local authority homes, these people tended to move into a private home where a vacancy could be found quickly.

Then there were the people who had deteriorated over a period of time. They had generally received increasingly large packages of care from social services and as they deteriorated, their admission, generally to a local authority home, was planned.

The elderly people who had made the decision themselves to move into residential care because they felt lonely and isolated had generally moved into a private home. The admission to care would probably not be considered urgent by professionals and these elderly people might expect a very long wait for a local authority bed. They had often been advised to move into a private home where a vacancy could be found, though many had wanted to move into this type of home anyway.

Admission to a home because of pressure on the carer might result in admission to either a local authority or a private home and there was a great deal of variation in the extent to which the elderly people had been involved in choosing a home.

The elderly people we interviewed generally had very little real choice about either the move into residential care or the particular home they would move into. There were, however, two extreme situations in our sample. Firstly, there was a group of people who were generally mentally alert and relatively physically able but who were becoming increasingly lonely and isolated. They had actively made the decision to move into a home for the companionship and care it offered. These people accounted for around a fifth of the sample. They had usually entered a private residential home and had often been active in seeking an appropriate home.

At the other extreme, there was a group of people who had not wanted to enter residential care and who felt they had not been consulted about the move. They felt there had not been enough discussion, they had not had enough control and had felt under pressure to enter a home. These people also accounted for around a fifth of the sample. Some had entered a local authority home, others a private home. They had usually been admitted to care following a crisis, having been told that there was no way they could stay at home, or they had moved into a home, possibly under duress, to relieve their carers, many of whom had been caring for some considerable time. These people were generally very unhappy about the move into residential care and had generally not settled in the home very well.

The rest of the sample, accounting for around three-fifths of the elderly people we interviewed, had generally not positively chosen to move into care but had usually accepted the situation and had participated to varying degrees in the decisions about the home.

Chapter 9

Living in a residential home

The move into residential care is often a time of great anxiety, and the lack of information elderly people often have about the home may well mean that they know little or nothing about life in residential care or that they have misapprehensions. We were interested to know whether they had found it different from their expectations.

Sixty per cent of the elderly people said that living in a residential home was better than they thought it was going to be, mainly because they were looked after in the home and all their needs were taken care of: 'It was better than I expected because you hear about these places, but they are very kind here and look after you well. They are there if you need them and they make sure you are comfortable...'

Some elderly people said how much they enjoyed the company in the home. The staff were mentioned in particular, but some elderly people liked the company of the other residents: 'Better, although it's early days yet. I didn't realise it would be so friendly. I'm not at all lonely, chiefly because of the proprietors and the people they employ. We're all on first name terms...'

The elderly people who had entered the home because they were lonely were particularly likely to say they enjoyed the company: 'Better, because it's company. I never used to have any company all day long...'

Other people said residential care was better than they thought it would be because the food was good, the home was comfortable or because they had more freedom than they thought they would: 'Better - I've got my own room, you can do what you like in here, have all your friends in the living rooms where you can laugh and joke. If you're not happy, that's your funeral...'

A third of the residents felt unable to comment, mainly, they said, because they had never considered the matter before they moved in and did not have any idea, therefore, of what it might be like. But only six people, four local authority and two private residents, actually said that living in a home was worse than they thought it would be. The local authority residents usually disliked having to share a room. Sharing a room is very painful for some people, and it is not perhaps surprising that they are unhappy under circumstances such as those described by an elderly woman in the London area: 'It's worse. I share a room. I don't like
that. I was told I’d have my own wash-basin but we share. She’s not fussy about whose towel she uses so I have to hide mine. I can’t bear to think of someone else using it…”

The two private residents simply said they did not want to live in a residential home.

**What elderly people liked about residential care**

Since residential care has such a poor image and is regarded by so many professionals as a ‘last resort’, we wondered whether there was anything about living in the home that the elderly people particularly liked. More than 80 per cent of residents in both local authority and private homes said that there was.

The company offered by the home, especially the company of the staff, was clearly a very important aspect of home life. More than a quarter of the elderly people who liked living in the home said that they enjoyed the company generally (29 per cent), while a further quarter said they liked the residential staff (27 per cent). The private residents said that they particularly liked the matron or proprietor of the home: ‘I’ve got company all the day long. There’s only one gentleman, but we don’t squabble over poor old Fred!’…”

It is really not surprising that so many of the elderly people enjoyed the company, as most of the private residents had lived alone before entering residential care, and loneliness was one of the main reasons for admission to a private home.

