

Residential Homes - Where to Start

Where to start when you're beginning to consider residential homes for your son/daughter

The first crucial point to consider is that your daughter/son has a Transition Assessment of needs (a Community Care Assessment). This should be instigated at the review on her/his 13/14th birthday. It should be completed by the final year (18/19 years) so that everyone is aware of her/his needs. During this time you need to find out about homes/colleges in your local authority area (this will be a requirement of your authority). If you do not find an acceptable placement in your local authority area, look outside in other areas.

At this stage you should have a Social Worker/Care Manager. She/he will give you the names of the homes/colleges in your area that may suit your daughter/son. If you do not have a social worker phone the local social services disability team and request one.

If you need to look in other areas the libraries or social services in the various areas will furnish you with names and addresses of homes and colleges; also take a look on the internet. Friends and acquaintances may also be able to help.

Once you have isolated some places to visit, make an appointment. Make sure you give yourself time - there is nothing worse than having to rush a visit. If the place you visit rushes you ask why; it would not be considered good practice to be rushed by the home/college. It may help you to go with someone you know. If you do take someone with you, show them the questions below and brief them as to what you would like them to do.

The following are some questions that may be useful to think about/ask. You may think of others that have a relevance to your daughter/son:

What are the different kinds of residential placements?

- Village - most authorities frown on these now days, but if you feel this is the best placement for your daughter/son don't be put off.
- Independent flat with support workers coming in for set number of hours each day/week
- Residential home of varying sizes on a street (community homes).
- Therapeutic communities (home where a therapeutic approach is offered 24 hours a day)
- Independent living housing; your daughter/son would own the tenancy of a flat/house and a package of care, depending on their staffing need, would be bought in.

In your local authority area or not - which one is best?

Make notes on all the places you visit. List pros and cons. See our *Exploring Residential Homes* factsheet for questions to ask. Remember, you know your daughter/son and what would work for them . . .

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When looking at Residential Provision it is also necessary to ask about their Day-Care Provision:

- How do you determine what the students would be interested in doing?
- Do you set up individual programme plans?
- How do you monitor development?
- Who is involved in setting goals and monitoring?

- Is there any day care on site?
If so, what do they offer?
- What choices do the students have?
- How do you know that the student wants to be in the workshop?
- How many people are involved in each workshop?
How many tutors?
- How long do the workshops last?
- If people are producing something - what happens to the product?
- Do the students get paid if they are involved in products that are sold?

- Are there any local day colleges?
- What do they offer?
- Would my daughter/son be considered for sessions there?
- Are you aware of any criteria that would prohibit students being welcomed?
- How would she/he be supported there?
- How do you maintain links with the college?
- How do they keep you in touch with students' development?

Residential College for the first 2/4 years prior to moving into a home:

The above questions would also be relevant when visiting the college, plus:

- Do you have an emotional needs policy?
- How do you support people with their emotional needs?
- Do you have a sexual needs policy?
- Have you had experience with supporting people with sexual needs?
- How do you operate risk taking?
- Do you have a complaints procedure?
- Is there a forum for students to discuss the running of the college?
- What happens socially for the students during the evenings and weekends?
- How informed do you keep parents/carers?
- What is the process for being accepted into the college?
- When are the college breaks?
- Can students come home during the weekends?
- May I have a copy of your various policies?

If you opt for a residential college, during the last two years you should look at options for a residential home in order that you have isolated a placement for when your daughter/son is due to leave college.

