

Choosing
a dementia
care home

This booklet was produced by Ralphland Care Home to help you identify
the best dementia care

Foreword

Reaching the decision to find a care home for a person living with dementia is hard. Knowing how to choose the right home can be daunting. Families who come to Ralphland tell us that their common experience was:

“We were just given a list, there was an awful lot to take in, there was no central source of information, it is something you have utterly no experience of, we were given no help on the emotional side of things.”

Questions come naturally flooding in. How will we find a care home with the right expertise in dementia care? How will we know what good dementia care looks like? Many people have no idea where to go for help – you are not alone in this.

At first glance, all care services seem to be offering the same ‘high-quality care’. One wife looking for a care home for her husband commented:

“It was hard trying to work out who was telling the truth, who was trying to persuade me and who was really going to look after him and who really wasn’t”

This booklet is here to help guide you in recognising the best dementia care. It highlights ten key elements of real quality dementia care that you should look for when visiting care home.

We hope the information in this booklet helps you in choosing a care home. Keeping the person living with a dementia as your central focus is what matters most.

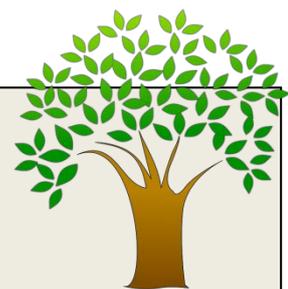
Kind regards

Jan Pragnall
Home Manager
Ralphland Care Home



“Mattering in a dementia care home is all about:

Valuing people, that’s what the word mattering means to me. It’s about the staff team valuing someone and acknowledging the person has a right to be how they are.”



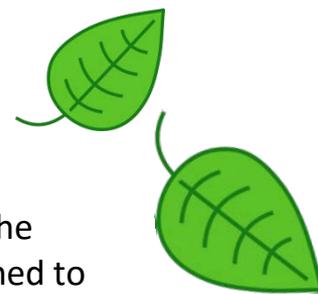
Choosing a dementia care home

Ten key things to look for

In this booklet we have come up with ten key words to have in your mind when looking around a care home:

-  1. **FEEL** – Ask yourself what is your immediate feeling when you walk into the care home? Is it depressing, stagnant, hospital or hotel-like? Or does it feel full of people getting on with living and is it a place where people really matter?
-  2. **LOOK** – Think about what the care home looks like? Is it sterile, clinical, boring and empty? Or does it look colourful, busy and engaging? Does it give you feeling of being at home?
-  3. **LIVE** – Look around the home; are people being looked after as a group or as individuals? Are people being treated as objects and just as bodies? Or is it clear to you that people's past lives and memories really matter to the staff team?
-  4. **CONNECT** – Watch how people are spoken to and ask yourself 'does it feel right?' Are people being herded around the home and controlled? Or are staff being close with people and connecting in sensitive ways?
-  5. **OCCUPY** – Consider how people are being individually occupied. Does it seem as if the only activities provided are traditional organised events? Or are people getting involved in domestic jobs and bits of their past lives? Are they surrounded by lots of stuff to occupy themselves with?
-  6. **COMFORT** – Come to your own conclusion about whether people have a sense of well-being and comfort? Do people in the home seem to be in a state of ill-being? Or are people looking happy, content and comfortable?
-  7. **REACH** – Listen and ask yourself 'do the sort of behaviours occurring in the home feel right?' Are people expressing lots of 'behaviours' and are the staff looking lost at what to do? Or are people's feelings responded to immediately and staff detect the meaning behind people's feelings?
-  8. **SHARE** – Learn whether the home feels family like and has a sense of shared community. Is there a sense of @us and them' barriers in the home? Or are people living and working alongside each other, more like a family being together?
-  9. **RELAX** – Conclude if the home is run on tasks and routines? Has the home got a regimented task-oriented feel? Or does the home and staff feel relaxed where people matter first and jobs still get discreetly done?
-  10. **SECURE** – Consider if there is an equal emphasis on providing both physical and emotional security? Does the home feel controlling and overly focused on limiting people's lives? Or are people helped to feel free and safe, while being encouraged to live an ordinary life?

