

# Finding the right home for end-of-life care

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**If you (or your relative) are not currently living in a care home but feel that this might be the best option, it is important to do as much research as possible so that you choose the right palliative or end-of-life care.**

This guide contains useful information about what to look for when researching and visiting care homes, and how to access assessment and funding. If you or your loved one has been diagnosed with dementia, some decisions may need to be made well in advance to ensure that your wishes are carried out.

For more information on dementia, please see our other leaflets:  
[www.canfordhealthcare.co.uk/library](http://www.canfordhealthcare.co.uk/library)

## What is end-of-life care?

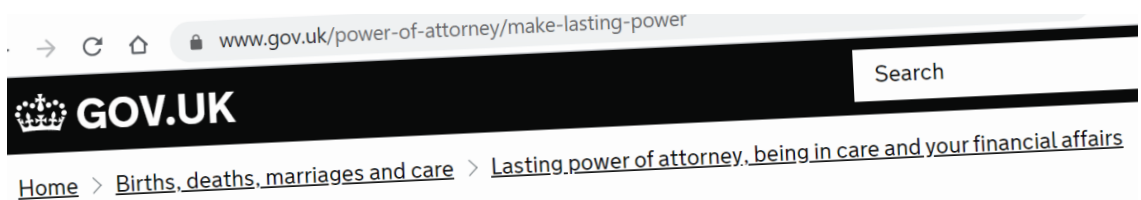
End-of-life care is the treatment and support that someone nearing the end of their life receives. When someone has a progressive condition like dementia or cancer, for example, palliative care is an important aspect of their overall care plan because this is all about making them as comfortable as possible.

We usually talk about this in terms of the last year or so of someone's life, but it can be difficult to predict when someone is going to die. For some people, end-of-life care may only mean weeks or even days.

## How is end-of-life care planned for?

Planning for end-of-life care involves talking about your needs and wishes with your family, friends and any professionals such as a GP or social worker. It can also involve getting help with practicalities such as financing your care, putting in place a Power of Attorney or making a will. These aspects are also covered in our other leaflet *Dementia and End of Life – the legal things you need to know*, at: [www.canfordhealthcare.co.uk/library](http://www.canfordhealthcare.co.uk/library).

Although it can all be an emotional strain to think about, making important decisions in advance means that you do not have to worry about the practicalities if and when you are ill, and avoids the need for family and friends making rushed decisions amidst the throes of grief.



## Make, register or end a lasting power of attorney

**The priority is to help you to live as well and comfortably as you can while being cared for with dignity and compassion.**

You have the right to say where you would prefer to receive care and where you wish to die – at home, in a care home, hospice or hospital. Your wishes will be considered as much as possible but, ultimately, it will depend on your needs at the time. Wherever you are, you have the right to high-quality care.

A care home is less clinical than a hospital would be, and the focus is on 'comfort care'. Your room will be kept as peaceful and relaxed as possible. You will be surrounded by familiar possessions, and your family and friends will be able to remain close to you for as much or as little time as you wish.

## Expert staff

When approaching the end of their life, people often need a greater level of nursing care. Many nursing homes have staff who are specially trained and experienced in palliative care and, with close links to local GP surgeries and hospitals, additional medical support is never far away.

Because of the close relationships that staff develop with residents – and their families – you can be confident that even if no family members can be there at time of death, a resident's last moments will be filled with compassion and kindness.

Staff who are experienced in caring for terminally ill people understand, too, that relatives also need care at this difficult time.

## Gold Standard Framework

This is a national framework dedicated to improving the quality of care for anyone nearing the end of their life. It aims to ensure that people's wishes are met, wherever possible, enabling them to live and die where and how they choose.

If you are looking for a care home where you (or a loved one) might spend the rest of your life, ask whether the home is Gold Standard trained or accredited, as this will give you a good idea of their standard of care.

To find out more, see: [www.goldstandardsframework.org.uk](http://www.goldstandardsframework.org.uk)

## CQC reports

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) monitors, inspects and regulates health and social care services, including care homes. It sets the benchmark for good and outstanding care with standards that homes must achieve. It regularly inspects and grades care homes according to four levels: outstanding, good, requires improvement and inadequate.

