

## Guidelines for choosing a long term facility

*First Impressions*  
*Accessibility of the home*  
*Rules and regulations*  
*Finances*  
*Residents*  
*Staffing*  
*Safety Awareness / Emergency Procedures*  
*Funding of the home*  
*Bedrooms*  
*Bathrooms*  
*Kitchens, Food and Beverages*  
*Gardens*  
*Intimacy and Privacy*  
*What additional services are provided by the home?*  
*Frail care Facilities*  
*Visitors*  
*Other*

### Accessibility of the home

- Is it close to family and friends?
- Is it within safe walking distance to: place of worship; shops; bank, post office?
- Is it close to activities in the community that the resident is still involved in?
- Is it in a familiar environment or a new area?
- Is the area safe?

### First Impressions

- What reception did you receive if you arrived unannounced?
- Friendliness of the staff?
- Is it safe, clean and attractively decorated?
- Are there noticeable odours (especially urine)?
- Do the residents seem to be happy and occupied, or are they sitting staring into space?
- Did you see staff and residents sitting talking to each other?
- Were any of the residents restrained in their chairs?



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## Rules and regulations

- Check the licensing and registration of the home.
- Do you feel comfortable with the rules and regulations of the home?
- Is it very regimented?
- Do residents have to go to bed at fixed times?
- Are visiting times strictly enforced?
- What is the policy about restraining frail residents?

## Finances

- Will you be able to afford the fees for the home?
- What is the annual increase in fees?
- Will you be able to afford the payments indefinitely?
- If you have any medical aid / disability cover / insurance – will it cover any of the costs of the home?
- Are there additional costs in the home not part of the monthly rental / levy?



*Ref. cbonita.brinkster.net*

## Residents

- Is there a residents committee?
- Are there channels for residents to complain to? Is there an ombudsman?
- Are residents encouraged to remain physically and mentally active and to see to their own needs where possible and suitable?
- Are residents allowed to assist in chores/activities in the home?
- Are residents called by name by the staff?
- Do other residents seem congenial?
- Is it a mixed sex residence?
- Are residents encouraged or forced to leave their rooms during the day?

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## Staffing

- There needs to be a high quality staff – resident interaction.
- Does the home have a high staff turnover ratio?
- Are there an adequate number of caregivers on duty for every shift?
- What staff are on-call / available 24 hours per day?
- Does the staff get ongoing training?

## Safety Awareness / Emergency Procedures

- Are there ramps and is there easy access for wheelchairs throughout the home?
- Is there adequate lighting in the home?
- Are there safety rails in the corridors?
- Are the floor surfaces non-slip?
- Are there easily accessible panic buttons:
- Are the passages and stairs well lit?
- Is there a lift if the home has more than one floor?
- Is there a disaster plan for evacuating the home?
- Are there visible and accessible fire hydrants?
- Are there smoke alarms?
- Do they have regular fire drills in the home?
- Are they linked to an armed response company?
- What other security arrangements are there at the home?
- Is the home secure in terms of controlled access / perimeter fencing, etc.?
- What emergency medical equipment is available on the premises?
- Are safety deposit boxes available for the residents?
- Are portable panic buttons available for residents when they go outside?

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## Funding of the home

- Who are the major funders of the home?
- Is it a profit for gain or non-profit organisation?
- Is there any form of financial assistance (if frail care or additional care is needed) if the resident is not able to afford it?
- Is it a life right scheme?

## Bedrooms

- Is there a view from the room?
- Is there adequate lighting?
- Is there a problem with damp in the room?
- Are the rooms furnished or unfurnished?
- Is it a single or double room?
- Is the resident allowed to have a kettle, toaster, etc. in the room?
- Are there sufficient plug points in the room (for bedside light, kettle, radio, hairdryer, etc.) if not, are adapters allowed?
- Is there an emergency bell/panic button in the room?
- Are there sufficient cupboards and drawers in the room?
- What personal furniture and belongings are allowed?
- Are residents allowed private telephones in their room?
- Are visitors allowed in the rooms?
- Are residents given meals in their rooms if they are not feeling well?

