



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

# Supporting people at the start of their care home journey

*A Warm Welcome...*



# A Warm Welcome...

When someone is faced with the decision of whether to leave their home and move into residential or nursing care, it can be a difficult and anxious time for them and their loved ones. Once they begin to explore care home options, it can be even more overwhelming as they try to ensure that they make the right choice for their individual needs.

You can help to support people through those often daunting early days by providing clear, upfront and accessible information about your care home in a dedicated 'welcome pack.'

Creating a 'welcome pack' gives potential residents, family members and independent advocates details about what they can expect from life at your care home right at the outset. It's something they'll be able to take away, talk through with others and, if the individual decides to make the move, bring with them to refer to as they settle in.

We've set out a range of suggestions to help you develop your own Welcome pack and give people a warm welcome at the start of their care home journey. This guidance is for you, as care home providers, to use as a framework so that you can ensure your pack covers the issues that matter to residents and their families.

If you already produce a welcome pack or brochure, this framework may provide you with some new ideas for when the time comes to update it.



# A great place to live...

Every care home is different, with its own ethos and its own way of doing things. This is your opportunity to show people what's great about living in your home. Do you have a vision or set of principles that underpin what you do? What do you pride yourself on? What do residents say they like about living there?

You can also use this section to refer to the professional standards that the home and the staff are guided by, providing reassurance to people about the quality of care available. Including a copy of the Code of the Practice for Social Care will help people to understand what they can expect.

You could also explain about the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales' (CSSIW) inspection process and provide an overview, copy or link to the latest report for your home.

## Respecting cultural identity and diversity

It's really important that all residents are treated equally and no one feels discriminated against, regardless of their gender, sexual orientation, race, religion, belief (or lack of religion/belief) or disability.

Are you committed to respecting diversity? Understanding people's social and cultural identities? Getting to know residents as individuals? Then this is an important opportunity to say so.

## Communicating effectively

Good communication is vital in helping people to feel part of the care home community. If people don't speak English as their first language, are there any arrangements in place to support them? If people speak Welsh, are there opportunities for them to engage in Welsh language activities or chat to residents and staff in Welsh?

Good communication isn't just about language. It's also about ensuring people who need help with communicating, perhaps due to sensory loss or as a result of dementia, are actively supported to engage with residents and staff, helping to avoid any feelings of isolation and loneliness. What arrangements do you have in place to provide this?



## Social interaction, hobbies and interests

Some people lead active social lives and want to continue to do so when they move into the care home. For others, care home life can provide an opportunity to join in with activities they haven't been able to before. Having fun, gaining new experiences and keeping busy are all important to a person's well-being. Does your home plan regular social activities, such as outings and holidays? Is there entertainment provided, like games, quizzes or film nights?

If people enjoy watching TV and listening to music, can they access TVs and radios easily? Are there TVs and radios in rooms and/or communal areas? Do you provide a hearing

loop or large sub-titles for those that need them? Are there any musical instruments available, such as a piano or keyboard?

And for people that want some peaceful, more reflective activities, do you offer 'quiet' communal rooms? Are residents and staff encouraged to have one-to-one conversations to help build relationships and strengthen the sense of community?

Do you provide internet access for residents? If so, are there tablets, laptops or computers available to use?

Some people will have their own hobbies and interests that they will want to continue to enjoy within or outside of the home – how do you support residents in doing this?



## Involving families and the local community

Leaving the family home, moving to a new area and not seeing family and friends as often are all concerns that people may have when considering moving into a care home.

That's why it's so important that they understand how families play a role at the home and in their care. For example: How do you support couples and help people to maintain friendships outside

the home? Can family or friends visit at any time? Can they join people for meals or sit with them in the lounge? Are children welcome to visit?

Care homes can play an important part in the local community, forming strong links with youth groups, volunteering schemes and other similar organisations. How is your local community involved in the home? Are there events or social occasions planned with local community groups?

## The day-to-day

It's the small things that really can make a difference. People want to know what the practical arrangements are for day-to-day living, such as laundry services, mealtimes, wash facilities, bedroom furnishings and personal possessions. What's the food like? How much choice do they have each mealtime? Can people get involved with the running of the home if they would like to?

They will also be keen to find out what the policies are on pets, visiting hours, telephone access etc. Are there any restrictions around activities available in both the home and wider community? What night time support is available?

You could highlight here how you support people to maintain their independence and mobility, such as enabling people to use the toilet when they need to.

## “A day in the life”

A good way to help people understand the reality of life in a care home is to use real examples and case studies. Perhaps you could feature a current resident and interview them about a typical “day in the life”? Or you could ask residents to talk about how they settled in, what helped make the move easier and any hints or tips they would offer new people arriving at the home?

## Who's who?

Introducing yourself and your team can help to make people feel more at ease. As well as explaining roles within the home and length of service, include some personal information, such as interests and hobbies, so that people become familiar with the staff and find things that they have in common.

In addition to the welcome pack, you could consider displaying a staff photo board in reception or the communal areas.