When researching potential homes, it is a good idea to look at their latest CQC report to find out how they and their end-of-life care has been assessed. Most homes publish these on their websites, or you can find them on the CQC website at [www.cqc.org.uk/search/services/care-homes](http://www.cqc.org.uk/search/services/care-homes).

**Unless you or your relative is already being looked after in a care home or has a care plan, it is essential that you develop an end-of-life plan, including a care needs assessment.**

You may already have had one to help you manage better at home, but if things have progressed and more care may be required in the near future, an assessment from your local council will help you and your family to make the right decision.

Someone being looked after in a care home should already have a care plan in place. We, like many nursing care providers, talk to residents and relatives when they first arrive so that we know their preferences for end-of-life care well in advance.

But if your health has deteriorated quickly, you can get the ball rolling and ask for a free care needs assessment by visiting **[www.gov.uk/apply-needs-assessment-social-services](http://www.gov.uk/apply-needs-assessment-social-services)**.

A social worker or occupational therapist will phone or visit you to ask questions about your health, care needs and how well you are managing.

The assessment is your opportunity to have your say about the help you need so it is vital to include everything, even if you do not consider it to be important. These details ensure that the care plan matches your needs as closely as possible.

## Preparing for a care needs assessment

It is a good idea to make a list of what you wish to say beforehand so that you do not forget anything. If the assessment is for you, perhaps enlist the help of a relative or someone else who knows you well.

Your requirements will be measured against your local authority's needs criteria. These vary and are published on local authorities' websites, so have a look at them and try to use the same words to describe your own needs, where possible. Remember that the person doing the assessment will only be able to consider 'presenting' needs – those that are mentioned or apparent during the assessment.

Take friend or relative with you during the assessment. They can help if you find it difficult to explain the situation, take notes in case you find it hard to remember or follow what is said, and mention things that you might forget.

You can find out more about the process by visiting:  
**[www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/care/arranging-care/care-needs-assessment](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/information-advice/care/arranging-care/care-needs-assessment)**

To apply for a care needs assessment, see:  
**[www.gov.uk/apply-needs-assessment-social-services](http://www.gov.uk/apply-needs-assessment-social-services)**

Which? has a useful guide to preparing for a care needs assessment and this is available via:  
**[www.which.co.uk/late-life-care/carers-and-caring/needs-assessment/preparing-for-the-needs-assessment-aydxs7j47udr](http://www.which.co.uk/late-life-care/carers-and-caring/needs-assessment/preparing-for-the-needs-assessment-aydxs7j47udr)**

**Whether you are choosing a care home for yourself or for a member of your family, you will want to be reassured that it is a safe, comfortable place where people are cared for with compassion and dignity.**

When you research or visit a home there are several things to look for to help you decide whether this is the right place for you.

Our handy checklist will help you:

## Location

- Is it easy for friends and family to get to with plenty of free on-site parking or public transport?
- Is there good wheelchair access into and throughout the building and grounds?
- Are there shops and other facilities nearby?

## Environment

- Do the buildings and grounds look well maintained?
- Can you personalise your room with favourite pictures, ornaments and small items of furniture?
- Is there an en-suite bathroom or wet room?
- Does the home have relevant equipment such as hoists?
- Are all the rooms well decorated and clean?
- Are the rooms a comfortable temperature?



- Does it smell of fresh air rather than air freshener masking other smells?
- Are the building and grounds secure?