Focusing on the person and the Importance of relationships



“Look at the individual, who ‘is’ the person you are supporting, see the person as an individual and not collectively. Care homes can be inclined to look collectively at people – distinguishing people as individuals takes a lot of care and work.”

As you begin looking for a care home you will see the term ‘person centred care’ referred to in many care home brochures. However, this term means many different things to people and it is useful to know what person-centred really means. **Person centred care** is an approach where care homes focus more on people living with a dementia as individuals.

When choosing a care home look for the difference between homes that only ‘talk the talk’ compared to a home where you can see, feel and hear the home putting this into practice.

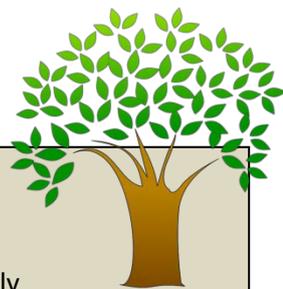
Care homes committed to providing person-centred care will demonstrate this by:

- seeing the person living with dementia first and foremost as an individual
- recognising a person’s unique life history and personality
- understanding the world from the person’s perspective
- keeping the person living with a dementia at the centre of choices and decisions
- creating opportunities and ways to occupy people to help how people are feeling
- adapting the environment to bring out the best in people

A care home wanting to bring out the best in people will see their key purpose is to create a community of people – relatives, friends and visitors, alongside people living and working in the home, all sharing and gaining from their lives together.

Hopefully now you can see how the ten key words we have focused on in this booklet can help you in choosing a care home – feel, look, live, connect, occupy, comfort, reach, share, relax, secure. When all this comes together, mattering in a dementia care home becomes a reality.

“There’s an awful lot to take in when choosing a care home. A common feeling is: “We didn’t really know what we were looking for. We were probably looking at appearances as it’s really all you have experience of.”



“My mother seems to have flourished here, it’s brought back some of her spark. I like the fact there are hardly any structured things, most of what happens here is spontaneous. Just quietly look around and see what people are doing, what they are engaged in. It’s not a hospital, it’s mum’s home and staff are part of the bigger family here. I never feel guilty about her being here.”



FEEL

In what way are people treated as individuals and how does the home feel?

“We still have a life – we’re still living people, we’ve got to have feelings to keep us going.”

For each and every one of us, feelings matter most in life. It’s not what we are doing in our daily life that matters so much as how we are feeling. Being diagnosed with a dementia will create a range of feelings very individual to each person. The experience of living with a dementia takes someone back to relying more on feelings. When you cannot rely on facts, logic and reason because of dementia, then feelings become even more important in life. People living with a dementia are more ‘feeling’ than ‘thinking’ being as they feel they can put trust in their feelings. This is the reason why people living with a dementia need families, nurses and care workers who are responding from the heart.

A care home that understands the importance of how people feel will:

- See the person first as an individual and not just focus on the person’s diagnosis of a dementia
 - Realise that providing dementia care is all about principally offering emotional care
 - Understand the importance of being ‘loving’ as the quality needed to reach people and to help people feel they matter
 - Respond to a person’s feelings by being there for them as an individual
 - Create a sense of family atmosphere in order to give people a sense of security and familiarity
- 

“The minute I walked in I knew this was what I had been looking for. It was just a completely relaxed atmosphere, there was a group playing dominoes and somebody was unravelling wool, people were doing things spontaneously, people here were getting different responses depending on where they were in their state of being. It’s like my home; I consider it my second home.”

“The staff make themselves noticeable whether it’s through colour or sound, they are constantly thinking of how to use props in the home to prevent boredom. It’s that constant changing picture in front of people that keeps people’s interest going.”



LOOK

What does the care home look like in terms of people feeling at home inside themselves?

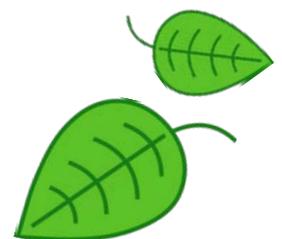
“When we came here we knew this was the place – it was a complete surprise, like nothing we’d ever seen – full of things, boxes, the stuff of life.”

In a home that has been specifically designed for people living with dementia, you will notice first of all that it looks and feels different. This is because the home needs to be seen through the eyes of someone living with dementia. The home should also feel just that – a home and not a hotel.

