CHOOSING LIVE-IN CARE

Preparing your home for a live-in carer: a practical checklist

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IN BRIEF

A live-in carer needs a private bedroom with a comfortable bed and somewhere to keep their things, use of a bathroom and the kitchen, and ideally Wi-Fi or a good phone signal. Before the carer arrives, agree food, household money, house rules and the daily break, check equipment and safety, and tell your home insurer. Then allow time: the first few weeks are about getting to know each other.



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Getting ready, together

A live-in carer is moving into someone's home, and that home is also becoming their workplace. A little preparation helps everyone feel comfortable from the first day. Involve the person who will receive care in every decision you can: it is their home, their routine and their choice.

Your care provider should visit before care starts to assess needs and look at the home. Use this guide alongside that visit.

The carer's room

The carer needs a private room to sleep, rest and keep their belongings. Check that it has:

- a comfortable bed, usually a single, with a good mattress;
- clean bedding and towels (agree who provides them);
- a wardrobe or rail and some drawers;
- curtains or a blind, a bedside lamp and heating;
- a small table or chair if there is room;
- a socket near the bed for charging a phone;
- a door that closes, so the carer has privacy.

Think about distance, too. The carer should be close enough to hear if they are needed at night. If the rooms are far apart, a simple baby monitor or a call bell can help, but agree it with the person first and respect privacy.

Agree how the bathroom will be shared, especially at busy times of day.

Wi-Fi, phone signal and staying in touch

Carers keep in touch with their office, record care, and talk to their own families during their breaks. Wi-Fi or a reliable mobile signal makes this much easier, and some providers use digital care records. Write the Wi-Fi name and password down somewhere easy to find.

Food and household money

Agree in advance:

- who does the food shopping, and how the carer's food is covered, either within the household shopping or as a food allowance;
- any foods the person loves, dislikes or must avoid, and any dietary needs of the carer;
- how household spending will work.

Keep money simple and transparent. Many families use a small cash float or a separate card for shopping, with every receipt kept in a notebook or envelope and checked by a family member. The carer should never be given the person's bank PIN or online banking details. If the person can no longer manage their money, a Lasting Power of Attorney for property and financial affairs lets someone they trust do it for them.

House rules and routines

Every home has its own way of doing things. Talk through:

- the person's routine: when they like to get up, eat, rest and go to bed;
- rooms or belongings that are private or precious;
- heating, laundry, TV and radio, and quiet times;
- smoking (usually outside only, or not at all);
- pets: feeding, walks and vet visits;

- use of the car, if the carer will drive;
- the carer's daily break: when it usually happens, where the carer goes, and who will be with the person if they should not be alone.

Write the main points down. A short welcome sheet is a kindness to every carer, including replacement carers.

A welcome sheet for the carer



Keep one page in the kitchen, and update it whenever things change. Include:

- **About the person:** the name they like to be called, important people, past work, hobbies, faith, favourite music and topics of conversation.
- **A good day:** waking time, breakfast, how they like their tea, newspaper or radio, outings, rest, evening routine and bedtime.
- **Things to avoid:** foods, topics, noises or situations that cause upset.
- **The house:** where to find the stopcock, fuse box, boiler controls, torch, spare keys and bins, and which day the bins go out.
- **Pets:** feeding times, walks, vet details.
- **Money:** how shopping is paid for and where receipts go.

An emergency contacts sheet

Who	Name	Phone
Family contact 1		
Family contact 2		

Who	Name	Phone
GP surgery		
District nurses		
Care provider office and out of hours		
Pharmacy		
Equipment service (for faults)		
Gas, electricity and water emergencies		

Add a note of where the medicines list, any Lasting Power of Attorney and any emergency treatment plan are kept. In an emergency, call 999; for urgent medical advice, call NHS 111.

Equipment that may help

Equipment can make care safer and help the person stay independent. Common items include grab rails, a raised toilet seat, a shower chair, a commode, a profiling bed, a pressure-relieving mattress, and a hoist with slings.