## Healthcare

Our health is hugely important to us all. People will naturally have lots of questions about the healthcare support available at the home. You could use this section to tell people about access to healthcare services, including access to GP services and community services. These could include dentists; pharmacists; dietitians; audiologists; optometrist as well as access to social services. You could also point out the GP enhanced service for care homes, which is additional to everyday GP services and improves the quality and continuity of care for residents. It allows the GP to work closely with a range of other healthcare professionals to review and assess medication; falls; podiatry; osteoporosis; diet requirements; hearing; eyesight; pressure areas and mental health.

It's also important to let people know how their care needs will be managed. For example, do you involve residents in planning their care? What arrangements are in place to manage specialist needs?

## Fees and financial arrangements

The costs associated with moving to a care home are often a concern for people and their families. Price lists should be clear and easy to understand, setting out what's included in the rate and what isn't. Make sure you refer to any charges that aren't included in a specific package to avoid any confusion further down the line. It's also a good idea to provide a clear explanation about third party top-ups and how they work.

People may find it useful to understand what support they'll have at the care home to manage their finances or look after valuable possessions. And, although we don't like to think of things going wrong, it would be helpful to include some information on the processes in place to help if they find themselves facing financial difficulties.



*“ We know how important it is to see your family and friends regularly so they’re welcome to visit at any time.”*

## Making a complaint

Residents and their families need to feel safe to complain should the need arise. In the first instance, you should let them know who to speak to in the home about their concerns. Then, outline the routes they can take if they’re still unhappy, such as raising a concern with CSSIW or contacting the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. You can also advise people on how they can access an independent advocacy service.

## Putting your pack together

Once you’ve gathered all the information you want to include, it’s time to think about how your welcome pack is going to be presented. This could be the first impression people get of your care home, so it’s worth taking the time to get it right.

The language you use plays a big part in creating that positive first impression. It should be easy to understand, direct and focused on the individual, setting the tone for a respectful relationship between care home staff and residents from the start. Some examples of this style include:

- “We know how important it is to see your family and friends regularly so they’re welcome to visit at any time.”
- “We actively encourage you to maintain your own hobbies and interests...”

Effective use of colours, images and graphics all help to make the pack engaging and interesting.

## Making it accessible

To give everybody the chance to read your welcome pack, it needs to be accessible for all. Make sure that fonts are easily legible, text is at least size 12, and there is enough of a contrast between the text and background colours to ensure the information is easy to read. You can find more detailed information online to advise you on the recommended fonts, sizes and colours to use.

Having printed copies and an online version will ensure that those with and without internet access are catered for, while providing large print, audio and braille versions will help those with specific requirements.



## Want to know more?

There is a wealth of research available about what makes a good care home experience for residents. If you would like to find out more, take a look at some of the publications below:

### ‘My Home Life: Promoting quality of life in care homes’

A ‘My Home Life’ Bulletin which looks at what is needed to promote quality of life in care homes.

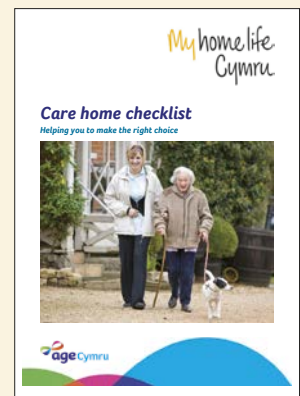
[www.jrf.org.uk/report/my-home-life-promoting-quality-life-care-homes](http://www.jrf.org.uk/report/my-home-life-promoting-quality-life-care-homes)



### ‘My Home Life Cymru: Care Home Checklist’

A bulletin which supports older people in choosing the right care home, including a check list which can give you an idea of the questions people are likely to have.

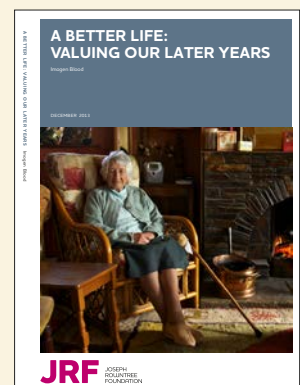
[www.ageuk.org.uk/PageFiles/24831/agecymru%20care%20home%20checklist%20LR%20\(E\)%20.pdf?dtrk=true](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/PageFiles/24831/agecymru%20care%20home%20checklist%20LR%20(E)%20.pdf?dtrk=true)



### ‘A better life: valuing our later years’

A John Rowntree Foundation report into what can help older people with high support needs to improve their quality of life.

[www.jrf.org.uk/report/better-life-valuing-our-later-years](http://www.jrf.org.uk/report/better-life-valuing-our-later-years)



### ‘Magic Moments’

A booklet published by Swansea University’s College of Human and Health Sciences highlighting the ‘magic moments’ that happen in care homes that very often go under the radar.

[www.careforumwales.co.uk/uploads/MagicMoments\\_PDF.pdf](http://www.careforumwales.co.uk/uploads/MagicMoments_PDF.pdf)

