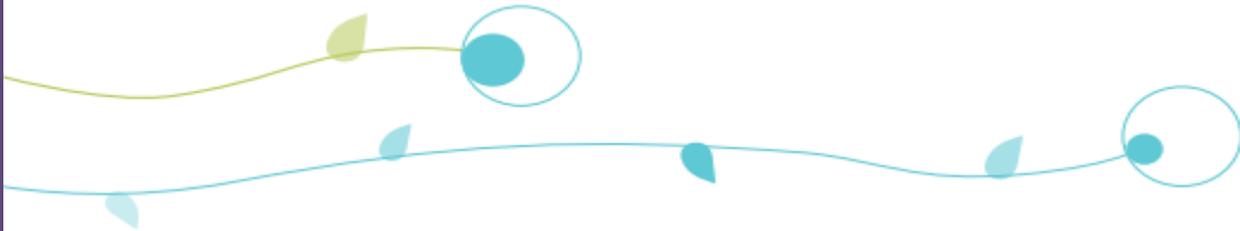


Where to live

Deciding where to live is an important decision. It is not one that should be rushed.



Which is the best option for me?

If you have just been diagnosed, nothing is going to change immediately. So take your time. There are lots of choices available, from staying where you are, to living independently but with help at hand.

Your needs will change over time, but they may change slowly as your dementia progresses. You will probably want to remain as independent as possible for as long as possible. However, you may need to consider where you would prefer to live if you can no longer manage at home and let the people that matter know your wishes.

Some things to think about:

If you moved would you lose the support of family, friends and access to your local community?

Could you remain in your own home if you had more professional care assistance and/or with the help of aids and adaptations?

Is it an option for you to live with someone in your family?

What would you do now, if you had a fall?

Would moving to sheltered or supported accommodation be attractive, but perhaps mean moving away from familiar places and family and friends?

Would moving to a care home mean you could remain close to family and friends, even if it means giving up some privacy?

Would it take pressure off your family if you moved to somewhere with more support, even if it means giving up some independence?

Options to consider



Remaining at home

Continuing to live in your own home can actually be very good for you - living in familiar surroundings and maintaining regular routines gives both reassurance and continuity. Maintaining your independence also encourages you to keep active and occupied. It gives you a sense of achievement and well-being.

If you live alone and have concerns as to how you will cope, there are lots of ways in which you can be supported. You can have help with personal care, with meal preparation and with shopping.

Your local Social Services department should provide information and advice in relation to resources and services that you may want to access. If you are finding it difficult to manage everyday tasks at home, you have a right to ask your council's Social Services department to assess your support needs. Independent Age have produced a useful factsheet, Assessment and Care Services from Your Local Council in England, which is available from their website (www.independentage.org).

There are also a number of charitable and voluntary organisations (including your local church) that might be able to provide advice and practical help. Your local Age UK and Alzheimer's Society are useful starting points.



Living with family

An option may be for you to consider moving in with your family following a diagnosis of dementia. It can provide security, comfort, familiar faces, and financial and emotional benefits for everyone. However, it's worth taking your time over making a decision to change your existing living arrangements, especially if you've just been diagnosed with dementia. You and your family both need time to adjust to the news and gain an understanding of the condition and what it may mean to both you and your relatives.

Don't feel you need to take a decision hastily. Give yourself time to adjust to your new circumstances before making further important life-changing decisions. There is a lot of support available for both you and your family in the event of you deciding go ahead with such a decision. Speak to the Carer's Centre (www.carersuk.org) or your local authority who should be able to help.



If more support is needed

Many people with dementia can continue to live independently in their own home or with the support of their family. However, you may find that as your dementia progresses that you need more support, either in terms of looking after your home or in looking after yourself. There are a number of options available. The key advice is to plan ahead, so that you can choose the option that is right for you.



Assisted living

This is usually referred to as retirement or sheltered housing and is intended for people who are aged 60 or over. They are usually small developments of between 20 and 40 self-contained bungalows or flats, all fitted with personal alarm systems. In addition, there is usually a full- or part-time warden or manager available for help, advice and to provide security. However, the warden does not provide personal care services; these would need to be provided either through Social Services or paid for privately.

The schemes usually have communal gardens, lounges and laundry; some have guest bedrooms for friends and relatives, and some have a restaurant. There is often an element of social activity, such as coffee mornings, whist drives, outings or religious services.

This sort of accommodation could be suitable if you're looking for somewhere smaller and more manageable with the additional security of an on-site warden. Points to bear in mind:

- You may not be able to fit in all your furniture.
- Pets may not be allowed.
- It may be in a strange, new area, away from friends and family.
- You will be living surrounded exclusively by older people.

Sheltered housing can be available to buy or to rent. A useful source of further information is The Elderly Accommodation Counsel (www.eac.org.uk).



Extra care

This is similar to retirement or sheltered housing but has the addition of on-site carers and support staff for people who need help with personal care, such as bathing and dressing, but who are otherwise able to live independently. It can also be called a 'continuing care community'. There is usually a member of staff on-site 24 hours a day.

