



WHAT PEOPLE LOOK FOR IN A CARE ENVIRONMENT

Miele

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There are 10.8 million people aged 65 or over in the UK

- Office for National Statistics

Introduction

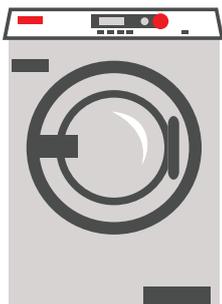
The population of the UK is changing. Thanks to advances in medicine and a better understanding of diets and nutrition, people are living longer.

'There are now more people in the UK aged 60 and above than there are under 18'
- Office for National Statistics.

However, growing life expectancy does not necessarily mean living longer in better health. Over the last 20 years, life expectancy has risen by 4.6%, but healthy life by only 3% (BBC). This means that although people are living longer, there is a greater need to provide care to the elderly in later life (potentially in the form of care homes). According to a Laing and Buisson survey, 'there are 431,500 elderly and disabled people in residential care (including nursing)' in the UK, and this number is rising.

So, as the number of elderly people rises, so does the number of prospective service-users that could potentially be staying at your care home. Increasing numbers of people will be requiring places in care homes over the next few years, and you want to make sure it's your rooms that they are filling.

We've carried out interviews with people who have first-hand experience of housing loved-ones in care/residential/nursing homes; and the following points are the key features that they looked for when making a decision. This ebook has been created to identify the most important parts of your home when attracting new residents and how you can show your establishment in the best light.

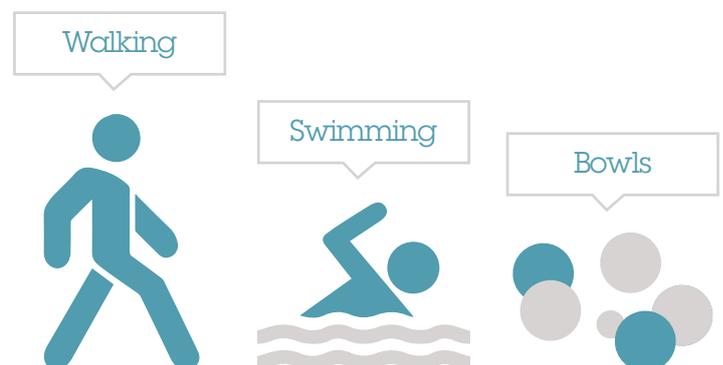


Outside your control

When a prospective service-user and their family come to view your home, it's important to create an attractive environment and give a good first impression. The ultimate goal is for you to gain a new resident and new revenue. To achieve these objectives there are certain things that can be done to highlight the best parts of your home; however there will be things you cannot change.

For example, regardless of a prospect's desires, there is no way for you to move your home. If your residence is not near local shops, public transport links or pubs; be honest about it. You're more likely to create a relationship with a prospect and their family based on honesty and openness. This goes for things like facilities too. If you don't have a garden or an elevator, be open and explain what your home does have as an alternative. For example, you do not have an elevator, but you have multiple stair-lifts with staff always on hand to ensure safe usage. You do not have gardens, but you take all residents to the local park twice a week to enjoy the outdoors.

In a care/residential/nursing home, there needs to be a relationship of trust between the managers/staff and the residents' families. So don't risk losing this trust by not giving all the facts about your care home. Be honest about all elements of your operation and remember that a caring, friendly environment is the most important thing for prospective service-users and their loved-ones.



Of those aged 65 and over who do sport, the most popular are recreational walking (10%), swimming (6%) and bowls (5%)

- AgeUK

Cleanliness

Having carried out our interviews, we found that cleanliness was typically the most important factor for the families of prospective service-users when visiting a home for the first time. So, ensure your establishment smells clean and fresh when prospective families enter and try to avoid clutter (at least during visits).

Regarding regulatory compliance, CFPP 01-04 needs to be adhered to when laundering soiled or infected loads in a care environment. A best practice approach to compliance will help to show prospects how serious your organisation is about cleanliness. So, ensure you show prospects and their loved-ones your laundry operation, equipment and safety procedures. This should also be the case for dishwasher equipment in your kitchen.

Illustrating your commitment to cleanliness including laundry and dishes will help to put family members' minds at rest. Discuss regulatory compliance with prospective service-users and families and explain how you meet and exceed these requirements with your equipment. Also, discuss any plans you have in process to improve your levels of cleanliness. For example, if you are in the process of buying laundry, dishwashing and vacuuming equipment, be sure to tell prospects why you have chosen to do this and how it will improve cleanliness and safety.

£39.9 billion

The total annual value of the independent
sector healthcare market is £39.9 billion
with older people's residential care

- Healthcare Market Review 2012-13, Laing and Buisson, 2013

Staff

Our research revealed that after the initial desire to confirm the cleanliness of the environment, people are generally interested in the staff, their rapport with the service-users and their levels of experience.

By spending just a few minutes in a care/residential/nursing home, it quickly becomes clear that the facilities, location and cleanliness wane in comparison to the importance of warm, friendly and capable staff. With families intending on leaving their loved-ones in the care of someone else, it's vitally important that employees are given the opportunity to put all visitors' minds at rest.