People living with dementia have difficulty in making sense of their surroundings. This can be helped by a care home knowing how to make the best of the environment so it gives more ‘cues’. In doing so, it is possible to help people living with a dementia to make more sense of where they are.

A care home that improves the look of the environment will have:

- clear signs around the building to assist a person living with dementia, but not so many as to cause confusion
- individual room indicators to assist people in finding their own room – these can be linked to aspects of personal life history or preference for colour or objects – a memory box or framed life story
- pictorial signs on bathroom and toilet doors
- different colours in hallways to break up the length of the hallway
- objects and items in corridors and on walls to help orientate people and provide some occupation or conversation points
- reminiscence items to help create positive memories and feelings
- lounges filled with familiar, everyday items from individuals’ own lives
- pictures in rooms which denote the main function of the room; for example, pictures of food and/or people eating in a dining room
- lounges and communal spaces filled with lots of rummage items, boxes, baskets and sensory items
- smells that create a certain ambience. These could be used to assist in creating memories or assist in identifying the time of day or specific events, for example freshly baked bread in the morning, freshly brewed coffee for breakfast, and so on.





LIVE

Does the home show it values and knows about each individual's past life?

"I had visited seven or eight places until, for the first time, the manager said sit down and tell me about your husband's life. No one else in other homes I have visited had said this – it had staggered and shocked me."

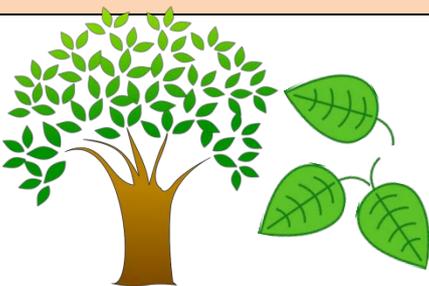
We have all undergone a personal 'journey' through life. What we have experienced, achieved or found difficult and the memories and feelings surrounding these events will stay with us. We store them in the form of thoughts, photographs or items that have sentimental meaning.

As an individual's experience of a dementia progresses, people may not be able to 'store' or recall events as easily as they did. Storing recent moments and events in life can be difficult and events in life can be difficult. It is not as easy, after the early 'stages' of experience of a dementia, to get a person to learn again or to remember recent events.

A care home that is person-centred will demonstrate that they understand this. The home will instead be stressing the importance of knowing and connecting with a person's past life. It is critical that the staff in the home know about the person's past life in detail (that is not to invade the person's, or the family's, privacy). This is because a person living with a dementia's emotions, action or words could be linked to an event, something they did, or an experience from their earlier lives. The person could be referring to a previous job, a home address, neighbours from years ago, family members or pets from the past.

A care home that helps people to live will involve people in:

- Sharing a person's life history or creating a life-story book about the person
- Developing a personal and meaningful 'time capsule' or memory box that includes items of special significance, meaning or comfort
- Bringing in items and photos from the individual's past which are likely to create positive memories, and providing information about their significance to share with staff
- Practically using individual's life histories, and perhaps developing them on a daily basis to record new key and proud moments.





CONNECT

Are people working in the home really connecting with people?

“There’s a need to detect what the person means behind what they are saying – there are ways other than words to connect with someone.”

(Carer in a care home)

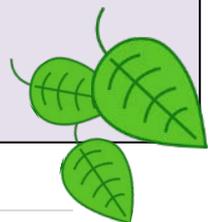
As a person’s journey through a dementia progresses, it can sometimes be a challenge to understand them. The person may have forgotten certain words, muddle their words up in sentences, or may say an entirely different word to the one they are meaning to say. There is nothing the person living with a dementia can do to prevent this.

In the earliest ‘stages’ of a dementia, orientating a person back to the present reality may still be possible. Eventually, a person living with a dementia may progress to a point of experience when this is not possible. People who are experiencing this part of their journey with a dementia may really believe that they need their mother, that they must go home to get tea for their children, or that they need to get to school or work. They may believe they are younger than they are, or still in a job they retired from 30 years ago.

One of the hardest things for a relative or friend of someone living with a dementia is to learn to accept that they now have a different reality. It can be especially hard if the person does not remember who they are, or wishes to find their mother who died long ago. The key is for families and friend to learn to respond to the feelings behind a person’s words and to find a care home too where the staff know this.

