

# Dementia and moving to a care home

A guide for those with a dementia and  
their carers, family and friends



Health and  
Social Care

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Choosing a care home can be one of the most difficult and emotional decisions that a person may have to make. That challenge can be even greater if a person has a dementia.

This booklet is for those who may be thinking about a care home for themselves or for someone they care for and provides guidance on things to consider.

It is a good idea to discuss potential living arrangements early in the journey of dementia and for the person with a dementia to be involved as much as possible in making any decision about their care. Having this discussion does not mean that a person with a dementia will inevitably have to leave their own home, but it is good to have sought and included their wishes as much as possible in case the time does come for them to move to a new setting.

Before making a decision to move into a care home, you should allow time to consider the factors which may be of importance to the person with a dementia and their carers/family. You should visit a number of homes, if possible, and ask for information brochures or leaflets.

Remember, staff in a care home are there to help make this transition as easy as possible and want to work with you throughout the process.

# Making the decision

The decision to move into a care home is not one that is taken lightly. Every person living with a dementia and their carers/family will experience their journey in their own unique way. It is perfectly natural to feel frustration, guilt, relief and sadness at this time.

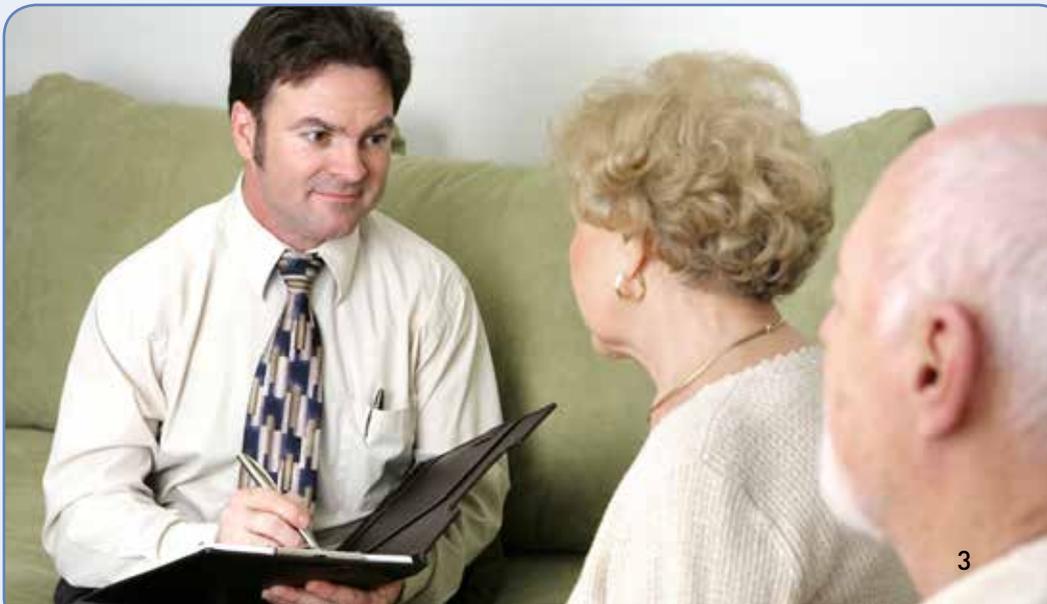
People who have been through this transition have said:

*'I felt relief knowing dad was with someone and safe'*

*'I was angry I could no longer care for her'*

*'Guilt but that soon went when we saw her settling in'*

It is good to talk to staff about these feelings. They are normal responses to a particular situation. It is important to remember also that there are many benefits in moving to a care home. Benefits can include living in a safe environment, opportunities to engage with others and reassurance that there are staff available to provide care, support and assistance on a continuous basis.



# Assessment of needs

Before deciding on a care home the person with a dementia will need to have an assessment of their needs carried out by a health or social care professional. The professional should ensure that all possible supports have been provided to help them, their family and carers make the choice between staying in their own home or entering a care home.

This assessment should be comprehensive and include medical, physical, social, spiritual, emotional and other needs. It should involve carers/family and all relevant professional staff.

The assessment will determine the type and extent of care the person with a dementia needs.

There are two types of care home, residential and nursing.

- **Residential homes** provide care for those who can no longer remain independently in their own homes, but who do not require nursing care on an ongoing basis.
- **Nursing homes** provide care for those people who require qualified nursing care at regular intervals throughout the day and night. The nursing care required must be beyond that which can be provided at home or in a residential home.

Care homes may be owned or operated by Health and Social Care Trusts (Trusts), independent (private) providers or the voluntary/charity sector.

All homes must be registered and are regularly inspected by the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) to ensure that they meet the required care, staffing and environmental standards.



Inspectors from RQIA write reports of their findings in care homes. These reports are available to the general public. You can view reports by searching for the care home on the RQIA website ([www.rqia.org.uk](http://www.rqia.org.uk)) or you can ask to see a copy at the home.

