



20 Questions to Ask When Visiting a Care Home



A practical checklist for any care home visit



Take this booklet with you when visiting a care home - any care home, not just ours. Use it to ask consistent questions, record what you hear and compare homes with confidence. There is space throughout for your notes and observations.

Care home visited:

Address:

Date visited:

Shown around by:

Who came with you:

Care and support

1. How is my relative's care plan put together, and how often is it reviewed?

Listen for: a clear description of an individual assessment process, and a specific review frequency (e.g. monthly), not a vague 'we keep an eye on things.'

2. How are individual needs and preferences actually understood and recorded?

Listen for: mention of getting to know someone's history and preferences, not just their care needs.

3. What is the current CQC rating, and when was the home last inspected?

Ask to see the full report, not just the headline rating. A confident, specific answer is a good sign.

Daily life and personal choice

4. What does a typical day actually look like?

Listen for specifics - mealtimes, activities, rest - rather than a single generic answer.

5. How much choice do residents have over their own daily routine?

Ask what happens if someone wants to get up later, or skip a planned activity.

Staff and communication

6.	How are staffing levels decided, and do they change at night?

7.	What training do staff receive, and how often does it continue after induction? Ongoing training matters more than a one-off certificate.

Staff and communication

8.	How will my family be kept informed, and how quickly would we be told about a concern?

9.	How available is the Home Manager, and who do we contact if they're not there?

Meals and activities

10.	Can dietary needs and personal food preferences both be accommodated? Ask about an alternative if the day's menu isn't to someone's taste.

11.	How personalised is the activities programme? A single fixed schedule for every resident is worth noting as a caution; genuine flexibility around individual interests is a good sign.

Bedrooms and shared spaces

12.	What can be brought to personalise a bedroom, and are there any safety rules to know about?

13.	What outdoor space is available, and how often do residents actually get outside?

Health, safety and visiting

14.	How would the home respond if a resident became unwell or needed to go to hospital? Ask who would assess them, when family would be contacted, and how important information would be shared with health professionals.

15.	What are the visiting arrangements, and are there any times it's best to avoid?

Fees and agreements

16.	What's included in the weekly fee, and what's charged separately? Can we have this in writing? For more detail on fees, see our fees guide: [LINK TO LENORE CARE FEES GUIDE]

17.	How and when are fees reviewed, and how much notice would we get of an increase?

18.	Is there a trial or settling-in period, and what does it actually involve?

Overall impressions

19.	How does the home support a new resident during the first few weeks? Listen for a described process, not just reassurance that 'people settle in fine.'
20.	If we had a complaint or concern, what would actually happen?

What did you notice during the visit?

A checklist of questions only tells part of the story. A few things worth paying attention to as you look around:

- ☐ Did staff speak directly and warmly to residents, using their names?
- ☐ Did residents look comfortable and engaged, rather than simply present?
- ☐ Did the atmosphere feel calm rather than rushed?
- ☐ Did staff seem to know individual residents, not just 'the residents' as a group?
- ☐ Did the environment feel clean and cared for?
- ☐ Did people's privacy and dignity seem genuinely respected - knocking before entering a room, for example?
- ☐ Was it easy to move around the building, including for someone with limited mobility?

Other things you noticed:

Final reflection

What felt positive about this visit?

What concerns remain?

What still needs checking before a decision?

Could you imagine your relative - or yourself - living here? ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure yet

Agreed next step:

This checklist is designed to help you ask useful questions and compare what you find. It's a support for your own judgement, not a replacement for it - a second visit, a conversation with current residents' families where possible, and professional advice where needed all matter too.

Lenore Care homes

Arden House , Pickering, North Yorkshire	01751 473 569
Birch Hill, Norham , Berwick-upon-Tweed	01289 382216
Carntyne , Hexham, Northumberland	01434 600195
Kendal House , Whitley Bay, Tyne & Wear	0191 297 0093
Melbury House , Seaham, County Durham	0191 581 8609