A care home that knows how to connect with people will:

- demonstrate that they have a real understanding that everything a person with a dementia says and does makes total sense to the individual
- train staff to interpret and act upon the meaning behind the words and actions of the person
- respond always to the feelings behind what is being said to the person
- not confront, argue, challenge or correct a person living with dementia
- not challenge a person’s different reality, but accept this and ‘go with the flow’. You should not hear staff saying: “You remember, don’t you?”, “Your mother died years ago!”, or “You’re not 35, your 80!”
- realise the person is going back in time in their lives when they felt loved, useful and productive, and will support the person through the conversation and actions
- realise that the person’s different reality may really be about how they are feeling now, for example not feeling loved or not feeling useful. The care home staff will try and do everything they can to help the individual feel loved, needed and valued in the here and now
- accept the person as they are, realising the person cannot be ‘fixed’ but the approach towards someone can be
- involve and support family and friends in understanding where the person is on their journey with a dementia.





OCCUPY

Is the home providing lots of opportunities for meaningful occupation and keeping people busy?

“In his mind he still thinks he’s going to work some days. When he’s in that frame of mind they give him a few screwdrivers and he takes things to bits – that’s the sort of job he used to have!”

We all have a real need in our lives at times to be busy and to be engaged in something that seems worthwhile. Boredom and lack of meaningful activity can be common negative features in the care and support of older people. A person living with a dementia is even more at risk of this and will find it more difficult to initiate or sustain an activity or occupation they previously enjoyed.

As a person’s experience of a dementia progresses beyond the early stages, there is little point in focusing on what the individual can no longer do. Engaging in tasks that will ‘test’ the memory, i.e. quizzes, bingo, and so on may cause the person distress. The reason for this is that the person may know, deep down inside, that they should still be able to do these things, but they are now realising that they can’t.

A care home that knows the importance of the word occupy will:

- Demonstrate that they know how to help individuals living with a dementia to feel busy, useful, occupied and successful
- Positively understand that the best way to occupy people living with a dementia is not always with organised group activity
- Help the person to do domestic tasks: polishing, dusting, laying tables, folding linen, washing up. These are some of the daily domestic tasks that will be stored undamaged, deep in people’s memory, as we have done them for most of our lives
- Help the person living with a dementia to feel they can busy themselves with clutter and everyday objects. This can be done by having rummage chests and boxes full of interesting items, and safe objects left on shelves for people to pick up. The reason for rummaging and collection may not always be clear to us. It is not important for the person to be able to tell us what they are busy with – it is more important that they ‘feel’ busy
- Provide a variety of choices, opportunities and support to be busy in a personally meaningful way
- Help the person to do something, however small, connected to their past ‘job’ in life. Many people living with a dementia ‘think’ they are at work. It is important that staff honour people’s past work identities, and know how to go with the flow and help a person feel useful
- Help the person to engage in activities which are sensory; touch, taste, smell, hear and feel. It may be easier for a person living with a dementia to take part in activities that are linked to the senses. These senses may be less damaged by a dementia in comparison to the person’s ability to think.



COMFORT

Do people living in the home seem to have a sense of well-being?

“It’s not the end of a purposeful life – people can still get pleasure and Comfort from all things that they are doing.”

Well-being is having the feel-good factor about life. Well-being involves experiencing things that increase or sustain this feeling. Supporting someone living with a dementia involves placing significant emphasis on maintaining a person’s well-being. Individuals are often going through a frightening experience with their diagnosis and the associated changes which a dementia brings to their lives. The experience can increase a person’s vulnerability and the person will be in need of reassurance and support.

Many people remain aware of the things they can no longer do, or that their recall memory is poor. Difficulty with memory, logic and concentration are some features of a dementia that will impact how individuals feel about themselves. This awareness can diminish a person’s sense of self-worth or well-being. The need therefore for a positive focus on well-being, for closeness and comfort can be heightened by the experience of living with a dementia. There may also be a risk of the person developing depression.