## Choosing a care home

You can ask your social worker for a list of homes within your Trust area which will include contact details for the home manager. Your social worker can be contacted through your local Trust, details of which are on page 17 of the booklet.

Also remember you are able to go outside of your own Trust area and the list of available places can be provided on request.

It is advisable to visit the care home to get “a feel” for the place and you can do so on a few occasions if you wish. It is important that the person with a dementia is involved in this process as much as possible. This will make the transition easier for all concerned and lessen any feelings of anxiety

You do not need to make an appointment to view a care home but remember meal times may be busy and staff will be focused on their residents' needs. Appointments should be made if you wish to speak with the manager simply to make sure he/she is there and available.



On your visit to the home you should be greeted with a welcoming atmosphere. The home should present as clean, tidy, pleasantly decorated with no bad odours. When you are visiting, take the opportunity to talk to residents, if possible, to better understand if this could be the right place for you

Some practical tips to consider are the home's location, is there parking available, is it near family and friends? Are there any shops, leisure, church or community facilities in the area?

It might be a good idea when you visit a home to take a trusted friend with you. That way you can discuss how you both felt about the home and share opinions. Family and carers should remember to include the person with a dementia as much as possible.

You might also want to ask about routines within the care home such as mealtimes, dietary requirements, getting up, going to bed, activities, use of shared facilities, room furnishings, entering and exiting the building and visiting times. Carers/family may wish to ask if there is the option to take the resident on outings.

Also ask about hairdressing, newspapers, medication arrangements, laundry, services, pets, church services, appointments, transport arrangements, telephone facilities, garden space, staffing ratio, staff turnover and staff training. Depending on how far away the home is the person with a dementia may be able to keep their own GP. If this is not the case they will be registered with a local GP.

You may want to have a discussion about the care home's admission policy and when a place might become available. After moving in there will be an initial six to eight week trial period to ensure the home meets your needs. After this, you will be offered a contract for long term residence. This contract will include several important details, one of which is the notice required on both sides to cancel the contract.

Make sure that the room you select is identified in the contract. Also ensure that you will be notified of any changes to the contract before they take place.

# Financial assessment

You have a choice as to whether you wish to participate in your Trust's financial assessment or you may choose to undertake a private placement in which case you are responsible for payment of placement.

If you choose to participate in the financial assessment, the Trust's care manager or social worker will assess the person with a dementia's finances. They will look at income and capital to calculate how much you need to pay. If you are unable to pay the full fees, you will receive information about what arrangements can be put in place. Not being able to pay the full amount will not prevent you from receiving a place in a care home.

You can choose a home that is more expensive than your local Trust usually pays for a person but the difference will have to be paid. If the Trust can suggest a place that meets your needs but you want to move into a more expensive home, a relative or friend can pay the extra fees. This is called a 'third party contribution'.

A resident of the home will not be able to pay this third party contribution as they will have been financially assessed to pay what they can afford.

It is important that you complete the assessment documentation in an accurate, timely manner to ensure you are not overcharged.

For more information on financial assessments and paying for care homes you can visit [www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/paying-your-residential-care-or-nursing-home-fees](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/paying-your-residential-care-or-nursing-home-fees)



## Personal allowance

Following financial assessment and after the fees have been paid, each individual resident is able to retain a personal allowance. This can go towards hairdressing, toiletries and other personal individual needs. Homes will have their own individual policy and you should discuss this with the manager.

If you need help and support, contact the social worker or care manager in charge or see 'Useful links' at the end of this booklet.

## Legal issues

When a resident is no longer able to manage their finances there are a number of legal measures that can be taken to ensure that their finances can be managed appropriately and in their best interests. If you are concerned about financial management please contact your social worker.

## Moving in day

The day before the move, there are a few key things to agree with the care home: date and time of admission, transport to the home and any escort arrangements necessary. When it comes to time of admission, early in the day can be better as it allows the person with a dementia to get to know their new environment in daylight, which can help them feel more relaxed.

On admission you should be welcomed by the staff, given a tour of the care home, introduced to other residents and advised of the services available. You should also be asked about preferences such as menu choices and how assistance for any care needs is delivered.

It's important to bring a supply of medication, enough for at least five days and get a print out of medication from the GP or hospital prior to admission.

## Key workers

Most homes have a keyworker/named nurse for every resident. This is the 'go to' person if you have any queries. Key workers want to hear about any concerns, no matter how small they may seem, as soon as possible. The key worker acts as a focal point for the resident and their family/visitors and will try and ensure that the resident's personal requirements are not overlooked in the busy day-to-day life of the home. The key worker, along with the social worker and family, will help the resident to develop their own personalised care plan based on their physical, social, emotional, cultural and spiritual needs and preferences.