Around a quarter of the residents, particularly the private residents, said that they liked the food. Many elderly people, especially if they are living alone or if they are frail, do not make the effort to cook a meal for themselves. Some live to a tight budget and cannot afford to eat well. This elderly woman, who had previously lived alone with very little help from either formal or informal sources, appreciated the provision of meals by the private home: ‘I like the food, it’s beautiful, it’s like Christmas every day…”

A fifth of the sample enjoyed the fact that everything was done for them: ‘You get looked after. It’s the first rest I’ve had for years. It’s care, attention and kindness…”

Some of the local authority residents had clearly thought that there would be many limitations upon them when they moved into the home, as more than 10 per cent of all the local authority residents said they liked the freedom they had in the home: ‘The freedom. I can go out, go to the shops, I can sit and talk to the other people and have a joke with them. I like that…”

Other aspects of the home which the residents said they liked included the cleanliness (8 per cent) and having a single room (7 per cent in both local authority and private homes), while 7 per cent liked ‘everything’.

**What elderly people disliked about residential care**

While more than two-thirds of the residents said there was nothing they disliked about living in the home, around a third of the private residents and a fifth of the local authority residents said they disliked something. The main things the private residents disliked were some of the other residents, sharing a room and some physical aspect of the home which made mobility difficult: ‘We have one person who doesn’t fit in and that causes problems. It means people won’t talk to other people. She’s very outspoken. I had a row with her the other day…”

Sometimes it did not appear surprising that the residents had complaints. This elderly woman had recently entered a private home in the southern area and was finding the company somewhat strange: ‘I’m the only one who isn’t deaf in here. They’re all deaf except me. One woman just talks, talks, talks, one’s got that shaking disease. Another says “Where do you come from? I’m from Bradford”. One just rocks all the time and one woman says, “I’m not talking to you, you’re new”. They’ve all got their funny ways!”

Two of the private residents disliked ‘everything’ about the home and simply did not want to live there while one or two disliked the staff, the restrictions imposed upon them, disturbance at night, the food and not being able to bring their pet in.

Local authority residents tended to dislike the large size of the home. Some residents referred to their lack of privacy and the fact that they disliked living in a crowd, while others disliked sharing a room and some of the other residents. They also referred to restrictions on their behaviour and movements, while some disliked members of the staff: ‘Sharing a room. I hate it, although the lady I share with is blind. But when she’s on her commode, she’s nearly on top of me…”

Privacy was a very important issue, and given the circumstances in some homes, it was surprising to us that it was not mentioned more often: ‘It’s not as private as living in sheltered accommodation. It takes a bit of getting used to. I had my own bathroom and toilet and that sort of thing before. I liked that…”
What elderly people thought about the other residents
Around a quarter of all residents said that they liked the company offered by the home, while just under 10 per cent said they disliked some of the other residents. But what did the elderly people really think of the other residents? We asked this question specifically.

Around a quarter of the sample were fairly neutral in their opinion of the residents, commenting that they were 'all right', like this woman in a local authority home in the southern area: 'They're all right. They can't understand you. Some of them are just past it, sort of thing. They're just old...'

But around the same proportion were more enthusiastic, saying that the other residents were 'nice' and that they 'liked them'. This woman lived in another local authority home in the southern area: 'They're like brothers and sisters. We have a bit of fun and joke together...'

As might be expected, around a fifth of the residents referred to the variety of people living in the home: 'We get a mixture. Some don't know where they're going - their memories have gone, poor souls. But most aren't too bad...'

Others said that they liked some of the residents, but not others: 'You get on with some. And some you don't. There's one particularly who is very loud, but she can't help it. She's not sure of herself...'

But some of our respondents were clearly unhappy about living with others, especially if the other people were mentally frail. Fourteen per cent of the residents referred to the fact that some of the residents were confused. It is perhaps surprising that private residents were more likely to refer to confusion in the home than the local authority residents. It is known that many private homes are reluctant to accept people with dementia and that local authority homes may well have a greater proportion of mentally frail residents: 'There's some queer ones wandering up and down all day. They leave the taps running and come into the toilet and say, "It's only me". I say, "I know it's only you but I can't be doing with you in the toilet with me...."'

Again, the elderly people referred to the company and conversation provided by the staff, rather than the other residents: 'Well you see, that's the trouble. There's not many I can go up to and have a conversation with. They're crackers. Their brains are touched in a lot of them and I can't talk to them. But I get on well with the staff...'

