



UNIVERSITY OF
BIRMINGHAM

Paying care home fees:

What to do next



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What point are you at?

Understanding the care system can be as complicated as solving a puzzle. Identifying what point you're at can help you figure out what comes next.

Searching for a care home

What to expect:

- If you will be self-funding your care then finding information and making decisions can feel like a daunting task.
- If you are being discharged from hospital into a care home, things may feel particularly rushed.

We recommend that you:

- Arrange Lasting Power of Attorney.
- Get independent financial advice so that you don't make decisions you might regret.
- For free advice, search 'Care Confidence' or speak to Age UK.



Living in a care home and paying fees privately

What to expect:

- The council may struggle to find the time to speak with you about money when you still have money left above the £23,250 limit.

We recommend that you:

- Have regular conversations with the care home manager about the rate at which your money is being spent.
- Get your finances in order ready for when you need a financial assessment. Make sure that trusted family members know where to find important documents/records.

If your funds will fall below £23,250 within 3–6 months: Ask for help!

What to expect:

- Possible delays getting a financial assessment and/or a needs assessment.
- You might be advised to stop paying fees at this point. If so, this will be resolved later.
- This can be a stressful and anxious time. Please ask for help and emotional support when you need it.

We recommend that you:

- Contact the council and ask for a financial assessment and a needs assessment.
- Keep the care home informed about what is happening.

Negotiation between the care home and the council about fees

What to expect:

- If there is a difference between what the council will pay and what the care home's fees are, there will be a negotiation.
- The council may tell you that you'll need to move to a new (cheaper) home. You can challenge this!
- Your family may be asked by the council or the care home to pay top-up fees.

We recommend that you:

- Work with the care home and social worker to make a case explaining what is in your best interests.

Possible delays and problems

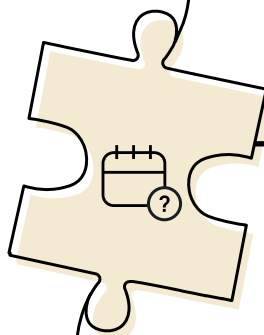
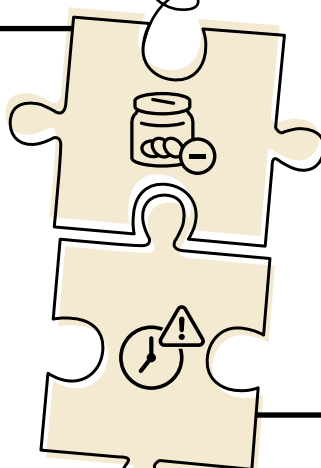
- If there is no Lasting Power of Attorney and you lack mental capacity to make your own decisions, this is likely to cause delays.
- If you cannot find or access financial documents/ records, this will delay the financial assessment.

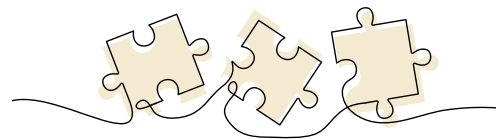
Try not to worry

- While you remain in the same care home (even after you have asked the council for help paying fees), the care you receive should not change in any way.

What happens next?

- You may be able to remain in the same care home once the council start to help with paying fees, but this will depend on negotiations about the fee level between you/your family, the care home and the council.
- If you stay in the same home, the care you receive is unlikely to change.
- If you stopped paying fees when your funds fell below £23,250, then the council and the care home will negotiate 'back-dated fees' to cover that period. You will be told how much is owed, if relevant.





The reality of paying for care

How you pay for your care depends on how much money you have. While this process may feel complicated, resources are available to help you understand what happens next.

Councils across England have responsibility for adult social care. They are required to provide people with information about care and to assess people who may be in need of care and support – free of charge.

Councils may also help with the cost of care depending on: (1) **the amount of money a person has**, and (2) **their level of need**.

In England, a person with savings (including shares, and sometimes the value of a house) **above £23,250** will be required to pay for their own care (in most cases). The £23,250 amount is set by the Government and is known as the Upper Capital Limit (UCL). Over time, this UCL may change.

If a person has care needs and their savings fall below £23,250, they will still need to contribute something towards the cost of their care, but the council may agree to pay a share of the cost. The contribution that the person needs to make will reduce on a sliding scale until their savings fall **below £14,250**.

