

Choosing a care home in the UK can be daunting for anyone. But for older LGBTQ+ people, this decision often carries an added layer of anxiety. Concerns around discrimination, trust in healthcare staff, and the loss of chosen family networks can make the prospect of moving into residential care all the more fraught. If this sounds familiar to you or a loved one, you're not alone. In this post, I'll walk through the key questions to ask a care home, explain how laws like the Equality Act protect you, and share useful resources [do i need a will uk](#) from organisations that specifically support LGBTQ+ over-50s.

The Reality of Care Homes for Older LGBTQ+ People in the UK

Discrimination in healthcare settings is, regrettably, still a significant concern. Many older LGBTQ+ individuals have lived through times when their identities were criminalised or pathologised, leaving scars of mistrust that persist when entering care environments.

Research and anecdotal evidence highlight a few common challenges:

- **Fear of discrimination or heteronormative assumptions** leading to concealment of identity and stress.
- **Worse health outcomes** due to late presentation with physical or mental health problems, driven by prior negative healthcare experiences.
- **Isolation and loneliness**, especially for those living alone or separated from biological family, with chosen family networks often overlooked by care providers.
- **Legal uncertainties**, such as recognition of partners or friends as visitors or decision-makers.

Here's a story that illustrates this perfectly: wished they had known this beforehand.. Because of these complexities, it's vital to approach the selection of a care home with care and armed with the right questions. It's about more than just whether the home provides physical care – it's about safety, respect, and dignity.

What Legally Protects You? The Equality Act and Care Providers

Before diving into questions to ask, it's crucial to understand the legal framework. The **Equality Act 2010** is a cornerstone of protection in the UK, making it unlawful for care providers to discriminate against service users based on protected characteristics – including sexual orientation and gender reassignment.

This means all registered care homes must:

- Provide services equally to LGBTQ+ residents.
- Make reasonable adjustments to ensure accessibility and comfort.
- Have policies in place to prevent harassment and discrimination.

If you feel a care home is not meeting these standards, you can raise concerns with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) or seek advice from organisations specialising in LGBTQ+ care rights.

Questions to Ask a Care Home: Your Checklist

When visiting or calling care homes, it helps to have a framework of questions that can probe beyond surface-level impressions. Here are some carefully selected questions to ask a care home, tailored towards LGBTQ+ safety and inclusivity:

1. **Do you have a written equality and inclusion policy?** Can I see how LGBTQ+ inclusion is addressed?

2. **How does your staff receive training on LGBTQ+ awareness and sensitivity?** Is this ongoing?
3. **Are residents encouraged to disclose their orientation or gender identity safely?** How do you handle privacy and confidentiality?
4. **How do you support chosen families or non-biological carers in visiting and decision-making?**
5. **Can you describe how you have handled a complaint related to discrimination or harassment?**
6. **Are there social activities or groups specifically for LGBTQ+ residents or inclusive events?**
7. **Do residents have the freedom to express their identities openly (e.g., clothing, pronoun use)?**
8. **Can you provide references or testimonials from LGBTQ+ residents or families?**

Keep notes of the responses—if something feels off or evasive, trust your instincts. It's also worth asking to visit during a social event or an open day to observe the atmosphere and interactions.

Building Trust and Finding Support

Alongside these questions, you might want to connect with peers to hear about their experiences and recommendations. This is where community groups like Opening Doors come in. They offer dedicated services and social opportunities for LGBTQ+ people over 50 in London and beyond, providing a trusted space to share information and combat isolation.

Events listed on the Gay London Life Events Diary also offer chances to meet others and gather insights on LGBTQ+-friendly care options.

Isolation, Chosen Family, and Legal Standing

A significant issue in older LGBTQ+ care is the loss of a chosen family. Many people have strained relations with biological relatives or none at all, relying instead on close friends or community networks for emotional support. Unfortunately, care home protocols can sometimes prioritise legal next of kin, excluding chosen family from visits or healthcare decisions.

It's crucial to legally formalise these chosen relationships wherever possible. Making a lasting power of attorney (LPA) for health and welfare or finances means a chosen family member or trusted friend can have recognised authority in decisions. The NHS website offers clear guides on LPAs. Consulting a solicitor with experience in LGBTQ+ matters can also ensure your wishes are respected.



Tips for Managing the Search and Decision

Many older LGBTQ+ people find the care home search stressful – I kept a tiny checklist in my phone's notes app when helping friends navigate this. Here are some practical tips to ease the process:

- **Use WhatsApp or other messaging apps** to share your findings or questions with trusted supporters. Opening Doors often facilitates group chats or discussions to crowdsource advice.
- **Pin helpful resources or shortlisted homes on Pinterest** so you have a visual and organised set of options to compare over time.
- **Visit multiple homes** at different times, including weekends or evenings, to get a rounded picture.
- **Stay alert for red flags** like staff avoiding your questions, lack of visible LGBTQ+ inclusivity, or no community activities.
- **Remember your rights** under the Equality Act if you face discrimination; complaint routes exist and organisations like Opening Doors can support you.

Final Thoughts: Your Safety and Dignity Come First

The fear of entering care as an older LGBTQ+ person is valid, but knowledge is power. By knowing your rights, asking the right questions, and connecting with supportive groups, you can find a care home that respects and celebrates your identity. The UK has made significant strides in legal protections, but cultural change within care environments is ongoing. Your voice matters.

If you or someone you know is planning for later life care, don't hesitate to reach out to specialist organisations like Opening Doors, consult NHS guidance, and join community events via the Gay London Life Events Diary for support and connection.

Think about it: feel free to share this post with others who may benefit using the whatsapp share or pinterest share buttons – building community means building safety.