For this reason, when prospective service-users and their families visit, ensure a member of staff engages with the prospect first, before greeting the family. This will help to illustrate that staff prioritise the needs of the service-user. Also, allow your staff members and current service-users to engage with prospects during initial visits and allow the families to observe the relationship between staff and service-users.

To proactively demonstrate the quality of your employees, suggest that a few of them introduce themselves to the prospect and their family; discussing their experience and qualifications in the care industry. It's also a good idea to let the prospects speak to current service-users about their level of service and their relationship with staff members.

1.6 million



More than 1.6 million people work in adult social care in England, staffing care homes and providing home help services

- The Telegraph

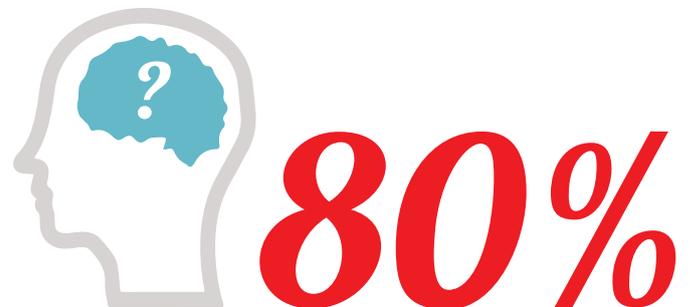
Specialist care

Always be up-front about your home's ability to handle specialist requirements. In some homes, management find it easier to place service-users with similar illnesses in close proximity to each other in order to target the best employee resources. For example, all service-users with dementia are located within rooms 1-10 or only on the ground floor.

If this is the case in your home, or you're planning to implement a similar strategy, be sure to inform prospective service-users and their families on visits. The reason for this is firstly to put prospects' minds at rest about the layout of the home; and secondly it's an opportunity for you to demonstrate your comprehensive care for service-users and your expert management of highly-trained staff.

In a care/residential/nursing home there will unfortunately be the heightened need for medical assistance due to the age of the service-users. This will, of course, be at the forefront of families' minds when viewing your home, so be sure to address their concerns. If you have a doctor/surgery on call at all times, provide the details of the surgery so families of prospects can rest assured that you have a medical assistance plan in place. If you do not have a surgery/doctor on call, explain your alternative process and how this will cover the need for any medical assistance in your home.

If you have medically trained staff working at your home, ensure that they are available during all visits and have the opportunity to discuss their expertise and experience with prospects and their families.



80% of people in care homes have dementia or severe memory problems

- Alzheimer's Society

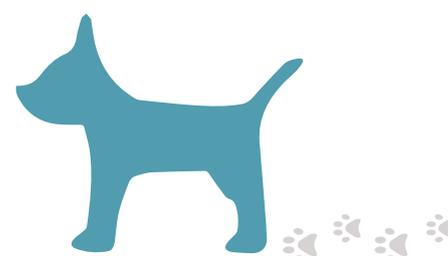
Other factors

The elements of a care home that have been discussed previously are typically the most important factors for prospective service-users and their families when looking for a suitable care/residential/nursing home. But, these are not the only factors they'll take into account. So, ensure you cover all potential features that could secure a new service-user and generate more revenue for your home.

A great place to start is with meals and dining facilities. Take service-users and family members on a tour of your dining area/kitchen and discuss the types of meals that are prepared. Also, provide details on meals times and the experience of the staff member in charge of cooking. If possible, give your prospects your menu and let them see first-hand the meals which you offer service-users.

Another good talking point during visits is leisure activities. Share information with your prospects like how often you take service-users on outings. Make sure you mention factors like whether they are chaperoned or not; if they regularly interact with community groups; and what level of interaction they have people outside of the home.

A rather important requirement for some prospects is whether your home will accept pets or not. If you do, then mention the rules around keeping and maintaining pets within your residence. If you don't allow pets, then consider utilising a pet therapy organisation that will bring animals to your home for short periods of time. This will mean that although your home does not permit pets, service-users will still have a chance to interact with animals on a fairly regular basis.



Pets can motivate and encourage the elderly to stay healthy and exercise

- AgedCareGuide

Conclusion

These are just some of the factors that our research uncovered as top priorities for prospects and family members when choosing a care/residential/nursing home. By focusing on these key elements and aiming to achieve a best practice approach to all of them, you'll have a fantastic environment to present to prospects. Ultimately, you'll be providing your service-users with the best possible service, but the upshot is that this will help to attract new residents and greater revenue.

Ensuring you present your care/residential/nursing home in a way that is likely to secure new service-users is a learning experience. The factors mentioned in this guide are an excellent place to start; but be sure to note the queries of prospects and families on every visit. What are their concerns? What are their questions? What questions did you not have an answer for? What line of questioning surprised you?

After each visit, analyse the results, formulate an answer and prepare better for the next visit. The outcome will be that every visit you host will improve your presentation of the home for the next visit. Eventually, you'll have an answer for everything and be converting the majority of your prospect visits to paying service-users.

Want to find out more?
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