Free interactive guide

Choosing the right home care provider

SweetTree
Home Care Services

"Choosing a quality care provider for yourself or a loved one is a life-changing decision"

Nicki Bones, SweetTree's Director of Operations

Many of the initial calls we receive at SweetTree are from clients and families unsure about the type of support they need, or who are worried about having an as-yet unknown carer providing help at home. We know that it can feel daunting when starting out your search for a home care provider – and we understand how important it is that you feel completely confident with your choice.

When choosing your home care provider, you aren't just trusting them to help you maintain your health, your lifestyle and your well-being - you're also trusting them to help you maintain who you are.

Choosing the right home care provider can transform your quality of life by providing practical and emotional support and companionship - we have credited this guide to hopefully help you in choosing the appropriate home care service for you.

Contents

Researching home care agencies..... Page 4
Prepare a list of your needs and expectations..... Page 5
Think about the amount and frequency of care..... Page 6
Aim for a better quality of life..... Page 7
Obtain financial advice..... Page 8
Gain input from others..... Page 9
Seek professional advice..... Page 10
Read the CQC report..... Page 11
Don't judge a book entirely by it's cover..... Page 12
Ask for an assessment..... Page 13
If you have time, ask to meet your carer first..... Page 14
Be sure you are happy with your carer..... Page 15
Check the carer has the appropriate training ..... Page 16
Ask if the care team will be consistent ..... Page 17
Is the service flexible enough..... Page 18
What is the protocol for emergencies..... Page 19

Whether you would benefit from having a carer for a few hours a week to help around the house, or you require live-in support for more specialist care, it's hugely important to take your time and do your research first to ensure that the home care provider you select can fully meet your needs.

You might want to ask a family member or close friend to help you evaluate the various home care options in your area.

Online directories are available to search for care services locally. Simply pop in your preferred location and preferences as instructed.

The logos below link to industry recommended directories

homecare.co.uk

Care Quality Commission

Proud member of AGE UK LONDON Business Directory www.saferservices.london

UKHCA UNITED KINGDOM HOME CARE ASSOCIATION

Back to contents page

Prepare a list of your needs and expectations

Make a list of all your needs, tasks, key questions, expectations and of course concerns you might have - be ready for that initial conversation with care providers.

It's worth considering how your needs may change over time and if the home care provider has the capacity to increase the amount of care in the future - Can they provide flexible care? Are there charges involved?

Have you considered live-in care?

Live-in care can provide reassurance through 24 hour support in the comfort of your own home - and can often be a cheaper option to residential homes. Check that any potential provider offers a live-in care service, this may be helpful on a temporary or permanent basis in the future.

Download our helpful checklist.

Back to contents page

Think about the amount and frequency of care

Most people requiring care for the first time wont know the hours of support they require straight away.

Think about how much care you are likely to need during each visit, find out if the home care provider has sufficient resources to meet your requirements. Do they have an hourly minimum support visit? Can this visit incorporate light household chores? Will the carer have enough time to perform their duties? Would a shorter visit be challenging if you are feeling tired or unwell?

If you can commit to a few hours of care for each visit, this will give the carer time to get to know you and your preferences.

SweetTree provide a minimum of two hours' care per visit (regardless of the frequency of visits) to enable staff to provide comprehensive care.

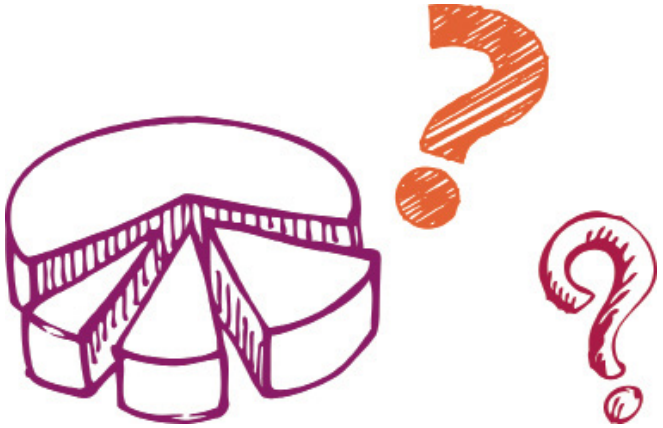
Rather than simply ensuring the care provider can meet your needs, it's also worth viewing home help as an opportunity to improve your quality of life.