A care home that places an increased emphasis on comfort and well-being will:

- Demonstrate a positive ‘can-do’ approach. This involves discussing individuals’ strengths in care plans, and aiming to support people in maintaining personal skills
- Support care staff who know how to bring out the best in people living with a dementia
- Have people living in the home who appear relaxed, engaged, looking after each other and involved in the environment – not sitting slumped, sleeping in a circle
- Know the importance of helping people living with a dementia to ‘feel good’ by measuring an individual’s well-being and by preventing ill-being. The home should be able to evidence this, and have plans that support individuals in enhancing their well-being.





REACH

Does the home know how to interpret the feeling behind people's behaviour?

“The behaviour in my husband's case is frustration – the only way he has to express himself is to get angry. We all need in life someone close and this word 'reach' matters, we all need to be reached.”

Living with a dementia is not an easy experience to imagine. People living with a dementia can struggle to make sense of things, people, places and events that we all take for granted. Knowing how to 'step into another person's shoes' can be difficult.

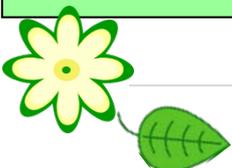
As a person's journey with a dementia progresses, an individual may struggle with the spoken word, people, places, objects and events and rely on other ways to communicate about how they are feeling.

A home trying to be person-centred will work hard at creating a calm atmosphere. Staff will be responding positively and effectively to the needs of the people who live there. A home for people living with dementia that describes itself as having lots of 'difficult' people, is a home that doesn't really know how to help, comfort and support the feelings of those in their care.

Even in the best person-centred care home people will, at times, express difficult feelings due to their experience. A positive home will be successful at reducing the frequency and you will be able to observe how well staff respond to people at these times.

A care home that is working hard to reach people will:

- See all expressions of behaviour as the person trying to communicate something
- View behaviour as being more about the person's feelings and not because they are choosing to be difficult
- Grasp that 'difficult behaviours' are normal and at times to be expected
- Provide understanding, love and comfort as the more important factors in supporting individuals rather than giving people medication to calm them down
- Help the person with 'difficult' behaviour to express their feelings – anger, sadness, fear, frustration, and so on
- Ensure people feel they are loved, valued and that they matter
- Spend time with the person to comfort or support them in expressing feelings, and not brush them off
- Find ways to help occupy and divert the person to a more pleasant place in their mind.



SHARE

Does the home appear to place importance on creating a family like community?

“It’s lovely, I’m welcome. I can come any time, day or night, everybody speaks, everybody seems normal, there’s no sense that there’s a loved one here so we must be on different best behaviour.”

We all need to feel that we matter to someone, to be comforted and to feel we are not alone. We all need to ‘belong’ somewhere or to feel we are deeply connected to someone or something. In times of stress or distress these needs are enhanced. A person living with a dementia will need to have these feelings met even more readily than ours. When facts, logic and reason cannot always be relied on because of living with a dementia, then not feeling isolated and being part of a family like community where life is shared will become more important.

A care home that knows how to really share will:

- Encourage and support friendships between people living and working in the home, seeing mealtimes as a real opportunity to share experiences together
- Give permission and expect staff to give (and receive) hugs and loving moments with individuals when needed
- Have staff who really show how much a person living with a dementia means to them and have removed as many ‘us and them’ barriers as possible
- Provide lots of comfort objects around the home such as soft toys and dolls. Some people may find other people too much to cope with, but instead gain comfort from cuddling or holding on to something. This should not be seen as the person living with a dementia being child-like, but as an adult needing something that is not threatening to them. It can also be seen as having a useful role in life but as an adult needing something that isn’t threatening, something to nurture, something that stays with them and needs them
- See that people living with a dementia are given lots of visual choice, and are never forced to do something
- Not talk despairingly about people, or talk across people as if the person is not there
- Not control people’s behaviour, or movement around their home, i.e. people will not be made to sit down. Or will not (other than in exceptional circumstances) be given medication to sedate them
- Be a place where visitors also feel at home and don’t feel awkward or out of place being there
- Welcome pets and have home pets that are looked after by people in the home and staff.



RELAX

Does the home have a relaxed feel where people matter first?

“It’s about keeping yourself relaxed, keeping your language low, soft and gentle. If you’re loud people pick up on this and people pick up on how you’re feeling.”