The person will be allowed to keep the last £14,250 of their savings – they will not be expected to use these savings to contribute towards care costs. The £14,250 is known as the lower capital limit.

Even when a person's savings fall below £14,250, they will still need to contribute towards care costs from any income that they receive (such as a pension or benefit payments). Savings and income will always be assessed, even if the person believes that their savings have fallen below the capital limit. The council will work with them to do the calculations. The person will be left with a small amount of any income to cover personal expenses.

For a council to pay for care, it must be satisfied that the person needs the care. The council will do its own assessment to find this out, even if someone is already in a care home and paying for it themselves.

Whether or not the value of a house is included in the financial assessment by the council will depend on circumstances and so it is important to seek advice.

The system is complicated, and it is common for people to feel anxious and confused. This leaflet has been developed to give information about the 'typical process' and what to expect next.



Searching for a care home



For help searching for a suitable care home or nursing home, search for 'Care Confidence' for helpful resources.

You can also look up the 'Care Quality Commission' for inspections and ratings of care homes in your area.

If you choose a care home from a list provided by the council, this doesn't guarantee the council will pay the fees later, or that you can remain there if you become council-funded.

We recommend that you get independent financial advice. While this may not be free, planning for your future care costs is important. You may be facing some very expensive decisions.

The [CareConfidence.org.uk](https://www.CareConfidence.org.uk) website will help you to decide if you need to move into a care

home or if other types of support would be more appropriate.

If you know your total amount of money is much higher than £23,250 and it will take a long time for you to spend your money on care costs, a financial assessment may be of little benefit at this point. The council may not be able to offer a financial assessment immediately if they are facing high demand.

Are you searching for a care home now and it's likely your funds will fall below £23,250 within six months? If so, we recommend asking the council to help with arranging a care home and negotiating fees.

What is 'discharge to assess'?

If you move into a (new) care home directly from hospital, this is called 'discharge to assess'. It is usually a temporary stay with short-term funding from the NHS – there may be pressure to organise things in a hurry.

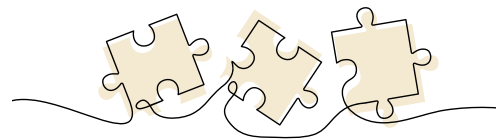
The NHS funding will only last for a short period. If you want to stay in the same care home or you're too unwell to return to your own home after the NHS funding has stopped, you will have to start paying the fees yourself (if your savings are above £23,250). In a more expensive care home, your money will be used up more quickly and if your money falls below £23,250 the council may not be able to negotiate for you to stay there.

The same principles apply in situations where there is emergency admission to a care home, whether this is from your own home or somewhere else.

What is 'lasting power of attorney'?

If you become unable to make decisions for yourself in the future, someone will need to make decisions for you. Who does this will depend on the situation. Generally, professionals will make decisions about your health and social care, and your family or carers will decide on day-to-day matters.

If you wish, you can officially appoint someone you trust to make decisions for you. This is called making a lasting power of attorney (LPA). More information can be found on the Age UK website.



Living in a care home and paying fees privately



You may be able to claim benefits to help your remaining funds last longer. Reach out to Age UK, Citizens' Advice, or your social worker to learn more.

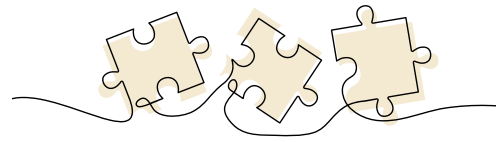
You can also search on the Gov.uk website for Personal Independence Payments (PIP) and Attendance Allowance.

In some situations, people can have all their care costs paid by the NHS under an arrangement called Continuing Healthcare. An assessment for this can be done if you have particularly complex and/or unpredictable needs, or are expected to have a short time to live. To learn more, speak to your GP or search on the NHS website.

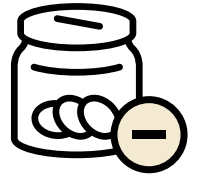
There is also something called NHS-Funded Nursing Care (FNC). Again, more information about this can be found on the NHS website.

If you are having a financial assessment, start getting organised now. Do you (and the people you trust to help you) know where to find important financial documents? You can find more information on financial assessments on the Age UK website.

