



Choosing the *right care.*

With so many options to choose from, finding the right care partner can be a challenge.

Which agency is right for you and your needs?

We've compiled a list of questions we think you should be asking, to give you the full picture so you can make an informed choice.

Questions to ask about your needs...

- How will you match the most suitable Carer with my needs?
- How do you ensure you are able to find a Carer who can visit at the time I need care?
- What happens if I don't get on with the Carer? Can I request a different Carer?
- What happens in the event of a medical emergency? Will my Carer stay with me until help arrives? Will they notify me of any problems?
- Will you help me with other appointments and making best use of other services, like NHS etc?
- How will the Carer get into my home if I can't get to the door? How will that information be kept secure?

Questions to ask about the care workers...

- Do you interview your new Carers and ask for at least two written references before offering them a contract?
- Are all your Carers background checked?
- Will I have the same regular Carer?
- If not, how many different Carers are likely to visit me in a week or month?
- What will happen if my Carer is unable to visit because they are off sick?
- What happens if a Carer can't visit me due to bad weather conditions or heavy traffic?
- What sort of training do your Carers receive? Do they have to work through an induction period? How often is the training updated?
- What qualifications do they have?
- How do Carers keep records of the care that I receive? Are there timesheets for me to sign? Will I get access to the records if I request this? Can family members have access to them too?

Questions to ask about the care agency...

- Do you have a contract for work with private clients? Does it detail care worker roles and responsibilities? Can I see a copy?
- What specialist types of care are you registered to provide, such as dementia or sensory impairments?
- How do you ensure that staff respect my privacy and dignity?
- What happens on weekends and bank holidays? Is care continuous? Do you charge additionally on weekends and bank holidays?
- Do you have a number to call outside of office hours? If we have problems with a Carer or the service provided?
- Is it possible to have for a short trial period initially, to see how it works out?

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- What are your hourly rates?
 - Do you have a minimum charge? Such as a minimum number of hours each week?
 - Can you assist me in getting help with the charges from my Council?
 - How do I pay you and how often is it required? Monthly or weekly?
 - Are there any additional charges? Do your standard charges include National Insurance contributions, travel and any VAT payable?

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- What quality assurance policies and procedures do you have in place?
 - How do you ensure that the quality of care is maintained?
 - What insurances do you have in place? For example, in the event of damage to my property, the Carer making a mistake or having an accident in my home?
 - Do you have procedures in place to protect me from accidents, neglect or self-harm?
 - Do you have cover in place for the way staff handle my money if the care worker shops or pays my bills? Do you instruct staff not to borrow or lend money, not to accept gifts and not take children or their pets into my house without permission?
 - What is your turnover of Care Workers like? A high staff turnover might suggest that staff aren't happy with their employment. If the agency doesn't treat its staff well, can you trust them to provide the best care?

What the agency should ask you

The agency should carry out its own assessment of you and your needs before offering their care plan.

This should include:

- The help you need on a daily basis, including any details of any illness and medication
- Your ability to see, hear and communicate, plus your preferred method of communicating
- Any problems you have with continence or mobility and any equipment you use at the moment
- Your dietary requirements including any preferences
- Any religious and cultural needs that you have
- Any other people who are involved in supporting you
- Details about your mental capacity and whether you are able to make independent decisions about your care, all or part of the time
- Whether anyone else has a legal role such as Power of Attorney in England and Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland to make decisions on your behalf
- Assessing the safety of its care workers visiting your home, as the agency carries health and safety responsibilities for its care workers
- Assessing whether you pose a risk to yourself or others by living at home
- How the care worker would gain access to your house.

If the agency doesn't include these areas in its assessment you should ask them to do so.