Living with a dementia can be very isolating, and people can feel trapped inside themselves. This trapped feeling may be demonstrated in ways which means the person cannot cope with, or handle, being ‘trapped’ inside a building – regardless of how much it feels like home.

Obviously, family, friends and the care home want the person to be physically safe. However, it is also important to see each person has a need to feel emotionally safe inside themselves. Usually as soon as a person living with a dementia feels ‘free’ and not ‘controlled’ they will feel settled once more and will happily return to the care home. The key is not to keep people who are feeling cooped up from being denied access to the outside.

A care home that links people’s safety with the word relax will:

- Understand the importance of people feeling free
- Not have excessive amounts of locked doors and exits
- Enable people to be outside whenever they feel the need to be there
- Have an enclosed, safe garden area where people can go out for a walk or can occupy themselves
- Accompany individuals on walks and enable them to remain connected and engaged with the outside world
- Open its main doors and go with people who express the desire to go outside
- Have a strategy to support individuals who wish to be outside on a regular basis





SECURE

Does the home help people to feel safe and secure inside themselves?

“There’s no behaviour that’s wrong, no sense of judgement – just people being alongside someone and helping them to get what they need.”

We all need to feel an inner safety. Often in care homes the main focus is felt to be that people living with a dementia should be physically safe and secure. Unfortunately this can, at times, override the need for an individual to feel good inside themselves. Living with a dementia can cause great distress, fear and anxiety and helping people to feel safe emotionally, too, is as important.

A secure care home is a care home that knows focusing on how people feel is their primary goal. Good dementia care is all about good emotional care. This does not mean good personal care will be neglected. Nor does it mean that the home will be unsafe or not get all its jobs done. It does however mean that the emphasis will be on people first and on task orientation second.

Good person-centred care does not always mean people living with a dementia will look, in terms of their appearance the way they want them to ‘look’. A home secure in its approach will respect people’s past preferences but also accept people as they are now. This can mean accepting changes in a person’s preferences that in the past they would never have wanted, but which now the person living with dementia wants. It will mean that the staff are going with what a person with a dementia wants, without the person being forced to do anything, or made to feel stressed.

The key to helping people feel secure is to accept the person for who they are in that moment.

A home that you can feel secure about will:

- Understand the need for inner safety and security, focusing on the person’s feelings and enabling people to express themselves
- Help people talk about how they are feeling
- Enable people to feel that they:
 - Are still in control
 - Can still decide things
 - Can still choose things, however small
 - Are not governed by set rules, regulations or routines
 - Can do whatever they want or go wherever they want, with support.



Choosing a dementia care home

The 50-point checklist

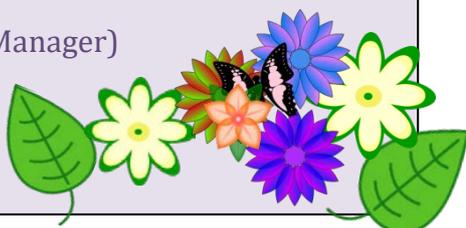
This is a guideline of what to look out for when choosing a dementia care home. Some of the points may not be important to you – don't worry if you can't answer all of these questions. Once you have somewhere that you think is suitable, it is a good idea to visit it again with the person you care for.

FEEL

- | | Yes | No | Partly |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Can you sense that the home has a heart to it and that people matter? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Have you spent time before choosing the home, just sitting in the Lounge for at least an hour to experience and feel what it might be like to live there? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Can you sense in the staff that their main focus is on how people are feeling? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Can you see staff and people living in the home freely giving and Receiving hugs, love and affection? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Do you feel when meeting the manager that 'feelings matter most' to Them and that feelings-based dementia care fits with who they are as a person? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Can you sense in the staff that they understand and feel what it may be like to live with a dementia? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Do you feel, as a visitor to the home, that you are 'at home' and are involved and not just 'a visitor'? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

“Look beyond the visual of the home, try and talk to people living there, visit more than once, speak to as many staff as you can.”