- **Ask for an assessment.** The council's adult social care team can arrange a free home assessment, usually by an occupational therapist, who will recommend equipment and adaptations. You could write: "Please arrange an occupational therapy assessment for [name, address]. [He or she] is finding it hard to [get in and out of the bath, use the stairs, get out of bed], and a live-in carer is due to start on [date]."
- **Small adaptations are often free.** For people who are eligible after an assessment, the council must provide equipment and minor adaptations costing £1,000 or less each free of charge.
- **Bigger changes.** A Disabled Facilities Grant from the council can pay up to £30,000 in England towards adaptations such as a level-access shower or a stairlift. It is means-tested for adults. The council must give a decision within six months, and you may get no grant if work starts before it is approved, so plan early.

- **Loaned equipment.** Keep the phone number for the equipment service handy, so that faults and servicing can be reported quickly.
- **Equipment you own.** If carers will use your own equipment, such as a hoist, health and safety guidance says their employer must make sure it is safe for them to use, so expect your provider to check its condition and servicing records.

Carers must be trained to use any moving and handling equipment. See equipment and home adaptations.

Safety around the home

- Test smoke alarms, and fit a carbon monoxide alarm near any gas, oil or solid fuel appliance.
- Ask your local fire and rescue service whether it offers a free home fire safety visit.
- Clear trip hazards, such as loose rugs and trailing cables, and improve lighting on stairs and in hallways.
- Consider a key safe and a personal alarm, or other telecare, for extra reassurance.
- Agree where medicines will be stored, and keep a current medicines list.
- Put an emergency contacts list by the phone: family, GP, district nurses, the care provider's office and out-of-hours number.

Our home safety checklist goes into more detail.

Paperwork worth sorting out

- **Home insurance:** tell your insurer that a carer will be living in.
- **Car insurance:** make sure the carer is covered if they will drive the person's car.
- **Council Tax:** a live-in care worker on a rota who keeps their own home elsewhere is not normally counted for Council Tax. A carer whose main home is with the person can be disregarded if they give at least 35 hours of care a week to someone getting a qualifying disability benefit and are not their partner. So if the person lives alone apart from the carer, they can usually keep the 25% single person discount. Tell the council about the arrangement and ask it to confirm in writing. See Council Tax discounts for care.
- **Important documents:** keep copies of any Lasting Power of Attorney, advance care plan or emergency treatment plan where they can be found quickly.

Introducing the carer

Tell the person about their carer before the first day, perhaps with their name and a little about them. On the first day:

- have a family member there if possible, to welcome the carer and share the routine;
- show the carer round: the kitchen, heating, water stopcock, fuse box, bins, medicines and equipment;
- share the things that make a good day: favourite foods, music, the newspaper, the morning walk;
- let the person and the carer spend unhurried time together.

For someone living with dementia, keep things calm and familiar. A consistent introduction, a photo by the door and a gentle, predictable routine can all help. See dementia live-in care.

The first few weeks

It takes time to get to know each other, and small adjustments are normal.

- Keep a notebook for questions and observations, or use the daily care record.
- Check in regularly, without hovering, so the person and the carer can build their own relationship.
- Raise any concerns early with the provider, and pass on praise too.
- Make sure the carer's breaks and rest happen as planned.
- Ask for a review of the care plan after the first few weeks. National guidance from NICE recommends that providers review a home care plan within six weeks.

Before day one: a checklist to print

- [ ] The carer's room is ready: bed, bedding, towels, storage, lamp, heating, privacy.
- [ ] Bathroom times agreed.
- [ ] Wi-Fi name and password written down.
- [ ] Keys ready, and a key safe fitted if needed.
- [ ] Food shopping and the carer's food agreed.
- [ ] Household money system set up, with a receipts book.
- [ ] House rules and the daily break agreed.