Accommodation is usually in self-contained flats, and as well as communal facilities such as gardens and laundry, there may also be an activities room, shop and a dining room where meals are provided. In addition, there are often regular activities organised, such as quizzes, music sessions or outings.

Some Extra Care schemes are specifically designed for people with dementia, with a home design that eases problems of confusion and disorientation. As these schemes are still quite new, there is limited availability of this type of accommodation. It can also be rented or owned. A useful source of further information is The Elderly Accommodation Counsel (www.eac.org.uk).



Independent Supported Living

Dementia Care has a number of independent living houses in the Newcastle upon Tyne area that are small self-contained houses or bungalows where groups of 4 or 5 people with dementia live together in their own homes supported by our staff.

People in our care are supported to remain independent for as long as possible. In this way, we can help people to retain the ability to dress, wash, cook, do housework, remain mobile and socially interact.

To find out more about Independent Supported Living you can contact us on 0191 217 3314.



Residential Care

A residential care home is usually a single property (though there may be annexes) where a number of older people live. They vary in size from just a handful of residents to 50 or more. Each resident usually has their own room, increasingly with an en-suite bathroom. In some, staff provide all levels of personal care, such as help with bathing, dressing and moving around, but not usually any nursing care. In others, nursing care is also provided.

All meals are provided and these can be taken either in your own room or in a communal dining room. There are usually communal lounges, activity rooms and areas where visitors can meet residents. Some also provide hair-dressing and chiropody, although this is an extra charge. Regular social activities are usually provided, such as quizzes, card games or 'armchair keep fit'. Some also offer outings.

While care homes provide a high level of 24-hour care and security and most try to do so with care and sensitivity, there can be a loss of privacy. Individual bedrooms can feel small, and you will be surrounded by older people. However, on the plus side, a care home can be a place to make new friendships, find new interests and fresh stimulation. You may find you go out more, and socialise more than you did in your own home, simply because it's much easier and other people are there to arrange things for you. You also no longer have the worry and the effort of having to look after your own home with all the difficulties and hassle that can involve. Some people consider this a blessing!

Some care homes also have separate wings that are specifically for people who need more nursing care or who have a mental illness, such as dementia, and require more specific caring skills and attention. This means that, should your care needs increase, you will not have a major upheaval.

All residential care homes have to be inspected by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). A good place to start looking at care homes is on the CQC website (www.cqc.org.uk). This shows how well a care home is independently rated in terms of the care provided. You can also check that they are registered providers and see their most up-to-date inspection report.



What does a good care home look like?

Here are some things to think about when looking at a care home:

Are there plenty of staff around, and are they interacting with the residents or are residents left alone for long periods?

Are staff running around with no time for residents, or are they always willing to stop and chat with residents?

Does the home have a smell, or does it feel warm and fresh?

Is it clean?

Is there a garden?

Can you keep pets?

Do residents have personal alarms, and are there plenty of alarm or call buttons in bedrooms and the public areas?

Are individual food preferences catered for, and is the food freshly cooked (as opposed to brought in)?

Can residents choose to get up and go to bed when they want?

Is there a variety of regular activities (outings, games, music afternoons, keep fit etc.)?

Do residents look clean and well-dressed (no mismatched socks or shoes, or food spillages on clothing)?

Will the staff allow you to ask some of the residents what it's like living there?

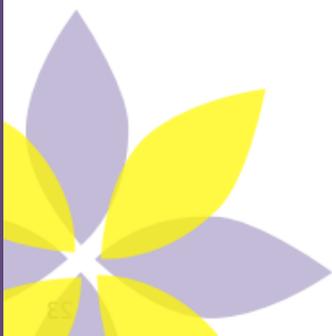
Can individual bedrooms be personalised, for example with pictures, ornaments, small items of furniture?

Can friends and family visit at any time, and take residents out?

What sort of care is provided through the night? How many staff are on the premises, and how often do they check on residents?

Do any staff have special dementia care training? What happens if a person's dementia deteriorates - can they remain there, and what additional help would they get?

Do the staff mind you asking lots of questions? If they do mind or seem abrupt, it's probably not the right place.



Support organisations

For more information or advice, please call Dementia Care on 0191 217 1323 and ask to speak to one of our Dementia Guides. They offer free face-to-face support for people with dementia and their families in Newcastle upon Tyne, Hexham and the surrounding areas.

A variety of support groups will exist in your local area. To find out who they are and how to contact them, it may also be useful to contact some of the national organisations listed here:

Age UK
www.ageuk.org.uk
or call 0800 169 2081

Alzheimer's Society
www.alzheimers.org.uk
or call 0845 300 0336

The Lewy Body Society
www.lewybody.org
or call 0131 473 2385

Carers UK
www.carersuk.org
or call 0808 808 7777

The Princess Royal Trust
www.carers.org
or call 0844 800 4361

Concerns regarding financial or other abuse of a vulnerable person

If you have any concerns regarding financial or other abuse of a vulnerable person, you should contact the Office of the Public Guardian:

PO Box 16185
Birmingham
B2 2WH
Tel: 0300 456 0300 or
Email: customerservices@publicguardian.gsi.gov.uk

Opening hours:
Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday - 9 am to 5 pm
Wednesday - 10 am to 5 pm

