

Make Time Today #3

HOW TO CHOOSE
THE BEST CARE
OPTION AND THE
BEST PROVIDERS
OF CARE

Recent studies show that the 65+ age bracket is growing larger, at a faster rate. There are now more elderly people than young people in the UK. Consequently, the demand for tailored, specialised supervision has increased, resulting in the creation of a variety of care options. These range from solutions to improve quality of life, from full-time intense nursing support, to services that fulfil simpler needs, like social companionship.

Given the diverse array of care services available today, picking the best option and providers of care is challenging in a crowded market. Throughout this #MakeTimeToday care guide, we help you to identify the care options most suitable for your lifestyle and loved one.

Over the course of several chapters, we explore the various kinds of home care (domestic, personal, social and nursing) and care homes (retirement housing, assisted living, nursing homes, etc.) available, providing you with the knowledge to help you make the right choice. Later in the guide, we also explore other support options surrounding care, including social gatherings, meal delivery and companionship services.



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Care option considerations

This chapter is dedicated to helping you determine the right type of care for your elderly loved one given their unique situation. Everyone is different when it comes to care. So it's about assessing your loved one's needs to help you find the most suitable solution.

There is no one size fits all response to care arrangements; every plan must be individually tailored. Each type of home care and specialised care home has its strengths to consider; you'll quickly find that some are far more suitable than others.

We've provided are some of the crucial things you'll need to consider as you move forward and make care plans.

Identify needs and the care that's required

The trigger point itself (as outlined in the [first guide](#) in our care series) is why you and your loved are discussing their future care. As such, it's important to look back on these events to guide you into making an appropriate decision. If your loved one took a fall down the stairs and appears unlikely to make a full physical recovery, assisted living may be the best option. Similarly, if the trigger point occurred during cooking (the stove catching fire, for example) a meal delivery service may suffice, rather than a move into a care home.

Consider where the care is located

Some types of care can be provided within your loved one's home (more on this in the next chapter), but in other scenarios, they may be required to relocate to receive the support they need.

Certain facilities focus just on providing specialised care. This is especially valuable if your loved one is suffering from a condition such as dementia – meaning they can't be left alone for long periods of time. In these cases, you must examine which of these facilities is based nearest to you for ease of access. The closer the better, when it comes to finding a suitable care option. Visiting times will also play a role in choosing a facility, as will the type of professional that works at the care home.

Are specific facilities required?

There are specialist facilities all over the UK for those suffering from conditions that require speciality care. When we think about "specific facilities", advanced equipment and treatment spring to mind. However, this term can also be used to describe added comforts for those without serious medical challenges.

For patients with less intensive requirements, simple amenities should not be overlooked. When searching for a care home, consider things like communal areas, gardens, en-suites, electronics and televisions. These everyday items are sources of luxury and entertainment and help to smooth the transition to care and shouldn't be underestimated.

No matter what the situation may be, a thorough and patient search for care is best for all parties. Ultimately, it's important to note that whatever solution you choose, the comfort of your loved one remains of utmost importance. If they're not completely satisfied, you may need to return to discuss their care further or consider an alternative option.

Choosing the right home care

Care is often associated with moving away from home, but if your loved one is living comfortably and safely enough, it may be possible to bring the care to them.

In surroundings that are familiar and fitting with their own choice of routine, home care can be one of the easier solutions to adjust to.

This chapter covers the different kinds of home care – domestic, personal, social and nursing – with each corresponding subsection outlining the basic roles and responsibilities involved in each.



Domestic

Domestic care involves assistance around the home, including cleaning, shopping, bed-making, laundry, washing up, and errands (such as medical prescription collection). Although these seemingly simple physical tasks might not be impossible for your loved one, for some they can prove extremely difficult due to how regularly they need to be done.



Something as simple as wiping down worktops every day can cause stress and strain on an elderly person; in these instances, it's best to recruit someone who can provide recurrent domestic care services. However, carefully consider the long-term expense of this type of care. As with all forms of home care, your loved one's bills will still need to be paid in addition to the care costs.

Personal

Personal care is often a tentative subject and the area of care that proves most difficult to talk about. Asking for help with things like washing and dressing can be embarrassing for a loved one, and they may not feel comfortable with you providing this assistance.



In these situations, bringing in a professional personal carer could be the best solution. These trained individuals can offer crucial support with washing and dressing, acting as a comforting presence for anyone who wants someone nearby while getting ready. Personal carers can also assist with going to the bathroom, meal preparation, feeding and general assistance with moving around the home.

It's important to bear in mind that your loved one may not have one regular carer, so if familiarity is important to them be sure to include the provision of a dedicated member of staff as a stipulation when arranging this care.

Social

Social care can be as equally important as any other type, with companion and sitting services actively boosting the mood and quality of life of an elderly person. Social care can prove particularly beneficial following a trigger point, increasing confidence and improving mental wellbeing.

