



TOP 10 Tips when looking for a Social Care Consultant

1. Are they qualified?

If your care consultant does not have any relevant health or social care qualifications, this suggests that they may have some experience but not necessarily the qualifications to offer accurate advice and support. You wouldn't employ anyone else that did not hold the relevant qualifications; for example, would you use an unqualified hairdresser or an unqualified gas engineer?

Assessing care needs and identifying how those needs should be met takes understanding of current legislation, policies and most importantly, it identifies their level of competence, knowledge and skills.

2. Are they registered?

As with many health and social care professions, the title Social Worker is a registered and protected title; you must be registered with Social Work England to practice as a Social Worker in England. Why is ensuring a care consultant a registered professional? Those professionals registered with Social Work England or the Health Care Professions Council must complete continuing professional development; this means you can be assured that a registered health and social care professionals knowledge is up-to-date.

Secondly, registration means accountability. If your care consultant does not have any professional registering body, they have limited accountability for their services. In contrast, a registered Social Worker must abide by the codes of conduct outlined by the registering body and be held accountable should they not meet these codes.

Always be aware of those that say, "I was registered, but...." some people do choose not to register with their professional bodies. While, for the most part, this is due to their own personal circumstances, there could also be a reason why they are no longer able to register.

3. Are they receiving a commission?

Organising care should always mean that the individual is at the centre of any decision making. Whether it be domiciliary, nursing home or technology, any care organised should always be the proper care for that person. If a care consultant receives a commission from a third party agency such as a domiciliary care provider, it would beg whether care organised is the proper care for the individual or to ensure the care consultant receives a commission.

4. Is the focus on assessing and meeting needs or on how it will be financed?

It's okay to be concerned about how care is going to be paid for, and there are lots of funding streams out there, but the main focus of any care consultants work should always be the individual and identifying their care needs and how these needs will be met. If your care consultant is more interested in CHC funding and Local Authority funding, then are they able to identify actual care needs?

Funding is essential, but if care needs are assumed rather than assessed, you can pay for care that is unnecessary or paying for the wrong type of care.

5. Does your care consultant have a holistic process that mirrors that of the NHS and Social Care?

The NHS and Local Authorities complete thousands of care assessments and plan every day; if your care consultant isn't mirroring their process, then this would be a red flag. After all, why would you not look to use all of that experience?

Care consultancy should always start with a Care Act (2014) compliant needs assessment. This should be followed by a care plan to identify how those needs are met, followed by the organisation of services (brokerage), finally followed by reviews to identify whether the provision is sufficient and if not, then adjustments need to be made.

Suppose your care consultant is skipping the assessment stage. In that case, this could result in unidentified needs going unmet and care provision being based solely upon the consultant's experience - which can, in turn, be a costly error.

6. Are they insured?

Always check to ensure that not only they have public liability insurance but that they also hold professional indemnity insurance. If they say no to either, then this may be a reason to walk away.

7. Do they have a team, or do they have "partners"?

There are many agencies out there who have relationships with professionals, while in all likelihood the person you see will be qualified and registered, you may end up paying additional costs to the care consultancy for acting as a middle man.

Our advice is always to use an independent professional or a consultancy practice that employs professionals directly. This ensures accountability for all parties.

8. Are they DBS Checked?

A DBS Check ensures they do not have a criminal record and a fit to work with vulnerable adults and children. Ask to see theirs. If they can't, provide either their certificate or their update ID, it is undoubtedly best to walk away.

9. Do they have reviews?

For consumers, Online reviews are a great way of seeing what others are saying about them and have become more popular over the past several years, whether it be for services or products. If they don't have any reviews or aren't on a reviewing site such as Feefo or Trustpilot, it may be worth continuing to search for a more transparent provider.

For practices such as Nellie supports, reviews are an essential part of our reflective practice and improve our business and our professional practice.

10. Are they Registered?

I know we have already covered this one. but it's really important if they aren't a registered professional then their accountability is limited.