(Home Manager)





LOOK

- | | Yes | No | Partly |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| • Can you sense the atmosphere is homely and not just like a hotel or hospital? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Can you smell that the home has positive smells, for example cooking and fresh air and does not smell like 'an institution'? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Can you see the home is a home, at times untidy, full of interesting items and not empty and soulless? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Can you see that the living rooms in the home are not institutional; with sofa and seating arranged to encourage people to make contact with one another? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Can you see that the home is not uniform, but instead full of people's own furniture and possessions? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Can you see the home has special design features to help people find their way around? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Can you see that the lounges and dining rooms are small and domestic in scale and not overwhelming? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Can you see that the home is colourful, bright, airy and not dark, oppressive or bland in its decoration? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Can you see that positive ideas are used to help people find their bedroom by making bedroom doors easily recognisable with individualised items? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| • Can you see that bathrooms and toilets are not clinical but warm, inviting places? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |



LIVE

Yes No Partly

- Did you talk to some of the people living in the home who, in their way, described how it felt to live there?
- Can you see evidence of the home valuing the individual's past life, with life-history books, memory boxes and reminiscence items in daily use?
- Did you meet staff who described how they will need your help and assistance to get to know the person, their life history and to create a positive care plan?
- Can you tell that staff are sensitive to individual differences in lifestyle, culture, religion, sexuality and other needs?

CONNECT

Yes No Partly

- Can you see, feel and hear staff connecting to and supporting people living in the home?
- Can you sense that the home understands the emotional journey that living with a dementia creates for everyone involved?
- Can you hear the conversations where staff go with the individual's reality and do not confront them?
- Can you see that staff work hard to interpret the meaning behind people's words and realise that 'the language of dementia' is all about feelings?

OCCUPY

Yes No Partly

- Can you see the home is full of household, domestic, reminiscence and sensory items and people are busy using them?
- Can you see people living in the home are occupied and busy?
- Can you see lots of things around the home that help to provide people with comfort – pets, soft toys, dolls, sensory fabrics?
- Can you see ordinary life going on, with people living in the home actively involved in the kitchen area; making drinks, snacks or so on?
- Can you see people living in the home are busy and involved in everyday domestic tasks, such as dusting, polishing and folding laundry?
- Can you see that the hallways in the home are full of pictures, colour, items of interest and themes that help break up the length?



COMFORT

- Can you sense that if you live in this home you would still thrive and not just exist?
- Can you see people living in the home have personal comfort items and objects that they hold, carry or keep by them?
- Can you see that staff have specialist skills in supporting people in the 'latter stages' of a dementia and know how to reach and comfort them?

Yes No Partly

REACH

- Did you notice staff describing people in positive ways and not being negative or labelling people?
- Were there any instances of behaviours which staff found 'difficult' and if they occurred did staff remain positive and focused on how someone was feeling?
- Can you see that the staff, in their contact with people, have had Specialist dementia care training?

Yes No Partly

SHARE

- Do you feel you would be able to talk to the general manager and staff about how you are feeling?
- Do you feel reassured that one key member of staff – a keyworker – Will take responsibility for really getting to know you and your family/friends involved with someone living with a dementia?
- Can you sense the home is not a controlling place and staff seem like best friends?
- Can you see, feel and hear people who live in the home getting on well Together and caring about each other?
- Do you feel people living in the home and people working appear like a family?

Yes No Partly



RELAX

- Can you tell the home is not regimented and run by routines but instead There is a relaxed, 'go with the flow' atmosphere
- Can you tell when talking with staff that they love working in the home And being with people living with a dementia?
- Can you feel the home's emphasis is not on locks but on helping people to feel emotionally safe and free enough to be able to access outside space?
- Can you see that thought has been given to the garden within the home And a place has been created where people can rest or be busy?

SECURE

- Can you sense that the home knows how not to mix people up together who are frightened or anxious with one another. Do people seem calm in each other's company?
- Can you sense that how staff are in their contact with you is how you would want them to be with a person living with a dementia?



50 – point checklist] Guide to scores

Add up the number of 'yes' answers on the questionnaire to determine whether a home is achieving person-centred dementia care.

Below 20 yeses

Unlikely yet to be fully focused on individuals and providing person-centred care

20 – 30 yeses

A home working really hard to develop a person-centred care approach

Above 30 yeses

A home that is really achieving very positive person-centred dementia care

However, the score should not undermine how you or your relative feel about the home