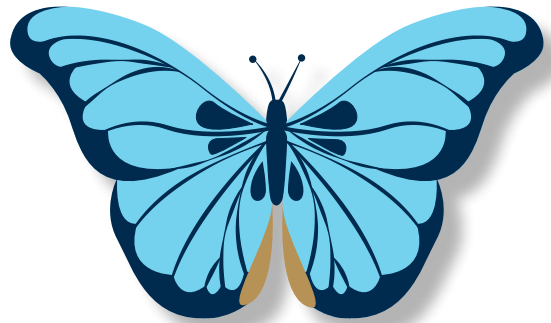
## Staff

- Are the staff welcoming and friendly?
- Are managers and senior member of staff on duty at all times?
- What is the ratio of staff to residents during the day, at night and at weekends?
- Can residents choose if they prefer to have a male or female carer?
- Do the staff know their residents well, and are they interested in their history and preferences?
- Are staff trained in end-of-life and palliative care?
- Are they trained or accredited by the national Gold Standard Framework?

## Residents

- Do the residents seem relaxed and happy?
- Can they have visitors whenever they want?
- Do other residents seem to have similar care needs to your relative?
- If care needs increase can the home still meet them?

- Do residents have a member of staff responsible for their individual care needs?
- How does the home support residents with sensory impairments or dementia?
- Can residents choose their routine – like when they get up and go to bed?
- Can they choose whether to have a bath or a shower, and how often?
- Does the home use something like the ‘butterfly’ motif to signal to other residents, staff and visitors that someone is approaching end of life and needs extra peace and compassion?
- Ask about how residents’ food choices are catered for and whether any religious, ethnic or cultural needs are met. What about special requirements, such as allergies/intolerances or a puréed diet?



These are some of the most common questions that our Canford Healthcare home managers are asked during show arounds.



## One of the big questions around choosing a care home for yourself or your loved one is – how will it be paid for?

Depending on your circumstances, there are many different answers, and it may seem daunting to have to find your way around all the different possibilities. To help you through this, we have put together a comprehensive finance guide that you can download at [www.canfordhealthcare.co.uk/library](http://www.canfordhealthcare.co.uk/library).

### Who will pay?

The care needs assessment also acts as the first step towards determining who will pay for care.

Local authority support is means tested. So if your assessment shows that you need care services, your local authority will look at your finances to determine whether you should pay some, or all, of the cost of your care. If your local authority has assessed you as needing care it will carry out the financial assessment.

Most people, even those eligible for some help from the NHS or their local authority, will need to cover some of the cost of their care.

Currently, if you have savings or property worth more than £23,250 you are likely to have to pay at least some of your care home costs



from your own income or by re-mortgaging or selling any property that you may own. If you have assets worth between £14,250 and £23,250 then the local council will fund some of your care with you contributing the rest.

If you have savings of less than £23,250 and a property, your local authority must disregard the value of your property for the first 12 weeks of your moving into the care home on a permanent basis.

In these circumstances the local authority will pay your care home fees for 12 weeks or until your

property sells, if sooner. How you choose to fund your care is very much based on your own personal situation, so we advise you to get independent financial advice from a qualified source.

## NHS continuing healthcare

You may also be eligible for care funded by the NHS, which can pay for some or all your care if your needs are specifically health related. Your needs will be assessed and your own views about what support you need will be considered. Talk to a doctor, nurse or other healthcare professional who will carry out an initial assessment.

If you are not assessed as eligible for NHS continuing healthcare, you may still qualify for NHS funded nursing care. This pays a flat-rate contribution towards the cost of your care directly to the nursing home.

For more detailed information about NHS and local authority care assessments, eligibility criteria and financial assessments visit:

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/money-work-and-benefits/when-the-council-might-pay-for-your-care](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/money-work-and-benefits/when-the-council-might-pay-for-your-care)

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/money-work-and-benefits/nhs-continuing-healthcare](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/money-work-and-benefits/nhs-continuing-healthcare)

[www.gov.uk/government/collections/nhs-continuing-healthcare-and-nhs-funded-nursing-care](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/nhs-continuing-healthcare-and-nhs-funded-nursing-care)

This leaflet is part of a series designed to help people understand more about making safe and informed decisions about palliative and end-of-life care, how to find the best care home for you or a loved one and deal with some of the practicalities such as making a will or putting legal safeguards in place.

Visit our resource library for our other leaflets:  
[www.canfordhealthcare.co.uk/library](http://www.canfordhealthcare.co.uk/library)

October 2020



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