Look for home care providers that offer an innovative approach to care that enables you to socialise, engage with your local community and pursue interests.

If care provider only looks at very basic health and hygiene needs, can high quality care be achieved? If your culture, preferences and interests are considered a carer can truly understand you and what makes you happy.

'Consider whether the home care service you are receiving improves your quality of life. If not, we probably shouldn't be there'

Nicki Bones,
Director of Operations



Find out what support is available to you, as you may be entitled to financial help. Start with the **social care system**. This means contacting your local authority (council) and asking for an assessment of your care needs – this is called **a 'Needs Assessment'**. The care is means tested, so any assets you have (including savings and the value of your home) will be considered by the authority. You might be eligible for care but be expected to fund it yourself.

You may also be eligible for **Attendance Allowance** or **NHS Attendance Allowance** is funded by **the Department of Work & Pensions** and is tax-free and not means tested. **NHS Continuing Care** is a package of care funded by the NHS if you are assessed as having a primary health need.

Did you know?

Your local authority is obliged to provide you with access to good quality information about help and support that might be available.

Find your local authority by postcode

Gain input from others

If you have friends or relatives who have employed a home care provider, talk to them about their experiences and what has worked for them.

- What have they found most beneficial and what pitfalls have they encountered?
- What process did they go through to ensure they made the right decision?
- Would they recommend the home care provider they are currently using?

Nicki Bones
Director of Operations

'You should definitely talk to other people who have received care at home to find out what home care really looks like in your community and attempt to find out where the best services are.
And don't forget how important it is to involve a family member or close friend when doing your research – it can be invaluable to have someone to talk things over with and they may well come up with questions you hadn't thought of'

Seek professional advice

If you do not know of anyone who has used a home care provider, then seek advice and support from local healthcare professionals.

Talk to your GP or your district nurse as they will have had experiences of home care providers. Local carer networks and groups can also be an invaluable source of information.

Carers UK is a charity aimed at making life better for carers and can provide advice by email or phone nationwide.

Did you know?

SweetTree's assessments and on-going reviews are free of charge with no obligation.

Please contact a member of the team if you would like some initial advice or support.
Tel: **0207 624 9944**

Every home care provider will have regular inspections of its services or facilities from the **Care Quality Commission** (also known as CQC). The Care Quality Commission produces a report – known as a CQC Report – that rates the quality of the service in terms of whether it is safe, effective, caring, responsive and well-led.

Care Quality Commission

This means that the CQC will have checked that the service protects clients from harm, offers treatment and support that achieves good outcomes and that staff are compassionate and services are organised so they are able to meet your needs.

CQC also check whether the leadership and management of the care home provider enables the service to provide high-quality care. It's advisable to choose a home care provider with a positive rating in all five categories to improve your chances of receiving the best possible care.

Home care providers publish CQC reports on their website and you can also find them on the Care Quality Commission's website by searching for the name of the care provider.

Don't judge a book entirely by its cover!

When carrying out your research, you may find that a company's marketing material says all the right things and gives you the answers you want to hear. However, it's important not to rely solely on brochures or other printed marketing material when it comes to making your final decision.

It's important to make your decision based on the interaction you have with the home care team. That first phone call should be the start of a friendly dialogue and the home care provider should be able to answer your questions in detail when you first make contact.

Rita Malone
Director of Older Persons Services

"Glossy brochures or fancy websites do not necessarily reveal the reality of the challenges of the day-to-day provision of care"

Ask for an assessment

Before accepting someone as a new client, home care agencies should make every effort to get to know you and your individual requirements.

They should offer to come and see you at a convenient time and discuss your needs in detail.

The prospective home care provider should provide you with a comprehensive assessment, asking very relevant questions – not just about medical needs or care needs or risk assessments.