## Bathrooms

- Own or shared?
- Bath and/or shower?
- Is there a panic button in the bathroom?
- Is it suitable for an older person (i.e. has it been adapted to the needs of the older person) – for example with non-slip surfaces in baths, handles, rails on baths, shower chairs etc.
- Is there easy access for a wheelchair in the bathroom?
- Is assistance with bathing and showering available to residents not requiring frail care, if needed?

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## Kitchens, Food and Beverages

- What are the mealtimes?
- Is the food of a high quality and high variety?
- Are provisions made for special diets (e.g. high protein; diabetic; low fat; kosher; vegetarian; halaal; etc.)
- Do they have a dietician available to them?
- Is there variety in the weekly menu, and does the menu change regularly?
- Are desserts and fruit part of the regular menu?
- Are the portions sufficient? Is a second helping allowed?
- Are there separate areas for food preparation / dishwashing and garbage disposal?
- Are visitors allowed to have meals in the dining room? At what cost?
- Are there ever any special meals (e.g. for religious holidays, birthdays, etc.)?
- Can residents get packed meals if they are going out for the day?
- Are there regular teas supplied by the home (eg. Morning and afternoon) and is anything served with the tea?
- Is alcohol allowed on the premises?

## Gardens

- Is there a garden?
- Is the garden easily accessible and available to the residents?
- Are more active residents encouraged to assist in the garden?
- Are there benches outside?
- Is there a suitable safe path to walk on in the garden? Are there rails along the path?
- Is the garden lit at night?

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## What additional services are provided by the home?

- Podiatrist (chiropracist)?
- Hairdressing/Barber facilities?
- Aromatherapy/reflexology/other alternate therapies?
- Tuck shop or canteen?
- Day Clinic/Examination rooms?
- Is medication administered if non Frail Care residents require this service?
- What additional professional services are available (e.g. Social Work; Occupational Therapy; Physiotherapy; Speech Therapy)
- Is there a doctor on call for emergencies?
- Are there activity rooms?
- Is there a regular activity and exercise programme for the residents?
- Are residents encouraged to learn new skills?
- Are any outside trips, outings, lectures, talks and shows arranged for the residents?
- Is there any community involvement in the home?
- Do they have volunteers involved in the home?
- Is there a lounge with television and one without? Is the television on all day?
- Is satellite television available?

## Intimacy and Privacy

- Are married couples allowed to share a room?
- Are residents allowed to be sexually active in the home?
- Are residents allowed privacy in the home?
- Do staff members knock before entering rooms?
- Is there privacy available for telephone calls?
- Is there a private visiting area available for residents sharing a room?

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## Visitors

- Are residents allowed to go out for days/weekends and holidays?
- Can visitors come and visit at any time or strictly at visiting time?
- Is there a private room for visitors?
- Do visitors have to sign in on arrival?
- Are relatives / friends encouraged to participate in the care of the resident?

## Frail care Facilities

- Establish what the additional costs/availability of frail care is, even if they are not initially required.
- Are there specially trained staff nursing in this area? (There should be a qualified Nursing Sister, not merely a Nurse Aid).
- Are you required to use the resident doctor or can you use your own?
- Are visitors allowed to visit frail care as wished?
- Is there any disability / illness that they are unable to cope with in the home?
- How is medical waste disposed of by the home?
- Are living wills recognized?

## Other

- Are there demarcated smoking and non-smoking areas?
- Are pets encouraged for their therapeutic benefits and allowed in the home?
- Are residents allowed their own pets?
- Is the laundry done on the premises or contracted out?
- Will the resident be able to meet their spiritual needs at the home?

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- Is there any form of transport available to shops / outings / doctors appointments?
- If residents are still active may they have their own cars on the premises? Is there secure parking that is easily accessible?
- Have there been any complaints / cases against the home?
- Do they have a policy about elder abuse? How is it handled if it arises?
- What is the notice period if residents wish to leave the home?

## **REFERENCES**

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