A further 15 per cent of the sample said that they did not associate with the other residents or that they preferred to have nothing to do with them:

I prefer to sit alone than sit with people who need care. They make me feel miserable. I don't like their little idiosyncrasies. It gets to me. I can talk to you, but not to them...

Similarly, some people seemed to want to see themselves as being different from the other residents, with some very old and frail residents commenting on the disabilities of other residents: 'I feel sorry for them. They're all cripples - they have arthritis and pains. The nurses have a rough time I think...'

Others tolerated some of the other residents because they felt that they themselves might become mentally frail: 'You put up with them, knowing one day you'll come to that yourself. One day, you'll be going gaga yourself. You wonder why some have been sent here...'

Other residents came in for quite a lot of criticism, with some men saying that all the residents were women and that they would prefer more men, as well as references to bad language, bad manners, noisy and dominant residents and complainers.

Clearly, the other residents were an aspect of home life which the elderly people generally did not appreciate, with some people being positively hostile to others: 'One person seems half dead. When she has a bath, I say, "Drawn her for me". One lady keeps clearing her throat at mealtimes. I told her not to and the helper told me off. Now I have my meals in my room, it's much nicer...'

Satisfaction with residential home
Around three-quarters of both local authority and private residents said they were satisfied with the home they lived in, with almost half the local authority residents commenting that they were very satisfied.

The local authority homes in the southern area got a particularly high rating, with nearly three-quarters of the residents saying they were very satisfied: 'Very satisfied. I'm happy and content. I couldn't wish for anything better. At 7.30, they bring you a nice cup of tea. I don't have breakfast because I'm getting a pot-belly and have trouble getting my corsets on! I wait for my dinner at 12.30. I think they'll keep me because they all like me. I don't mean to be big-headed but they do.'

| Table 9.2 Satisfaction with residential home among elderly people |
|-------------------|------------------|------------------|
|                   | Total | Local authority homes | Private homes |
| Very satisfied    | 44    | 48               | 39              |
| Satisfied         | 29    | 25               | 33              |
| Fairly satisfied  | 18    | 17               | 20              |
| Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied | 2    | 2                | 2               |
| Fairly dissatisfied | 4    | 6                | 2               |
| Dissatisfied      | 1     | -                | -               |
| Very dissatisfied | 2     | -                | -               |
| Don't know        | 2     | 2                | 2               |

Base: all elderly people in residential care (103) (52) (51)
But some residents who said they were fairly satisfied were clearly trying to view an unwanted situation in a positive way: ‘I’m fairly satisfied. You have to be here. You never choose a thing like this. But it’s come that you have to…’

Only five of the residents expressed dissatisfaction with the home; three local authority residents and two private residents. These elderly people said they were dissatisfied with different aspects, including their lack of independence, the lack of activities in the home and the medical care. But underlying the dissatisfaction with particular aspects of the home, it was clear that these residents did not want to live in a residential home at all: ‘I’m fairly dissatisfied. I’m just told what to do and I do it. It’s just that everything here is done for me. I don’t seem to have any say. All my home is parcelled out to other people. They’ve all got something of mine. There it is and it’s just been taken from me…’

What about the carers? They had frequently played a key role in the decision to move into residential care and about which particular home the elderly person should move into. How satisfied were they with the home?

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| Base: all carers of elderly people in residential care | (74) | (42) | (32) |

Like the elderly people themselves, there was a high level of satisfaction with the residential home among the carers, with 86 per cent satisfied, including two-thirds who were very satisfied. There was little difference in opinion between carers of private and local authority residents. The son of an elderly woman living in a local authority home in the southern area was very impressed with the home: ‘Very satisfied. Absolutely. Ten out of ten. I can’t fault it. Her key worker wears earrings and has a stud in her nose. But she’s a super girl. I thought, “What will Mother think?” But she’s really super. If you saw her in the street, you’d think she was “one of those” – but she’s super!…’

Only three of the carers were dissatisfied with the home; two carers of private residents and one carer of a local authority resident. These carers, however, tended to be very dissatisfied, and complained about many aspects of the home, including the matron or head of the home and other staff, the medical care, the general care of the residents, the food, the lack of activities, the bedrooms and the cost. The niece of an elderly woman in a private home in the London area was very critical of the home:

