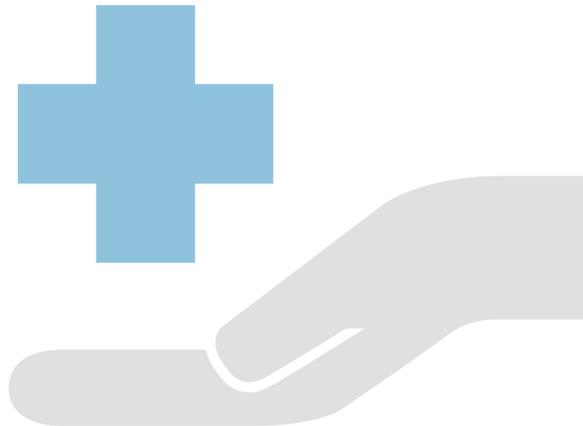


Use this checklist as a guide to what you should ask a home care agency. It is important that you get all the answers that you need.

About the careworkers

- Do you interview your recruits and take up at least two written references before offering them work as a careworker?
- Do all your careworkers undergo a criminal records check?
- Will my relative have a regular careworker?
- What will happen if my relative's regular careworker is off sick?
- What happens if a careworker is unable to get to my relative because of adverse weather conditions or heavy traffic?
- How many different careworkers are likely to visit my relative in a week, or in a month?
- What sort of training do the careworkers receive? Do they have an induction period? How often is their training updated?
- What qualifications and experience do they have?
- Will careworkers keep written records of the care that has been given, and accurate timesheets for my relative to sign? Can copies of the records be sent to me if I want them?



About your relative's needs

- How will you match the most suitable careworker to my relative's needs?
- Will you be able to find careworker(s) that can visit at the time my relative needs care?
- What happens if a careworker and my relative are incompatible? Could a different careworker be requested?
- What happens in the event of a medical emergency? Will the agency careworker stay with my relative until help comes? Will they notify me of any problems?
- How will careworkers get into your relative's home if he/she cannot answer the door? How will that information be kept secure?

About the agency

- Do you have a standard contract for work with private clients? Can we see a copy?
- What are your hourly charges? Are there any minimum charges (such as a minimum number of hours per week)?
- What happens on weekends and bank holidays? Is care provided? Is there an additional charge at these times?
- How is payment required - by cheque, direct debit or some other way? How often is payment required? Monthly or weekly?
- What insurance do you have to protect my relative, for example, in the case of damage to property, the careworker making a mistake, or the careworker having an accident in my relative's home?

About the agency (cont.)

- Are there any extra charges? The prices quoted usually include National Insurance contributions, travel and any VAT payable. Regulated homecare services generally qualify as welfare services and are exempt from VAT. However, this does not apply to introductory agencies or domestic only services.
- What insurance do you have to protect my relative, for example, in the case of damage to property, the careworker making a mistake, or the careworker having an accident in my relative's home?
- How do you ensure quality of care is maintained? What are your quality assurance policies and procedures?
- How will you make sure your staff respect my relative's privacy and dignity?
- Who should we contact (outside office hours if necessary) if we have problems with a careworker or the service provided?
- Is it possible to try you for a short trial period initially, to see how it works out?

Does the agency have following procedures in place?

- To protect my relative from accidents, neglect or self-harm?
- To cover the way staff handle my relative's money if the careworker shops or pays bills?
- To instruct staff not to borrow or lend money, not to accept gifts and not take children or pets into my relative's house without permission?

What the agency should assess

Regardless of whether your relative is engaging an agency via their direct payment or engaging an agency directly (without an assessment from the council), the agency should carry out their own assessment before offering their own care plan. They are likely to look at:

- The help your relative needs and details of any illness and medication.
- Your relative's ability to see, hear and communicate, and their preferred method of communicating.
- Any problems with continence or mobility, and any equipment your relative uses.
- Any dietary requirements and preferences, and any religious and cultural needs.
- Who else is involved in supporting your relative.
- Your relative's mental capacity and whether they are able to make decisions about their care for themselves, all or part of the time.
- Whether anyone else has a legal role to make decisions on behalf of your relative, because they hold power of attorney.
- The safety of careworkers visiting your home, as their employer carries health and safety responsibilities for them.
- Whether your relative poses a risk to themselves or others by living at home.
- Arrangements for getting access to your relative's house.

If they don't carry out an assessment that covers all of these areas, you should ask them to do so.