on group activities. If your loved one misses

the everyday tasks of home, can they do some light 'household' tasks, such as washing dishes, folding laundry, or helping in the garden. They should also have the chance to get out and about if they wish to, and are able.



3 "I want to go home."

A care home team should be focused on understanding a new resident's life story and getting to know them. This reassures a person that the team are genuinely interested in them as an individual and it helps the team

to understand what they can do to help them feel more settled. If a person is living with dementia, telling them they can't go home will only upset them. Instead carers should aim to encourage them with an activity they'll find interesting, or a change of subject.

4 “What if Mum won’t eat?”

A home team should work holistically to find ways to help a resident to eat and drink well. There are many reasons why a person might not be eating:

- **Physical discomfort:** Some residents who are living with dementia have dysphagia, which is a difficulty swallowing. Does the home’s catering team use food technologies to create pureed food that looks enticing, so your loved one can eat more easily?
- **Physical capacity:** Residents should be able to dine with dignity, whatever their ability. Does the care home use dementia-friendly cutlery and crockery so residents can eat independently and do they provide one-to-one assistance.
- **Short concentration span:** If a resident isn’t able to sit down long enough to eat, will the catering team adapt – perhaps putting their favourite finger foods in a snack box for food on the go?
- **Reduced appetite:** Will the home make up batches of your loved one’s favourite foods and freeze them, so there’s always a meal to hand that will tempt them?



5 Confusion

Some new residents settle immediately, while others need more emotional support to help them through the transition. Everyone is

different and the home team should be on hand to listen, reassure and support them.



Sources of advice and support



For more information about Care UK and our homes and services, visit our website [careuk.com/care-homes](https://www.careuk.com/care-homes).

Local support

Many care homes will have links with local charities that support both people living with dementia and their carers – ask your nearest home for more information and contact details.

A number of our homes hold regular support sessions for family carers through their 'Friends of' groups, dementia cafés and drop-in sessions. All are welcome at these groups – please just ask your nearest home for more information.

For more information on funding care visit [careuk.com/care-homes/choosing-funding-care](https://www.careuk.com/care-homes/choosing-funding-care) or go directly to www.england.nhs.uk/healthbudgets for more about personal health budgets.

Health and social care professionals can offer information, advice and care to people with dementia and their carers. The services available and how they are organised vary by area, so to find out about what is available in your area contact your local social services department or GP surgery.



National organisations

Age UK

Age UK has been helping older people across the UK for more than 60 years.
ageuk.org.uk and ageuk.org.uk/scotland

Alzheimer Scotland

Specialist services for people with dementia and their carers.
alzscot.org

Alzheimer's Society

For information, advice and local services for those looking after someone living with dementia.
alzheimers.org.uk

Care Information Scotland

For information about care services for older people living in Scotland.
careinfoscotland.co.uk

Care Inspectorate Scotland

The independent body for care services in Scotland.
careinspectorate.com

Care Quality Commission

The CQC is the health and social care regulator for England.
cqc.org.uk

Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales

The care regulator for Wales.
careinspectorate.wales

Carers UK

Offers advice on benefits and services available to carers.
carersuk.org

Carers Trust

Information and local support services for carers.
carers.org

Dementia Action Alliance

Supports communities and organisations to enable people to live well with dementia.
dementiaaction.org.uk

Dementia UK

Provides expert care and support to people living with and affected by dementia.

dementiauk.org

Money Advice Service

The Government's free and impartial money advice service, has advice on funding care.

moneyadvice.service.org.uk

NHS Choices

Information and advice on a range of healthcare concerns, helping people to live well.

nhs.uk

Silver Line

Free confidential helpline providing advice to older people. Open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call 0800 470 8090.

thesilverline.org.uk

With thanks to our colleagues for their valuable contributions and to all the relatives, family carers and residents for sharing their stories.

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