

Keeping an eye on things after a move

However much we plan for the future and put in place as much as we can for our relative to ensure that they are settled and secure and well provided for, we still worry especially knowing that we are not always going to be around to keep an eye on things. However, there is a peace of mind that comes with knowing that we have been part of that planning process and have done everything we can to ensure that our relative lives a safe and healthy life.

Much of the planning ahead process involves working closely with other people including your relative, family, friends and professionals and they will all have a valuable part to play in making sure things are going well. It may take a while for your relative to settle into their new house and sometimes, we may have to take an initial step back while they adjust to living independently. Everyone is different. There is no right or wrong way. It is more a case of supporting your relative in a way that works best for them.

After the move

Your relative may start to try new things. This may concern you, but the key is for them to try new things in a way that minimises risk but enables them to feel confident about their achievements.

Your relationship may gradually change. You are no longer the primary carer, but Mum or Dad. How you shape this different involvement will depend on how much you feel able to do, where your relative has moved to and the level of support they need to make decisions. Remember, you are not handing them over, you are just stepping aside.

You can continue to be involved with person-centred planning. Your relative may meet new people who can bring different ideas and connections and contribute to their person-centred plan.

If your relative has a circle of support keep it going if possible, as having other people involved during and after the move brings a different perspective and can help make a move go well. Sometimes other people dropping in to see your relative is easier for them initially if they struggle when they see you.

If your relative has difficulty communicating verbally, make sure they have a communication passport that describes their communication and how staff should support them to make decisions as well as how your relative expresses emotions and feelings such as pleasure and pain.

Help your relative to choose photos and items to take with them. Creating a memory book for them is a good way for support staff to chat to them about their life, family and friends especially in the future years.

Keeping in touch

Try to arrange for your relative to have regular contact with family and/or friends. It gives the message to the support provider that you are committed to your relative having a good life and that there are others who are keeping an eye out.

There should be no restrictions on when you call in. Sometimes it is good to drop in unannounced, especially if you are concerned about anything.

Is your relative able to keep in touch using a phone or some other type of technology – work with the staff so that they can support them to call you. Staff should check with your relative whether they want them to stay once they are connected.

When you visit, you should be able to have some time on your own with your relative so they can talk about any worries they may have. Sometimes staff (trying to be helpful) answer on behalf of your relative which may cause them distress. Having a discreet word with the manager explaining how this makes you and your relative feel is a good idea.

If there are no family members or friends that could visit your relative, you could consider putting money in a discretionary trust to pay an advocate or other interested person to visit.

Building a relationship with people supporting your relative

A good support provider will welcome family and friends involvement and create opportunities for you to meet in a variety of ways. It is important to communicate with the provider and let them know how you would like to be involved.

Give positive comments when you see something good happening – it is easy to be only critical which can be demoralising to staff.

Establishing a good relationship means it is easier to raise concerns and ideas for change. Discuss any concerns you may have at an early stage as that should make them easier to resolve. Your involvement will depend on your relative's ability to be able to speak out and make their opinions known.

Making decisions

If your relative has difficulty making some or most decisions, you will want to keep an eye on how decisions are being made on their behalf.

Family members must still be involved in the process of assessing whether someone has the capacity to make a specific decision and in making best interest decisions. If this is not happening, or you feel decisions are being made that do not seem to be in your relative's best interest and you are not being listened to, you can ask for an independent advocate to be involved.

Failing this, you can follow the complaints procedure.

Quality checking

If the support provider is providing personal care and has an office in the house they should be CQC inspected – check what their ratings are on the CQC website.

In some areas, there is a quality checking service which employs people with learning disabilities and/or family carers that inspects properties and ask residents and tenants their views about the support they receive. They often use the REACH standards to monitor the services against. In Oxfordshire, My Life My Choice conduct quality checks. Ask the support provider if you can see any of the reports.

How to keep safe

Your relative needs to feel safe where they live, and you need the reassurance that all the relevant tests are carried out on a regular basis.

Ask whether regular smoke alarm and fire safety checks are carried out including fire alarm, gas and electrical checks.

What happens when someone comes to the house – are ID badges checked?
How is your relative supported to understand internet safety?
Does your relative understand about the procedures that exist to help them keep safe and secure. Most local authorities have produced an Easy Read guide to help people understand about keeping safe or safeguarding. Where is this kept and how will your relative be supported to make a complaint in a way that they feel comfortable and safe.
Is there an Easy Read complaints procedure about the housing and support provider that your relative understands.
Who has access to your relative's passwords for any online accounts they may have?
Who has access to your relative's pin number for their bank account? Who supports your relative to withdraw money? How are their finances monitored? (This is something you need to think about for the future).
If your relative is able to go out on their own, do they know how to ask for help if they feel threatened or unsafe. Is there a safe place scheme in the area? If so, has the support provider explained to them how it works in a way that they understand? Would they know where to go and get help?

What to do if you have concerns

We are parents, our relative who is vulnerable has just moved out of the family home, so it is only natural that we worry. If you do have any concerns, raise them straight away, even if it is only a minor issue as it will prevent the problem from escalating.
Equally, if your relative raises any concerns, or you start to see a change in their behaviour raise this with the manager straight away.
Different levels of action can be taken depending on the nature of the concern. It may be that something specific is not working well, support is of poor quality, or you have noticed something that makes you worried that some kind of abuse is taking place.
You should not worry that raising a concern will affect your relatives support – this should never be the case and would be cause for serious concern in itself.
If you think your relative is at 'risk of harm' the Safeguarding of Adults procedure should be used. If they have been a victim of crime the police should be contacted. If you think they are at risk but not in immediate danger you should report it to the safeguarding adults team. It is important to know that abuse can be of various kinds: physical, sexual, psychological, financial, material, discriminatory or institutional, or to do with neglect and acts of omission. The safeguarding team once provided with the information about a concern have a duty to follow it up.
If you wish to make an official complaint, talking it through with other family members or people who know your relative well first may help you decide the best way of approaching the issue and provide you with a written record. Keep a record of all correspondence with staff. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You should start by talking to the manager/service provider first. If you have already established a good relationship, it will be easier to raise any worries. If this does not resolve the issue, escalate it further using the complaints procedure. Every organisation by law must have their own complaints procedure. You can ask for independent support when making a complaint by contacting the local authority or NHS who should be able to advise on who can help. If you still feel your complaint is not being addressed or dealt with, you can take it to an independent regulatory body such as the Care Quality Commission or government ombudsman.

Adapted from **Thinking ahead: a planning guide for families**
Together Matters