You should not rush into any decisions about selling your home or arranging equity release, especially if someone else is still living in the house. If your partner, or another relative still lives in your home, it will usually not be counted as part of your assets. If the value of your house will be taken into consideration, you can consider deferred payments. For more information on this, visit the MoneyHelper website.



When your funds are about to fall below £23,250



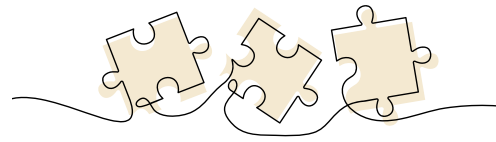
When your funds are getting towards the Upper Capital Limit, you should contact the council and request a **financial assessment** and a **needs assessment**.

It's likely the council will give a single email address or phone number for all adult social care issues.

When you contact the council, tell them clearly:

1. You are currently living in a care home
2. Your funds are getting very close to the Upper Capital Limit
3. You are requesting a financial assessment and a care needs assessment

If you are told that a needs assessment cannot be done until after the financial assessment, and this is causing significant delay, you can challenge this. Councils have previously been told by the Ombudsman to avoid unnecessary delays to the care needs assessment.



Negotiation between the care home and council over fees



Your current care home may charge more than the council normally pays. When this happens, there is often a negotiation between the council and the care home, which can cause anxiety for the resident.

The council may check whether your current care home offers value for money compared to other care homes that would also meet your needs. Other care homes may be sent to assess your needs.

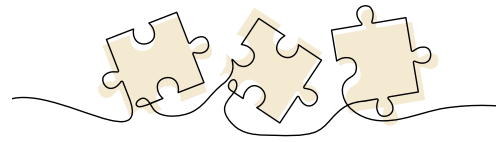
So, whether you are able to stay in your current home will depend upon the fee negotiations and whether the council deems that alternative care homes can meet your care and support needs.

It's your right to see a copy of the council's assessment of your care needs. You can discuss this with a social worker, particularly if you feel that anything is missing or inaccurate. In this way, you can ensure that the council considers everything you feel is relevant and important.

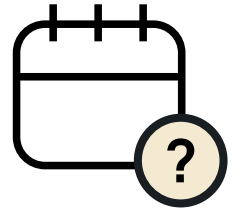
Your current care home will be well-placed to help you be clear about what your care and support

needs are. You can consider what helps you to feel well physically and mentally, whether family and friends can travel to visit and any particular religious or other needs and interests you may have.

Your family may be asked to pay 'top-up' payments to reduce the difference between the care home's fees and what the council will pay. Your family can refuse – but choosing an expensive care home at the start may make this harder to do.



What happens next?



There is no guarantee that you will be able to stay in the same care home.

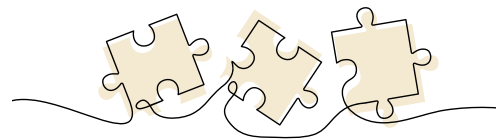
Whether you can stay in the same care home will depend upon whether the care home and the council can agree on an acceptable fee rate. It will also depend on whether alternative care homes can adequately meet your care and support needs.

Being proactive in working with your current care home and the council to ensure that your care and support needs are accurately assessed and considered could influence the council's final decision.

Your current care home may be more willing to agree a fee rate with the council if your family agree to top-up payments.

If you need to move, it is likely that some extra support will be needed to help you settle in. Staff at the new care home will be aware of this. You, your family, the social worker and the two care homes can discuss any practical arrangements regarding the move.

If you stay in your current care home, it is unlikely that you will notice any difference in how you are looked after. Few of the staff will be aware of who is paying for your care.



Organisations that can help

Age UK

- Lasting Power of Attorney
- Benefits
- Financial Assessment
- Needs Assessment
- Top-up fees

CareConfidence.org.uk

- Is residential care the best option for me?
- Searching for a care home
- Paying for care

Care Quality Commission

- Care home quality ratings

Citizen's Advice

- Benefits
- Lasting Power of Attorney

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

- Making a complaint

Gov.uk

- Benefits
- Care Act (2014)

Money Helper

- Benefits
- Deferred Payments
- Upper & Lower Capital Limits

NHS

- Continuing Healthcare
- Funded Nursing Care

Society of Later Life Advisors (SOLLA)

- Independent financial advice

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