Very dissatisfied. The amount of money – it’s money for old rope. The proprietor is never there – or rarely. Lack of staff is the problem. They’re never taken out anywhere. She was supposed to go to hospital today and they rang me this morning to say they couldn’t spare staff so I had to leave work to go. She had a terrible cold-sore. The doctor wouldn’t come and they wouldn’t take her so I made an appointment eventually when it covered her whole face. It says ‘Residential Care Home’ outside and it should only say ‘Residential Home’. There’s no care. The food’s diabolical, the staff are too young and their money’s not good. The only trained nurse there is leaving and the proprietor says she doesn’t have to have a trained nurse. The chef only lasted a month – she was only a young kid. They’re pleasant but not competent – they’re young kids. They can’t get the proper staff – they probably don’t pay them. The trained nurse says the owner has been muttering about selling it…

Whether carers’ views of residential care had changed

Around a third of the carers said that their views of residential care had not changed since the elderly person had moved into a home, either because they had previously had no views as to what residential care might be like or because they already knew that residential homes were good and the elderly person’s move into the home had confirmed this view.

But just over half the carers said that their views of residential care had changed, usually for the better. The carers praised the home and the staff and the care that the elderly people received: ‘It’s marvellous. She is living better than she was before. She has good food regularly, company most of the time. The young ones jolly her along because she had a good sense of humour. I think they realise she is a very courageous woman who has tried her best to manage on her own…’

Some said they had heard bad things about residential homes and had been rather anxious about their relative’s move into one. But like the daughter of an elderly man in a local authority home in the southern area, these carers were pleasantly surprised to discover that these stories did not apply: ‘I’d heard some awful stories of the way homes were run, but this home is so good. I now realise that residential homes can be marvellous…’

The three carers who had expressed dissatisfaction with the home said that their views of residential care had changed but for the worse. Again, these carers criticised many aspects of the residential home, including the staff, care, food and lack of activities. This daughter-in-law criticised a local authority home in the London area: ‘It’s worse than we expected. We end up taking half of them to the loo – and feeding them their tea. We think it’s dreadful. It’s like a
Complaining

One of the features of being a consumer of a service is the right to complain. But elderly people are often afraid to complain because they think they might antagonise the service deliverer or even lose the service altogether. We have already seen that the elderly people living in the community were worried about complaining about the services they received.

It is also very difficult to complain if you do not perceive yourself to have any choice. Perhaps this is another reason why the elderly people in residential care were so reluctant to criticise anything about the home.

More than a fifth of both the local authority and the private residents felt that there would be nothing they could do if they were unhappy in any way with the home, frequently because there was nowhere else they could go:

I’ve got to be happy. There’s nowhere else to go. My relatives don’t want me. I wouldn’t dream of going there. I know the dangers of living with relatives. I wouldn’t dream of it. While I’ve got a penny of my own, I’ll not live with them..

Similarly, this elderly woman in a private home in the London area recognised that her options were limited: ‘I’d have to stick it. I’ve not much choice really. You couldn’t just walk out, could you?’

A further third of the local authority residents said they did not know what they would do if they were unhappy.

Some residents, however, were more assertive. Around a fifth of the residents said that they would complain to the Matron or head of the home, while the same proportion said they would look for another residential home to move to. Private residents were rather more likely than local authority residents to say they would complain or move to another home. A couple of the private residents even said that they would try and live in the community again: ‘I’d leave and try and find a place to live in – a place of my own. I’d see if I could manage on my own again.’

Virtually all the elderly people said that they received visits, usually from their carer or relative, but also from friends or neighbours and, in a few cases, from their former home help. Some said that they would talk to their carer or relative if they were unhappy, and a few said that if they were unhappy, they would go and live with a member of their family. Some people simply could not conceive of their being unhappy in the home, while for one person, any problems with the home would simply feel like the end of the world – ‘I’d commit suicide’.

As many as a quarter of the sample, however, said that they would be worried about complaining. But there was clearly some reluctance to complain, both among those who said they would be worried and those who said they would not be. One in ten residents said that they disliked complaining: ‘If I had to complain, it would be a big worry to me. I don’t like complaining...’

Others said they would only complain if they really had to: ‘No, I wouldn’t worry, not if it was serious. But it would have to be serious. There’s got to be a certain amount of things that don’t go right, like rows with people, but I haven’t had a row yet...’

Reflecting the high level of satisfaction with the homes, 15 per cent of the residents said they were quite happy with the home and the question of complaining therefore did not apply.