Social care also involves services like medication reminders, daytime activities and accompanied trips out.

While this level of socialisation may be adequate for some; your relative may still experience periods of loneliness on returning to their home or after the companion has left.



Nursing

If your loved one needs medical support that falls outside of the skillset of a typical care professional, you may need to look for nursing assistance.

With a trained nurse on hand, this individual will be able to receive the medical care they need, including dressing changes, medication administration, bowel and bladder management, and regular health checks.

If you do believe your loved one needs to move away from their home to enjoy a better quality of life, you may be looking into the different types of care facilities and residences available. There are many to choose from, and our next chapter is dedicated to describing them in detail.



Choosing the right care home

Whenever a trigger point diminishes your loved one's ability to perform a variety of modest tasks, it may be best for them to relocate from their current residence and find a suitable care home.

There's a good chance you won't be intimately familiar with care homes, and you may never have visited one previously. These premises come in so many different shapes, sizes and styles that they are grouped by name and nature only. Therefore, it's worth familiarising yourself with the different types of care home, as this will help you and your loved one to realise which one is best for the circumstances.

This chapter of our guide offers a detailed outline of the different types of care homes available.



Different types of care homes available:

Sheltered or retirement housing

Sheltered or retirement housing are self-contained flats or bungalows in a complex shared by elderly or disabled people, usually with wardens or staff visiting the site to keep an eye on residents. One of the most appealing things about sheltered housing is that it offers freedom and flexibility, with your loved one having company in the form of fellow residents.

However, there are service charges to consider, and if your loved one is in a particularly frail condition, the warden may take too long to arrive in an emergency. For those in a reasonable physical and emotional state, sheltered housing can be an excellent option. However, if your loved one is struggling in these areas, there may be more appropriate care homes available.

Extra care housing

Extra care housing offers elderly people their own self-contained section within an estate comprised of similarly aged residents. With extra care housing, support services are on hand 24/7, with the option to participate in social activities and have meals provided if available and desired.

If your loved one can move around freely and live somewhat independently, but you're worried about their wellbeing, extra care housing can prove a good move. For those who are visibly weak, however, this option should be avoided, as more intense care will be required.

Assisted living

Similar in style to extra care housing, assisted living involves moving into a specialist complex known as an assisted living facility, with carers on site taking care of residents. While extra care housing is only available following a joint assessment by Social Services and the local authority's housing department, assisted living schemes can be purchased or rented on a private basis.

Assisted living often doesn't come with extensive medical care, and some elderly people find it challenging moving into these premises due to the people around them. While they are good for socialising, some feel as though they lose a sense of privacy. Consider your loved one's feelings in these areas before heading down this route.

Close care

Close care schemes are a modern adaptation of assisted living and extra care housing, essentially acting as a midway point between light care and intensive support. With close care, your loved one will be housed in their own flat on the same site as an actual care home. This allows them to live independently but have help on hand when they need it.

This is a good option for an elderly loved one who is currently capable of living with minimal support, but who is likely to enter a care home in due course.

Respite, convalescence and rehab

Respite care involves sharing your care responsibilities with a trained professional. This can be provided as a live-in service or by visiting a particular location. Convalescent care and rehabilitation are special care programmes designed for those recuperating from an injury or illness.

You may find any of the above to be appropriate if your loved one has recently experienced a bout of poor health brought on by a trigger point. However, they are often seen to be temporary solutions, with a different form of care required once your loved one has recovered.

Daycare

Daycare facilities provide activities for elderly people and present them with opportunities to socialise. They are great for anyone who lives alone and those who want to get out of the house and spend time with others of a similar age.

However, these facilities are not suitable for people who need round-the-clock care or medical support as they might not have the necessary specialist staff working on the site. Daycare is offered in private care homes and by social services or charities – whether that's at a daily or occasional service.

Alongside these facilities, additional support options are also available – either in conjunction with care homes or as separate services altogether. Further support options can offer flexibility that fills the gaps in different services.

Care homes (residential homes)

Residential care homes are buildings with several residents living under one roof, all of whom have their own private room. They are free to move about as they please within the care home, with carers hosting social activities at various points throughout the week. Staff are on duty 24/7, and there are a lot of opportunities for companionship.

However, when your loved one does enter a care home, there will inevitably be an adjustment period. This may prove a little uncomfortable for some. There is also cost to consider – care homes such as these can cost on average £29,270 per year which will either be paid by your elderly relative or if they don't have the necessary funds or assets then they may require financial support from family or friends, which may include yourself.

Care homes with nursing

Care homes are facilities with professionally trained nurses administering medical care for residents on a day-to-day basis.

The clear benefit of entering a care home with nursing is that there are higher levels of support available for your loved one, with professionals with excellent medical knowledge on hand to assist whenever it is needed. However, these facilities tend to cost a little more money, and this may be an unnecessary expense if your loved one is in reasonable health.

