

Factsheet A24: Home care services - using an agency

Professional carers have a variety of skills. Some have nursing and first aid qualifications and other may be home helps or personal assistants. Examples of the type of tasks they may undertake are:

- cooking, cleaning and other household tasks
- help with personal care like washing and using the toilet
- driving or help with getting around
- medical tasks like giving injections or changing a catheter
- shopping, banking and paying bills.

The idea is to help you maintain your independence and remain living within your own home. The option you choose depends on your needs and preference for employing services directly, and how much responsibility you wish to take on (i.e. employing a PA yourself) or using a care agency.

If you would be happier using a care agency, Norfolk County Council has a Home Care Providers list. These are organisations that are registered with the Care Quality Commission. Have a look at the link 'here is a list of organisations that provide home care' on this webpage: <https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/care-support-and-health/care-and-support/types-of-care/home-support-and-home-care>

They point out at the start of the Providers list: 'the Providers have also been accredited by Norfolk County Council for use by the Adult Social Services Department in the delivery of personal care provision for Norfolk. However, they are not approved



or monitored for their private commissioned work and Norfolk County Council cannot accept liability for any issues that may arise from the use of a Provider on this list for private commissioned work. This list does not reflect the quality of providers. For further information on the quality of providers please contact the Care Quality Commission (CQC) on 01223 771300 or visit their website www.cqc.org.uk.'

If you are happy to let the Council arrange your care, they will use the money allocated in your personal budget to pay an agency, who will provide staff who will be employed by the agency.

Prices for agencies will commonly range from £12 to £20 an hour, and may rise at weekends and be even higher on bank holidays.

This isn't what the agency worker gets paid – they will often only receive the National Living or Minimum wage, and they will not be paid for travelling between clients. The rate per hour is used for 60 minute visits, but if you book a 15 minute or 30 minute slot, this can be expensive as they can calculate this at higher than the expected proportion of the hourly rate.

The downside of using an agency was expressed well in this anonymous report from an agency worker: "We were paid around £7 an hour but were charged out at nearly £25. We did not have much time to get from one appointment to the next, and you often felt that you were rushing clients. The sad thing is that the clients often didn't know who they were getting, sometimes with different people one week to the next."

If you require further information or would like this factsheet in an alternative format you can contact us by calling: 01508 491210, by emailing: info@equallives.org.uk, or by writing to: Equal Lives, 15 Manor Farm Barns, Fox Road, Framingham Pigot, Norfolk, NR14 7PZ.

