

Residential Care Worker interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for residential care worker roles focus on your practical care skills, your values and how you handle real situations on shift. Employers want to know you can follow care plans, work safely and communicate well with residents, families and the nursing team.

- **Motivation and values:** Questions about why you want to work in residential care and how you put dignity and person-centred care into practice.
- **Behavioural:** Questions asking for examples from past work or placements, using the STAR method to show how you handled care, teamwork or pressure.
- **Scenario-based:** Questions that put you in a realistic situation, such as a resident refusing care or a fall, to see how you judge risk and follow policy.
- **Technical and safety:** Questions about infection control, manual handling, medication assistance and incident reporting, including the Serious Incident Response Scheme.
- **Availability and shift work:** Questions about your ability to work rostered shifts, including nights and weekends, and your reliability.

The process often starts with a phone screen, then a face-to-face or panel interview with a care manager or registered nurse. Some employers include a tour of the facility or a short practical task. The interview usually runs for 30 to 45 minutes and may include questions about your availability and any checks you hold.

1. Can you walk me through how you approach personal care for a resident who needs assistance with showering and dressing?

Why they ask

This shows whether you understand the practical steps and the dignity and safety considerations behind personal care.

How to structure your answer

Walk-through: preparation, communication, privacy, dignity, infection control, and documentation. Explain each step in order, as if you were doing it on shift.

Example answer

"First, I check the care plan and any mobility or skin care needs. I knock and introduce myself, then explain what I am going to do and ask if they are ready. I make sure the bathroom is warm and private, and I get all the equipment ready before we start. During the shower I encourage the resident to do as much as they can themselves, and I support them safely with transfers and washing. I watch for any redness, bruising or changes in skin condition, and I keep the conversation going so they feel comfortable. Afterwards I help them dress, check they are comfortable, and document the care and anything I noticed in Leecare."

2. Tell me about a time you noticed a change in a resident's condition and had to report it.

Why they ask

Employers need to know you can observe accurately and escalate promptly, because early reporting can prevent a decline.

How to structure your answer

STAR: describe the situation, your task, the action you took, and the result. Be specific about what you noticed and who you told.

Example answer

"I was on an afternoon shift and noticed a resident who was usually alert seemed drowsy and had not eaten much at lunch. My task was to make sure the registered nurse knew as soon as possible. I stayed with the resident, checked their observations within my scope, and asked a colleague to let the nurse know. I documented what I had seen and when. The nurse assessed the resident and adjusted their care plan, and the family was informed. Later that shift I kept an eye on them and passed on clear information in handover."

3. A resident refuses to take their medication. What do you do?

Why they ask

This tests your judgement under pressure and your understanding of medication assistance boundaries in residential care.

How to structure your answer

Judgement under pressure: stay calm, respect the refusal, do not force or persuade beyond your role, report to the registered nurse, document, and follow the care plan. Explain your steps in order.

Example answer

"I would stay calm and respectful. I would not force the resident or try to give the medication in secret. I would ask if they are okay and if something is bothering them, like pain or trouble swallowing. Then I would let the registered nurse know straight away, because medication decisions are theirs. I would document the refusal and what I said in the care notes, and I would follow the nurse's instructions about what to do next, such as trying again later or contacting the doctor. I would also keep an eye on the resident and report any changes."

4. How do you maintain infection control during a shift, and what would you do if you saw a colleague not following hand hygiene?

Why they ask

Infection control protects residents and staff, and employers want to see you know the protocols and can speak up professionally.

How to structure your answer

Explain your routine first, then describe how you would address a colleague: privately, respectfully, and escalate if needed. Keep it practical.

Example answer

"I follow standard precautions every shift. I perform hand hygiene before and after resident contact, use PPE as required, and clean equipment between residents. If I saw a colleague skip hand hygiene, I would speak to them privately and respectfully, saying something like, 'I noticed you went straight to the next resident, do you want to grab some hand gel with me?' If it continued or it was a serious risk, I would report it to the nurse in charge. I know infection control is everyone's responsibility, and I would rather have an awkward conversation than risk a resident's health."

5. How would you support a resident who is upset or distressed, or a family member who has a complaint?

Why they ask

This shows your client-facing skills, empathy and ability to manage emotions while following policy.

How to structure your answer

Empathy and escalation: listen, acknowledge, stay calm, find out what they need, and escalate to the right person. Give a clear example of what you would say and do.

Example answer

"I would sit with them if I could, listen without interrupting, and acknowledge how they are feeling. I might say, 'I can see this is really upsetting. I want to help, so can you tell me what has happened?' I

would not promise things I cannot deliver, but I would find out what they need and let them know I will pass it on. If it was a complaint, I would follow the service's complaints procedure and tell the registered nurse or manager. I would write down the details and make sure the person knew what would happen next."

6. This role involves shift work, including nights and weekends. How do you manage your availability and reliability?

Why they ask

Residential care runs 24 hours a day, so employers want to know you can commit to the roster and turn up reliably.

How to structure your answer

Practical and honest: talk about your availability, how you manage fatigue and travel, and give an example of your reliability. Avoid overpromising.

Example answer

"I am used to shift work and I plan my week so I am rested and ready for nights and weekends. I check the roster in advance and let my manager know early if there is a problem, rather than calling in at the last minute. In my last role I had a strong record of turning up on time and covering shifts when needed, and I am happy to work across the roster. I know residents rely on us being there, so reliability matters to me."