Other support options

Not every type of care involves assisting the elderly with mobility or medication. In fact, there are many other support options which are completely dedicated to taking care of their emotional wellbeing, rather than the physical side of things.

In this section, we explore some of the other support options that are worth deliberating. These will appeal most to those who need light or intermediate care. For instance, someone who is independent but finds cooking difficult or impossible.



Lunch clubs

Lunch clubs are social gatherings that tend to congregate once or twice a month. While these occasions are themed around nutritious and tasty meals for elderly people, they aim to bring people together for a chance to communicate with one another. This can be especially worth considering if loneliness is something your loved one suffers from, or if they have recently lost their partner.

There are a wide variety of lunch clubs to choose from. Your loved one may need to visit a couple of different clubs to see which is right for them, as much of the fulfilment comes down to bonding with fellow members. If your loved one is seeking companionship, you should start looking for a lunch club together. You may even want to come along yourself to help them get settled in.

Meal delivery

If your elderly loved one has trouble cooking or shopping, an excellent option is meal delivery. These services (commonly referred to as "meals on wheels") involve taking full plates of food straight to your loved one's door, meaning they don't need to do any of the cooking or preparation work themselves.

There are many varieties of meal delivery service available in the UK, so you'll need to join your loved in assessing which one is best for them. It may also be a case of trial and error, sampling a few meals from one service before trying another.

Befriending services

Loneliness should never be synonymous with old age. Being in care does not mean you necessarily prefer being on your own. In fact, many elderly people yearn for company.

As much as you would like to be around your loved one all the time, being there 24/7 is impractical – especially if you live far away or have a hectic schedule to stick to. That's where befriending services come in handy.

Arrangements are made for someone to pay regular visits to your loved one. In many cases, those who take advantage of these schemes find themselves with a new best friend in later life – which makes a huge difference to their overall wellbeing.

Support for military personnel and their dependents

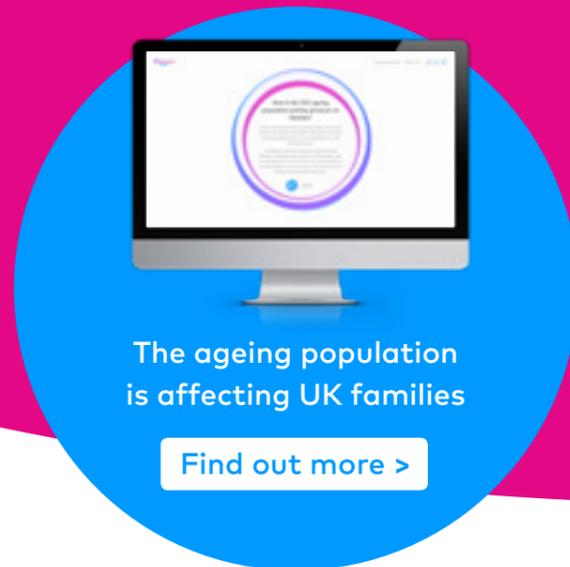
There may be additional support available for your loved one if your family has connections to the armed services. Current and former military personnel are entitled to extra care in certain circumstances, and there may even be added financial assistance available.

Deciding on the right type of care for your elderly loved one should be a careful, considered process, not a snap decision.

As you proceed to choose a care option that gives your relative the appropriate degree of support, don't hesitate to involve us in the conversation. Our independent Care Advice service can help provide support and work towards getting the best quality of life for your loved one in the future.

You'll probably have a lot of questions when it comes to selecting a care option and providers of care. Our members can access our Independent Care Advice Service, offering knowledge and experience to best answer your questions.

We understand this can be a stressful period, but it's important not to rush into any decisions.



The ageing population is affecting UK families

[Find out more >](#)

Thank you for reading our guide: Make Time Today #3 How to choose the best care option and the best providers of care.

Guide 4 focuses on paying for care and getting your affairs in order. Download our next guide: [Make Time Today #4 Paying for care and getting your affairs in order.](#)

Our #MakeTimeToday guides have been created alongside our specialist partner [Grace Consulting](#), an independent care advice service that helps people make the best possible care decisions.

Don't miss any of our other free #MakeTimeToday guides, covering a range of care topics, they are available to download here:



#1
The trigger points for elderly care



#2
How to approach the care conversation



#4
Paying for care and getting your affairs in order

If you have any questions about Benenden Health's services or would like to know more about how Benenden Health can support you with caring for an elderly loved one, remember that our supportive teams and their staff are always here to help.

Call us on 0800 414 8205 or send a message via our [online contact form](#). We'll happily assist with any enquiry you may have.

 0800 414 8205
 www.benenden.co.uk

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Benenden Healthcare

Membership is available to anyone over the age of 16 who is normally resident in the UK. Members can add family and friends to their membership regardless of their age. Some services have a six month qualifying period.

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