

Questions to ask when searching for care at home



Every agency promises compassionate high-quality care, but when it is your Mum, Dad, or partner's daily safety on the line, glossy marketing copy isn't enough.

When choosing a home care provider, asking direct, practical questions cuts through the sales talk.

Here is a checklist of essential questions to ask potential care agencies, covering Care Professional consistency, staff vetting, pricing transparency, regulatory checks, and care plan flexibility.

Why is asking the right questions so important when choosing a home care provider?

Asking the right questions is vital because home care agencies vary significantly in how they operate, employ staff, structure their fees, and schedule visits.

No two home care providers are identical. Some agencies rely heavily on short-term agency workers or wide arrival windows, while others focus on dedicated local care teams with fixed visit times.

By asking specific questions early on, you can spot red flags, such as high staff turnover, hidden admin charges, or vague visit schedules before signing an agreement.

What questions should you ask about Care Professionals?

When evaluating an agency ask how Care Professionals are matched to clients, whether visit times are consistent, and how the agency guarantees Care Professional continuity.

Having a steady, familiar face step through the front door makes a world of difference to an older person's confidence. To ensure your loved one won't face a revolving door of strangers, ask potential providers:

- Will my relative have a small, dedicated team of Care Professionals, or will different people arrive each visit?
- How do you introduce a new Care Professional before their first visit?
- What are your arrival windows, and how do you notify us if a Care Professional is running late?
- What happens if my relative doesn't feel comfortable with a particular Care Professional?

Prioritising Care Professional continuity builds genuine trust, turning a practical visit into a comforting, familiar friendship.

How should you ask about staff vetting, training, and recruitment standards?

Ask whether the agency directly employs its staff, what police and background checks are conducted, and what ongoing training Care Professionals receive in specialist areas like dementia or mobility support.

The quality of a home care service depends entirely on the people delivering it. You want complete confidence that anyone entering your relative's home is thoroughly vetted, well-trained, and supported by their employer:

- Are all your Care Professionals directly employed by you, or do you use self-employed contractors or agency staff?

- What background and Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks do you perform before a Care Professional works alone?
- What initial and ongoing training do Care Professionals receive (e.g. dementia care, first aid, moving and handling)?
- How do you support your care team to maintain low staff turnover?

Directly employed Care Professionals who receive fair pay, continuous training, and proper office support deliver far safer, more attentive care than overworked, high-turnover agency workers.

What questions should you ask about home care costs and hidden fees?

Ask for an itemised breakdown of hourly rates, weekend or bank holiday surcharges, travel fees, assessment charges, and cancellation terms to avoid unexpected financial surprises.

Navigating care fees requires clear, upfront numbers. A reliable provider will be completely transparent about their pricing structure from the very first conversation:

- What is your standard hourly rate, and does it change for evenings, weekends, or bank holidays?
- Do you charge extra for travel time or Care Professional mileage?
- Is there an upfront assessment fee or setup charge before care starts?
- What is your cancellation policy if my relative is admitted to hospital or away with family?

For a full breakdown of current funding options and pricing structures, read our guide on: *How much does home care cost in 2026? Asset threshold analysis*

How do you verify a home care provider's safety, regulation, and CQC rating?

Verify a provider's safety by checking their official Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection report, asking about emergency procedures, and confirming how out-of-hours support is handled.

If you are looking for care in England, understanding what the CQC is and does is essential for verifying an agency's standards.

What is the CQC?

The CQC is the independent regulator for health and social care in England. (Equivalent regulatory bodies operate in Wales and Scotland).

What does the CQC do during an inspection?

They inspect care providers across five key pillars to ensure services are safe, effective, caring, responsive, and well-led, publishing official ratings ranging from 'Inadequate' to 'Outstanding'.

When choosing a home care provider, ask these critical safety questions:

- What is your current CQC rating, and where can I read your latest inspection report?
- How do Care Professionals report changes in a client's health or well-being to the office team?
- What is your protocol if a client experiences an emergency or a fall during a visit?
- Is there an out-of-hours phone line managed by a local office team member if an issue arises overnight?

Beyond simply knowing what the CQC is, knowing what the CQC does gives you independent proof that a provider meets strict legal safety standards before you sign an agreement.

What questions should you ask about care plan flexibility as needs change?

Ask how care plans are reviewed, how quickly visit hours can be adjusted, and how the family is involved when health needs fluctuate.

Health and support requirements naturally evolve over time. A good home care provider creates a flexible support plan that adapts smoothly without bureaucratic delays:

- How often are care plans formally reviewed and updated?
- How quickly can visit times or hours be increased if my relative's health changes unexpectedly?
- How do you involve our family in ongoing care decisions and updates?
- Can you provide short-term respite care if family carers need a break or holiday?

Understanding these key review steps completes your checklist, ensuring your family finds a flexible, long-term partner rather than a rigid service.

Restoring your family's peace of mind

Finding the right care for a parent or spouse is about far more than ticking off practical tasks. It is about restoring balance, allowing your relative to live safely at home while enabling you to step down from managing daily care logistics and return to being a loving son, daughter, or partner.



Knowing what questions to ask when searching for care at home equips your family with the clarity needed to make a decision with complete confidence, ensuring your loved one receives dignified, reliable support.

Have questions about setting up home care?

If you are exploring care options for a loved one and want clear, honest answers to all your questions, Radfield Home Care is here to help. Our local teams offer free, zero-pressure care consultations to discuss your family's needs and explain exactly how our visiting support works.

Contact your local Radfield Home Care office today to talk through your options.