Staying connected with friends and the community is paramount to maintaining wellbeing and the care plan should enable the person with a dementia to continue to maintain friendships and participate fully in their local community.



# Living in a dementia friendly environment

One of the key areas to be aware of when selecting a care home for a person with a dementia is the environment into which they will be going. Many care homes are working to become more dementia friendly, with some further along than others. Being dementia friendly is not just about the physical environment but also about the staff throughout the care home knowing how to provide appropriate person-centred support. This means staff will be trained and have the right knowledge and skills to care for a person with a dementia.

It can also mean allowing visitors to stay for as long as they wish with the person with a dementia and visit them whenever suits. Ask if the home has signed up to John's Campaign. John's Campaign supports the right of a carer or family member to stay with a person with a dementia in hospital or care home and the right of the person with a dementia to have their carer stay with them. For more information visit [www.johnscampaign.org.uk](http://www.johnscampaign.org.uk)

A person with a dementia may have different needs to someone who does not have a cognitive impairment. They may become confused more easily and have difficulty finding their way around the home. Designing a care home to be dementia friendly can have a positive impact on the independence of the person with a dementia and provide the opportunity to move within the living environment as freely as possible. Some things to look out for in terms of a dementia friendly environment might be:

- The use of contrasting colours to help important rooms and objects stand out. For example, the door to a living area could contrast with the walls in a corridor to help the person with a dementia find the room.
- Appropriate signage with the use of words and pictures can help a person with a dementia find their way easily around the home.

- A good balance between keeping walkways clutter free so the person with a dementia does not trip, but leaving objects placed around the home that might provide stimulation to the person.
- The care home should have adequate lighting, with as much natural daylight as possible.
- Furnishings and carpets should be relatively plain and not too distracting.
- There should be quiet areas where someone with a dementia can go to if they are ever feeling a little tired, anxious or overwhelmed.

# Eating and mealtimes

Mealtimes can be very busy in a care home but it is important that the person with a dementia gets the right support to enjoy meals and to help them eat as independently as possible. Below is a list of things to look out for in a care home to help make meals easier for a person with a dementia.

- Are mealtimes flexible as some people might prefer to have their main meal of the day at lunchtime and others in the evening?
- Are small snacks and drink available throughout the day and at night times, especially for people who may be awake during the night?
- Does the home make use of contrasting colours to make food easier to see and also more appetising?
- Can residents have their meals in a quiet space if being in a room with many other people is too distracting or distressing?
- Are residents asked about what they like to eat and how they like to eat it?
- Are there menu options at mealtimes that reflect dietary needs and cultural preferences?

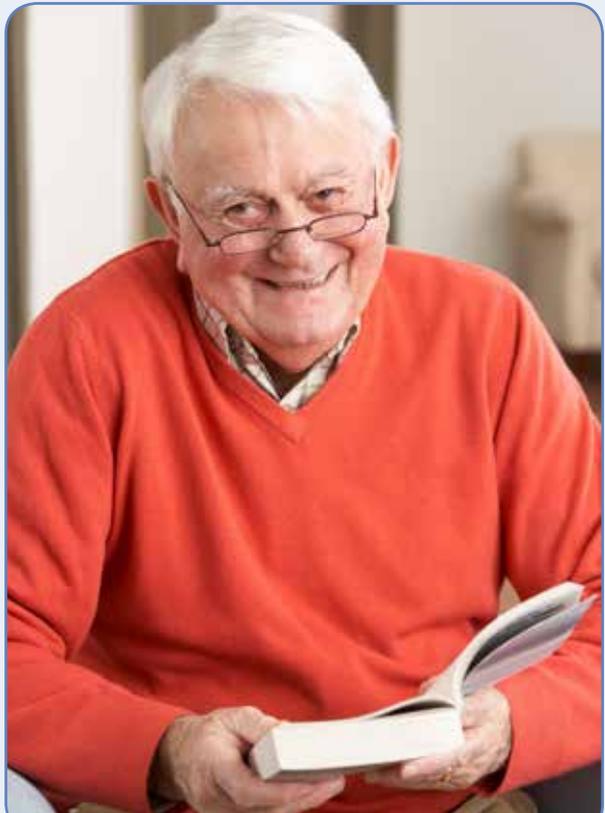


# Caring for residents as individuals

Everyone with a dementia should be treated as an individual and be involved as much as possible in making decisions about their care and treatment. You should have access to information and support to help you make the right decisions, including the offer of independent representation where necessary. To find out more about how you can access independent representation contact your healthcare professional or social worker. Trust contact details can be found in 'Useful links' on page 17.

## Activities

Many care homes have structured activity programmes. These should be designed so that they are pleasurable and stimulating. Reminiscence activities, including life story books, can be very beneficial to a person with a dementia, allowing them to feel connected with the past. We all have preferences about how we like to spend our time. The important thing is that the person with a dementia is supported and enabled to spend their time as they wish.



