

How to talk about care at home

A practical guide to starting conversations about care with your loved one



Care doesn't stop when your needs change

As life moves forward, care often comes full circle.

The people who once cared for us begin to need care themselves. For many adult children, juggling work, family, and ageing parents can feel overwhelming, and becoming a carer for your mum and/or dad is a near-universal experience that's still rarely talked about.

We all want the best for our parents but knowing how and when to step in can be hard. Admitting you need help is a caring act in itself. Recent research by Consultus Care and Nursing has found that;

94% of adults say it's important that their parent stays in their own home.

However, 61% haven't yet had a conversation about care.

This guide is for anyone who wants to feel better equipped to have conversations about care with the people they love.

Whether your parent still lives independently or already receives some support, this tool is designed to help you approach the subject of care with confidence, compassion, and a clear plan.



At Consultus, we believe life is better at HOME

When it comes to supporting a loved one, knowing where to start can often feel overwhelming. To make things easier, we've created a simple acronym – HOME – to guide you through the key steps of approaching conversations and decisions about care. Each step is designed to help you open up discussions with compassion, plan together, and adapt as circumstances change, always keeping your loved one's comfort and independence at the heart of the journey.

H **Have a health check-in.** Keep tabs on how they're doing day-to-day i.e. physically, mentally, and emotionally. Declining mobility or mood might signal a need for more support.

O **Open up the conversation.** Don't wait for a crisis or a sudden change in their health. Begin the conversation casually and early, when things feel calm and manageable

M **Make a plan together.** Whether it's future-proofing their home or researching options that suit their needs, involve them in next steps so that it's a decision made together.

E **Evolve as things change.** Your loved ones needs may shift over time, so make sure to check in often with them and adjust your plans as needed.



H - Have a health check-in

Start by quietly observing how your parent is doing day-to-day — physically, mentally, and emotionally. You don't need to be a medical expert to notice when something feels different or 'not quite right.'

Small changes often happen gradually, so it's useful to keep tabs over time and trust your instincts. These kinds of changes might mean it's time to talk about extra support.

Here's a short little checklist of things to notice / monitor:

- Forgetfulness or confusion (missing appointments, repeating stories)
- Changes in mobility (unsteadiness, hesitance with stairs, avoiding outings)
- Loss of appetite or weight changes
- Neglected personal hygiene or unwashed clothes
- Messier home environment than usual
- Mood changes (withdrawal, low energy, irritability)
- More frequent health complaints (aches, falls, sleep issues)

Top Tip:

These chats don't need to feel heavy or clinical. Try asking casual questions while you're doing something together, like having a cup of tea or going for a walk. It helps make the conversation feel more relaxed and natural.

Keep a simple journal of what you notice over 1–2 weeks. Talk to a GP or social worker if you see consistent physical or cognitive changes.

You can also explore a needs assessment, which is a free service through your local council, to help determine what kind of support might be helpful. Find your local authority here: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-needs-assessment-social-services>



O - Open up the conversation

Don't wait for a crisis. Introduce the topic in a calm moment like over a cup of tea or a walk when no urgent decision needs to be made.

Starting the conversation is often the hardest part. You don't need all the answers but just an open mind and a bit of courage. So, focus on what matters most to them, not just their needs, but their values, routines and preferences.

What does a 'good' later life look like for them?

Prompts or questions to gently start the conversation:

- How would you feel about someone popping in to give you a bit of extra help around the house during the week?
- What are some things you wish you could do more of during the day?
- Is there anything you're finding a bit harder lately?
- Have you ever thought about what kind of help you'd want if things got a little trickier?
- Do you think your home still works for everything you need day-to-day?

Top Tip:

It's okay if they brush it off the first time - or even the fifth. Resistance is normal. You're planting seeds. If a door closes, gently leave it open for the future. What matters is that they feel respected, not pushed.



M - Make a plan together

Whether it's future-proofing their home or researching options that suit their needs, involve them in next steps so that it's a decision made together.

Some of the terms around care can sound a bit formal or overwhelming, but they don't have to be. Here are a few you might come across and what they really mean in everyday language:

Care at home: Also called 'domiciliary care' or 'live-in care', this means getting support in your own home. This support can look like help with washing, dressing, or household tasks. It's often flexible and tailored.

Reablement/ Respite Care: Short-term care (usually a few weeks) to help someone regain confidence and independence after illness or injury. Can also be useful to cover holidays or family members or carers.

Needs assessment: A free evaluation by your local authority that looks at what support your parent might need day-to-day, and whether they're eligible for funded care.

Adaptions: Small changes in the home like grab rails, stair lifts or walk-in showers, that can make it safer and easier to live independently.

Capacity: The ability to make your own decisions. If someone 'lacks capacity,' it means they're no longer able to understand or weigh up information well enough to make choices about their care, finances, or living arrangements.

Top Tip:

Planning doesn't mean locking in big changes straight away. It's about understanding your options before there's a rush and helping your parent feel in control of what comes next. Sharing stories from friends or neighbours can help make things feel more relatable.





E - Evolve as things change

Reassure your parent that support doesn't mean losing independence. Help them explore what's available, from community help to trusted professional care at home.

It's okay if things don't go to plan. Care isn't a straight road and it can take detours, pauses, and changes in direction. The most important thing is to stay responsive and open, rather than feeling like you have to get it 'right' the first time.

Keeping the conversation going and adjusting step by step can help everyone feel more in control, even when life feels unpredictable.

Top Tip:


You don't have to figure it all out by yourself. Chat to your sibling, friend, or partner about how things are going. They might offer practical help, or even a fresh perspective. A quick conversation can make all the difference.

Want to chat about what's right for your loved one? Talk to Consultus Care

With over 60 years of experience, Consultus is one of the UK's most trusted live-in care providers. Family-founded and family-owned, they understand the unique pressures adult children face and they offer care that works for everyone involved.

Whether you're just starting the conversation or already exploring options, our team can offer personalised guidance to help you understand what's available and what feels right for your family.

Visit consultuscare.com or call 01732 355231 to speak with our team.

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