But what did the elderly people think would happen if they did complain? A third of the residents (31 per cent) simply did not know what might happen, but the same proportion thought that the home would rectify the problem (33 per cent). The private residents in particular felt that the home owners would see to their complaint. This elderly woman lived in a private home in the northern area: ‘They’d listen to the complaint and try and sort it out for you...’

Possibly one of the reasons for some people’s reluctance to complain was the fear that they might have to leave the home. Eight per cent of the elderly people said that they might be turned out if they complained, while the same proportion said that they themselves would want to find another home to move to. Local authority and private residents were equally likely to worry about the outcome of their complaining. This woman was living in a private home in the northern area: ‘They would say, “Right, there’s the door. Go!”’ And this woman was living in a local authority home in the London area: ‘I’d get thrown out – put on the rubbish heap...’

It is one thing to complain, but it is another to ensure that the problem is rectified. Some elderly people felt that they were at a disadvantage and that the home owners might not take any notice of their complaint. This woman living in a local authority home in the southern area, for example, was not confident that her voice would be heard: ‘I should be in the dog-house, I would be in the wrong for sure. No notice would be taken...’

Did the carers also feel reluctant or worried about complaining or would they act as true consumers and say what they thought? The carers of local authority and private residents acted in rather different ways. More than half the carers of local authority residents (55 per cent) said that, if they were not happy about the home, they would speak to the head of the home, while around a fifth (19 per cent) said they would complain to the social worker or other member of the social services team. Other carers said they would find another home for the elderly person (17 per cent) or have the elderly person to live with them (10 per cent):

‘We could invite him back here or maybe transfer him to a private place...’

Some carers would combine these options, complaining to the home first, then to the social services department if necessary and if an acceptable solution was still not found, they would move the person out of the home: ‘I’d tell them. We wouldn’t mess about. We’d tell them and if we got no satisfaction, we’d go over their heads...’
The carers of private home residents, on the other hand, said they would take one of two main actions. More than half of the carers (53 per cent) said that they would find another home for the elderly person to live, reflecting the fact that many of the carers of private residents had ‘shopped around’ for the home and were not averse to doing so again: ‘We’d look around elsewhere. Money comes into it. But it’s not easy to move old people from one place to another. She was in a room in the Cottage Hospital, then she was on the ward and then she moved to the home...’

Most of the other carers (44 per cent) said that they would complain to the home owner: ‘I’d see the boss. I have already on two occasions. My mother was sharing a room with a confused woman who became aggressive. I told him and they moved her out. Now she has one that walks about at night and I have told him about this...’

All but one of the carers we interviewed visited the elderly person, mostly once a week or more, and were able to keep an eye on the elderly person and the home. Eighty per cent of the carers said they would not be worried about complaining about the home and a fifth of the private carers said that they could speak quite freely to the home owners and that they would listen. But again there was some reluctance to complain. Some said that they disliked complaining while others said they would only complain if they had good reason to so.

A fifth of the carers said that they would be worried about complaining. Some did not like complaining, but would do so if they had to. Others, however, were clearly concerned as to what effect complaining might have on the care and treatment of the elderly person: ‘Yes, I would be worried, in case you upset them. I wouldn’t like to upset the staff because they might not be so kind to my mother. There have been one or two things I haven’t been sure about...’

Concern about the consequences of complaining disempowers people. Not only were people worried about how the elderly people might be treated, but they were also concerned that the service might be withdrawn altogether. Some carers, therefore, said they would find another home for the elderly person rather than complain about the home: ‘Yes, I’d be frightened of it coming back on her. There is something in the contract that they only have to give a week’s notice if they’re disruptive, I think it says. If she was unhappy, we’d move her, that’s all...’

More than half of the carers (55 per cent), however, felt that if they did actually complain, something would be done about it: “I think they’d be very reasonable. We always take the dog to see her and one old man shouted and swore at her every time he saw her so I got fed up and mentioned it to Matron and she said, "Don’t take any notice, you bring her whenever you like", and she told the old boy off!’

Carers of elderly people in private homes were particularly likely to say that the home would sort the problem out: ‘Knowing the owner, she would sort her staff out if they were in the wrong. One lady complained and said that she would leave and Matron said, “The staff will go before you go”. She makes sure the staff do what they should...’

A further 14 per cent of the carers thought the home would listen to their complaint and look into the matter, even if no resulting action was taken. These comments were usually made by carers of local authority residents, generally from the London and the southern area. But 10 per cent of carers of both local authority and private residents felt that ‘nothing would be done’ if they complained; the home would not take any notice.