The assessment questions should look at quality of life outcomes - What will make a difference to the person who is going to be receiving care?

You may want to speak to several home care providers and meet each of them separately before making a decision. Ideally the assessment should be free as you may meet with organisations that you do not choose. It's always best to ask two or three companies to see who you and your family like best.

Back to contents page

Receiving the appropriate care is clearly important, but if you are going to have a regular carer then you need to be sure you'll get along.

Ideally it's best if you have some common interests so that you can chat comfortably and explore those interests, rather than just talking about what you'd like for breakfast.

SweetTree tries to match up people's interests; if a client has an interest in history and modern art, it's possible that the carer we find may have an interest in modern art too. It's important for both parties to consider – Can you have a good conversation about something you both enjoy?

Referring back to the initial care assessment... Did the home care provider ask you those important life questions?

Be sure you are happy with your carer

It's easier for you and the carer if you both have common interests, and having similar values and beliefs will also help your relationship flourish.

For example, if you're an animal lover and you have a pet, you may not feel comfortable having regular contact with a carer who dislikes animals.

At SweetTree our team members have their own personal profile that explains the kind of work they've done in the past and their interests and hobbies.

Check the carer has the appropriate training

This may sound obvious but it's important to ensure that the training and experience of your carer matches your needs.

For example, if you have a specific care need or diagnosis, it is vital to find a carer with relevant experience and training.

- Does the home care provider have specialist services for specific needs such as dementia?
- Is the care team specially trained?
- What experience does the service manager have?
- Do they have input from in-house clinicians?

Ask the home care provider for a testimonial

This is not an unreasonable request. Other clients with similar needs to yours should be happy to recommend the home care provider if they are satisfied with the service. If a service provider can not find a client who is willing to speak to you about the care they deliver, start to question why?

Ask if the care team will be consistent?

While everyone needs to have holidays the key to receiving good care is a consistent relationship with a care team you know and like.

Ask the home care provider if they can provide the same care team (ideally up to two people) with the exception of sickness or holidays, so that you aren't opening your door to carers you've never met.

It's useful for you and the carer if they get to know your family or a key family member, such as a son or daughter who is involved in your care. If everyone communicates regularly, it will benefit you and the carer and enable you to build a stronger relationship.

"A good carer will talk to both the family and the client to find out the things that are important to them when receiving support. It's the small things that often make a huge difference"

Sharon Horvath, Deputy Service Manager

Back to contents page

Is the service flexible enough?

Ensure you are able to choose another carer if you feel that the person caring for you isn't suitable or you don't get along with them for any reason. That you can make changes to your care package and that your care is regularly reviewed for quality assurance.

Can you cancel your care visits at short notice?

At SweetTree, if you wish to cancel your care visit/s please call the office team within 48 hours to avoid any service charges taking place.

Can you change your carer?

SweetTree care packages are designed to be flexible to accommodate changing care needs. Should you wish to make changes to your care package or request a different care team member for any reason, please call the office team so we can action your request.

How can you cancel the services should you wish to?

SweetTree's clients are free to change or end their care and support with SweetTree at no cost with 7 days notice.

"Having a flexible approach to care is at the heart of all our services at SweetTree, that's why our initial assessments and on-going reviews will always be free of charge."

Barry Sweetbaum,
SweetTree Founder and Managing Director

What is the protocol for emergencies?

- Ask the home care provider if they can be contacted in the event of an emergency?
- Can you reach them out of normal office hours?
- What policy do they have if the carer visits you and you feel unwell or need medical treatment?
- What will the provider do if a carer arrives at the clients home and there is no answer?
- Do they have a registered manager to speak to? (This is a CQC requirement)

All home care providers should have a protocol for dealing with unpredictable situations.

"All providers should be happy to send and explain their company policies and procedures relating to emergencies. Don't be afraid to challenge and question anything you do not understand."

Somayeh Tosi, Registered Manager

Back to contents page

For more information, advice or details on how SweetTree can meet your home care needs, speak to one of our team.

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