## Supporting a **good** end of life

Talking about end of life plans can be difficult and emotional but it is still important to have the opportunity to discuss these matters with the keyworker or home manager.

You may want to draw up an advance care plan. This is a record of a person's wishes and preferences for their health and social care in the later stages of life. Advance care plans can include issues such as symptom management, decisions regarding treatment and hospital admissions. A person with a dementia can nominate someone to help fulfil these wishes in the event that their dementia progresses to the point where they become unable to express their wishes clearly.

If the person with a dementia has plans in place or has expressed their wishes around end of life care, these should be shared with the care home at the earliest opportunity to ensure that these wishes are respected as far as reasonably possible.

Sometimes a person with a dementia may have complex health and medical needs that cannot be met by the home and a review of care needs may be required, perhaps leading to a change of residence. Home staff, other professionals and family, and, wherever possible, the person with a dementia, will be involved in making decisions about how the best care can be provided.

# Helpful tips when selecting a care home

- Visit the care home, or several homes if possible, preferably involving the person with a dementia.
- Take a friend with you for support and to help you make decisions.
- Check the care home's inspection reports at [www.rqia.org.uk](http://www.rqia.org.uk)
- Talk to staff in the care home and make an appointment to speak to the home manager if you wish to discuss anything in detail. Also, talk to residents if the opportunity arises.
- Is the home welcoming with a friendly atmosphere?
- Ask about staffing levels, staff turnover and staff training.
- What are the general routines of the home for things like getting up at night, meals, outings and anything else of interest to the person with a dementia?
- What is the care home's admission policy and is there a waiting list?
- Is the care home dementia friendly? If not, is it working towards becoming more dementia friendly and what steps are being taken to ensure this happens?
- Has the care home signed up to John's Campaign?
- What are mealtimes like in the home and how are people with a dementia supported to be as independent as possible in this area?
- What activities can the person with a dementia get involved with in the care home, both in terms of structured group activities and also more personalised activities?
- Think about any financial or legal considerations.
- How will the home support a good end of life for the person with a dementia?

The main thing to think about for the person with a dementia when selecting a care home is:

***‘Will I be happy here?’***

# Useful links

## **John's Campaign**

John's Campaign emphasises the right of a carer or family member to stay with a person with a dementia in hospital or in a care home and the right of the person with a dementia to have their carer stay with them. For more information visit [www.johnscampaign.org.uk](http://www.johnscampaign.org.uk)

## **nidirect**

Online information regarding dementia in Northern Ireland  
[www.nidirect.gov.uk/dementia](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/dementia)

## **Belfast Health and Social Care Trust**

[info@belfasttrust.hscni.net](mailto:info@belfasttrust.hscni.net)  
[www.belfasttrust.hscni.net](http://www.belfasttrust.hscni.net)

## **Northern Health and Social Care Trust**

[www.northerntrust.hscni.net](http://www.northerntrust.hscni.net)

## **Southern Health and Social Care Trust**

[www.southerntrust.hscni.net](http://www.southerntrust.hscni.net)

## **South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust**

[www.setrust.hscni.net](http://www.setrust.hscni.net)

## **Western Health and Social Care Trust**

[www.westerntrust.hscni.net](http://www.westerntrust.hscni.net)

# Useful contacts

## **Alzheimer's Society**

Unit 4  
Balmoral Business Park  
Boucher Crescent  
Belfast BT12 6HU  
Tel: 028 9038 7770  
[www.alzheimers.org.uk](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk)

## **Age NI**

3 Lower Crescent  
Belfast BT7 1NR  
Tel: 0808 808 7575  
[www.ageuk.org.uk/northern-ireland](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/northern-ireland)

## **Carers Northern Ireland**

58 Howard Street  
Belfast BT1 6PJ  
Tel: 028 9043 9843

## **Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Interpreting Service**

Business Services Organisation  
Franklin Street  
Belfast BT2 8DQ  
Tel 028 9536 3777

## **Dementia NI**

54 Elmwood Avenue  
Belfast BT9 6AZ  
Tel: 028 9068 6768  
Email: [info@dementiani.org](mailto:info@dementiani.org)  
[www.dementiani.org](http://www.dementiani.org)

## **The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority**

9th Floor Riverside Tower,  
5 Lanyon Place,  
Belfast BT1 3BT  
028 9051 7500  
[www.rqia.org.uk](http://www.rqia.org.uk)

## **The Office of Care and Protection (OCP)**

Room 2.2A, 2nd Floor,  
Royal Courts of Justice,  
Chichester Street,  
Belfast BT1 3JF  
Tel 028 9072 4733  
[www.courtsni.gov.uk](http://www.courtsni.gov.uk)

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