But it was clear that many of the carers of private residents were concerned about the consequences of complaining. Some carers were worried that the elderly person might be asked to leave the home: ‘They might make you take them home and look after them yourselves...’

Some were concerned that their relative would receive less care and attention: ‘I think what would happen would be what would happen anywhere. It would reflect on my mother, not on me. She would probably not get the same help and consideration she gets now...’ And some feared that their relative might be mistreated: ‘They would make my Mum’s life a misery...’

Most of the elderly people and their carers, therefore, said they were satisfied with the residential home. But, like assessing satisfaction with services received in the community, caution must be exercised in interpreting the data. Many of the elderly people really had had very little real choice about the decision to move into residential care. They generally thought there were no alternatives to living in residential care and in this respect they felt they had very little choice but to be satisfied with the home. Even if they were not satisfied with the home, some elderly people and their carers were clearly concerned about what the result of complaining might be. Some were worried they might receive less care and attention or even be mistreated, while others thought they might be asked to leave. Their voices were clearly muted by concerns over the possible repercussions of complaining.

**Payment of home charges**

An elderly person’s financial situation may influence the type of home into which the elderly person moves. It was significant that more than half the private residents had been home owners before they moved into residential care, compared with only a quarter of the local authority residents. There is evidence that home owners are less likely to enter local authority residential care and the social workers we spoke to indicated that if someone was considering residential care and owned their own home, they would be more likely to suggest looking towards the private sector for residential care. Residents living in local authority homes were more likely to have been living in rented accommodation, and especially accommodation rented from the local authority (40 per cent of the local authority residents had lived in a council house, 17 per cent had lived in private rented accommodation).

As expected, virtually all the residents said they were receiving a state pension before they moved into residential care. A quarter of them, both local authority and private residents, said they also received a private or occupational
pension. But local authority residents were more likely than private residents to have received income support, while private residents were more likely than those in a local authority home to have had savings and investments.

An elderly person's financial situation must to some extent affect how much choice a person has about the care they receive and whether to move into residential care. It is also likely to influence which type of home a person moves into and which particular home is affordable. Income support enables elderly people entering residential care to obtain financial support, but many of the homes we visited charged more than was available through income support. The release of income from property is also an increasingly important issue.

We were interested in the extent to which the elderly people contributed towards the homes' charges and whether they had received any help from income support.

**Payment of local authority home charges**

We asked the local authority residents whether they made any contribution towards the charges for their accommodation in the home. As we found when we asked them about sources of income, the elderly people were often unsure about whether they contributed or not. Many said they left their finances to their carer. Around two-thirds of the elderly people, however, said they did contribute and most referred to the home taking their pension and giving them back some 'pocket money'. We tried to verify this information with carers and the heads of homes. This gave us a clearer picture, though we were not able to interview a carer for all the elderly people and some of the carers we did interview did not know whether the elderly person contributed towards the charges. Some home owners were also unable to help us in this respect.

Overall, however, as might be expected, local authority residents were primarily contributing towards the home’s charges via their state pension. But we had some evidence that some elderly people were contributing money from other sources. Around a fifth of the local authority residents were contributing money from a private or occupational pension, as well as from their state pension. There was also evidence that five of the 52 local authority residents had sold, or were in the process of selling, their home and the proceeds were being used to help pay for the home. A similar number were said to have savings or investments which were being used.

**Payment of private home charges**

Some of the elderly people living in private homes were very worried about their financial security and were worried about running out of money. Some carers had similar fears about how long the money would last and what would happen when the money ran out. And some had reason to worry. Some of the private homes refused to accept new residents who were receiving income support. If an elderly person ran out of money, some proprietors allowed the elderly person to remain in the home and encouraged and helped them to apply for income support. Others might ask the elderly person to leave.

We asked the private residents if they had any help from income support towards the charges for accommodation in the home. Again, the elderly people were quite often uncertain as to whether they received income support or not, and many thought they did when in fact they probably received attendance allowance. We again tried to verify the information with informal carers and with the proprietor of the homes. Sometimes the carer or proprietor did not know and sometimes there were discrepancies. The information on receipt of income support by private residents should therefore be treated with some caution.

Nevertheless, around a third of the private residents seemed to be receiving income support. Most of these people lived in the northern authority, but a couple of these people were only receiving the benefit temporarily while they sold their house. The majority of the private residents, therefore, did not receive income support, though many said they received help from the attendance allowance.