- [ ] Welcome sheet and emergency contacts sheet in the kitchen.
- [ ] Equipment in place and checked; occupational therapy assessment requested if needed.
- [ ] Smoke and carbon monoxide alarms tested; trip hazards cleared.
- [ ] Medicines stored safely, with a current list.
- [ ] Home insurer told; car insurance checked if the carer will drive.
- [ ] Council told about the carer, and any Council Tax discount confirmed.
- [ ] A family member available on the first day.
- [ ] First review date booked with the provider.

What to do next

1. Work through the checklist above with the person, a week or two before the carer arrives if you can.
2. Ask the council for an occupational therapy assessment early, as waits vary.
3. Share the welcome sheet with your provider so it can brief the carer.
4. Plan the first day, then book the first review.

How we can help

Day and Nightcare provides fully managed live-in care anywhere in England, from £1,550 a week, and has supported people at home since 2008. We are registered with CQC and rated Good. Our free initial assessment is a good time to talk through getting the home ready, and you will receive a written quote afterwards. Call 01865 715780, or read about how live-in care works with us.

Common questions

Does a live-in carer need a double bed or their own bathroom?

No. A comfortable single bed in a private room is usually fine, with clean bedding, somewhere to hang clothes and a drawer or two. An en-suite bathroom is welcome but not essential; sharing a bathroom works well when you agree times, especially in the morning. Ask your provider exactly what it needs, as some have their own minimum standards for the carer's room.

What if we do not have a spare bedroom?

Live-in care needs a private room for the carer to sleep and rest, so a sofa bed in a shared living room is not suitable for long. Families sometimes turn a dining room, study or ground-floor room into a bedroom. If that is not possible, other options may suit better, such as visiting care with a sleep-in or waking night carer, or a care home. A good provider will talk this through honestly.

Does the carer need their own key?

Usually, yes. A live-in carer comes and goes during their break and on errands, so they need a key, and it should be handed back at changeover. A key safe fixed outside, opened with a code, also lets replacement carers, family or emergency services get in if the person cannot reach the door. Keep the code confidential, and change it if you are worried it has been shared.

Will the carer eat with the person?

It depends on what the person would like. Many people enjoy sharing meals with their carer, and eating together can encourage someone with a small appetite to eat more. Others prefer to eat alone or at different times. The carer's daily break is their own time, so they may eat separately then. Talk about it early and write the preference into the care plan.

Sources and further information

- NHS: Home adaptations
- GOV.UK: Disabled Facilities Grants
- GOV.UK: Disabled Facilities Grants, how to claim
- NHS: Personal alarms, monitoring systems (telecare) and key safes
- GOV.UK: Council Tax, who has to pay
- HSE: Care provided in people's own homes
- NICE: Home care, delivering personal care and practical support to older people (NG21)

Read next

CHOOSING LIVE-IN CARE

What is live-in care? A complete guide for families in England

Live-in care explained for families in England: what a live-in carer does day and night, who it suits, breaks and rotas, couples and pets, how it compares with visiting care and care homes, typical costs, funding, regulation and how to start.

Read the guide →

CHOOSING LIVE-IN CARE

A day with a live-in carer: what live-in care looks like

A realistic picture of a typical day and night with live-in care, from the morning routine to bedtime, the carer's daily break and what happens at night, with a sample daily record, the questions to ask and the signs that care needs a review.

Read the guide →

LIVING SAFELY AND WELL AT HOME

Equipment and home adaptations: what is free and how to get it

How to get equipment and home adaptations for an older or disabled person in England: occupational therapy assessments, free council and NHS equipment, Disabled Facilities Grants of up to £30,000, VAT relief, beds, hoists and stairlifts, and how to buy safely.

Read the guide →

All guides in the information centre Check what help you could get

Talk to our care team: 01865 715780

enquiries@dayandnightcare.co.uk · Out of hours: 07775 686272

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Information, not advice: please check anything important with the organisation named.