



CareHomeGuide

Care Home Guide for Darlington Residents

A practical checklist for families

Free, independent, CQC-rated care home data for Darlington

This guide provides practical advice for choosing a care home, with local data specific to Darlington.



Care Homes in Darlington

33

TOTAL CARE HOMES

10

NURSING CARE HOMES

22

RESIDENTIAL CARE HOMES

19

DEMENTIA SPECIALIST

CQC Ratings Breakdown

Current Care Quality Commission ratings for care homes in Darlington:

2 Outstanding

23 Good

4 Requires Improvement

1 Inadequate

What do these ratings mean?

Outstanding: The service is performing exceptionally well.

Good: The service is performing well and meeting expectations.

Requires Improvement: The service isn't performing as well as it should.

Inadequate: The service is performing badly.

Average Weekly Costs (North East)

Regional averages based on 2025 data from Laing Buisson via PayingForCare.org:

Residential Care

£896/week

Nursing Care

£1,164/week

These are regional averages. Individual care home fees vary based on location, facilities, and level of care required.



What to Look For When Visiting

Before You Visit

- Read the CQC inspection report online before you go
- Book visits at different times of day (including mealtimes)
- Try to visit at least 3-5 different homes before deciding
- Bring a list of questions and take notes during the visit

First Impressions

- Is it clean, warm, and welcoming?
- Are there any unpleasant odours (urine, stale air)?
- Does it feel homely rather than institutional?
- Are you greeted promptly by staff?

Residents & Atmosphere

- Do residents look happy, clean, and well cared for?
- Are residents dressed appropriately for the time of day?
- Are residents engaged in activities or conversation?
- Can you speak to other residents or families?

Staff Interactions

- Do staff speak warmly and respectfully to residents?
- Do staff crouch down to speak at eye level?
- Do staff use residents' names (not room numbers)?
- Are there enough staff visible and available?
- Do staff seem to know residents as individuals?

Facilities & Rooms

- Can you see a typical room, not just a show room?
- Can residents personalise their rooms with photos and furniture?
- Is there adequate space, light, and storage?
- Is there accessible outdoor space that's actually used?
- Are communal areas clean and well-maintained?



Questions to Ask

- What is the staff-to-resident ratio during day and night?
- What is your staff turnover rate?
- How do you manage medication and medical emergencies?
- What activities and outings are available?
- Can residents choose when to get up and go to bed?
- What happens if care needs increase significantly?
- Can residents keep their own GP or will they need to change?
- How do you communicate with families about day-to-day changes?

Costs & Contract

- What is included in the basic weekly fee?
- What extras are charged separately (hairdressing, chiropody, outings)?
- How much notice for fee increases?
- Do fees continue during hospital stays?
- What is the notice period for leaving?
- Are there any joining fees or admin charges?

Activities & Food

- Is there a varied activities programme?
- Can you see a sample weekly menu?
- What happens if a resident doesn't like what's on offer?
- Are mealtimes flexible or fixed?

Red Flags to Watch For

- Residents calling for help but being ignored
- Staff who seem rushed, stressed, or dismissive
- Reluctance to answer questions or show you around
- Pressure to make a quick decision
- Vague or evasive answers about fees and contracts
- Unpleasant odours or unclean communal areas
- Residents who appear unkempt or unhappy



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Search, compare, and read full CQC inspection reports for every care home in Darlington



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