

Better home care for older people

A quick guide for people who arrange their own home care



80% of people using home care services are over 65 and the number of people funding their own care is expected to grow over the coming years.

You will find this quick guide useful if you are paying for care yourself or receiving direct payments from your local authority.

What can you expect from a good home care service?



The care you get should reflect **what you want and what you have agreed** with the agency. The care should take into account what you feel you can do and what you want to be able to do.



You should feel comfortable around your care workers. They should **get to know you and be familiar with your needs** including how you like to communicate and your likes and dislikes.



Your care worker should respect your **cultural and religious values** (regarding food, for example) and make sure that your needs are met.



Your care workers should have **the right skills** to meet your needs. They should be able to support you, for example if you have dementia, are deaf, blind or deafblind, or need help coping with bereavement.



Your care agency should let you know in advance if a **different care worker** is coming to visit you.



You should have a **care diary** to keep in your home. Home care workers and others who help you at home (like community nurses and physiotherapists) should update it every time they visit.



You should have a **home care plan** that describes the care the agency will be providing and is focused on the things that are important to you. If you have specific health problems or disabilities the plan should take these into account.



The agency should **review the plan** with you within six weeks of your first care visit to make sure that you are happy with it. After that, the plan should be reviewed at least once a year.

The **home care plan** should be clear and concise and include information about:



Your health, medicines and pain management.



Skin care and other support to help you stay well.



Keeping you safe.



What will happen if your home care worker is late, or unable to visit you.

Information available to you



Your local council social services department should tell you how you can find information about the care services available in your area. They may also suggest other options, such as:



Employing a live-in care worker.



Employing a personal assistant.



Using telecare.

Find information about home care services in your area by using:

- [Find home care services](#) – NHS Choices
- [Find services in your local authority area](#) – Care Quality Commission
- [Find a homecare agency](#) – United Kingdom Homecare Association



If you have direct payments, your local council social services department should give you the support and information you need to manage your payments effectively.

What to do if you are not happy with the standard of your home care



Step 1: Try an informal approach first. Explain to the agency why you are not happy with your care and what you would like to happen to make it better.



Step 2: If this doesn't work, the next step is to make a formal complaint. The agency should have their complaints procedure on their website and in other formats, such as leaflets.



Step 3: If you are in receipt of a direct payment and are not satisfied with the agency response, you may be able to complain to your local authority, depending on how the payment is managed. (Check with your local authority.)



Step 4: If you are not satisfied with the agency's or local authority's response to your complaint, you can ask the [Local Government Ombudsman](#) to investigate.



Step 5: You can also raise your concerns with the [Care Quality Commission \(CQC\)](#). The CQC regulates home care in England.



Making a complaint can be stressful, so you could ask for support from a friend, family member or advocate. You can get information about advocacy from social services.

Further information

[Home care: delivering personal care and practical support to older people living in their own homes](#) – NICE guideline

[Home care: delivering personal care and practical support to older people living in their own homes – information for the public](#) – NICE

[Home care for older people](#) – NICE quality standard

[How to find the help you need at home](#) – Age UK

[Care services in your home](#) – NHS Choices

[Paying for your own care and support](#) – NHS Choices

[Code of practice for care provider members of UKHCA](#) – United Kingdom Homecare Association

[What can you expect from a good home care agency?](#) – Care Quality Commission

[Care and support jargon buster](#) – Think Local Act Personal

[Shared Lives Plus](#) – The UK network for shared lives and homeshare

This content has been co-produced by NICE and SCIE and is based on NICE's quality standard on home care for older people and guideline on home care

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