

Retirement Village Manager interview questions

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What to expect

Interviews for retirement village manager roles tend to focus on your ability to run a complex, people-heavy operation while keeping residents safe and satisfied. Employers want evidence you can manage budgets, interpret legislation, and handle sensitive conversations with older people and their families.

- **Operations and process:** How you plan, schedule and coordinate maintenance, services and daily village life.
- **Financial management:** How you build and monitor budgets, set recurrent charges and report to owners or boards.
- **Compliance and safety:** Your knowledge of retirement village legislation, accreditation and work health and safety.
- **Resident and family liaison:** How you communicate with residents, families and care providers, especially when issues arise.
- **Leadership and team:** How you lead administration, maintenance and lifestyle staff through change and day-to-day pressures.
- **Scenario and judgement:** How you prioritise and respond when something goes wrong, such as an emergency or a service failure.

Typically a phone or video screen with HR or a recruiter, then a panel interview with the village operations manager and sometimes a resident committee representative. Some employers include a tour and a scenario exercise, and final stages may involve a regional manager or CEO. You may be asked to walk through a budget or a compliance issue in detail.

1. Walk me through how you would manage the annual budget for a retirement village, from setting recurrent charges to reporting to the board or owners.

Why they ask

Tests whether you understand the full budget cycle and how you balance resident affordability with the village's financial needs.

How to structure your answer

Use a step-by-step structure: gather historical data and forecasts, consult on maintenance and staffing needs, set charges or levies, monitor monthly, report variances. Explain how you involve residents and owners in the process.

Example answer

"I would start by pulling the previous year's actuals and the current maintenance schedule into a forecast. I'd meet with the maintenance and lifestyle teams to understand planned works and any staffing changes, then build a draft budget in Xero. Recurrent charges would be set based on that forecast, with a clear explanation for residents about what each item covers. Once approved, I'd review monthly against actuals, flag any variance over a set threshold, and report to the owners or board with a plain-English summary. If we were behind on maintenance, I'd prioritise safety and compliance items first."

2. Tell me about a time you had to handle a complaint from a resident or family member about a sensitive issue, such as a maintenance delay or a change to services.

Why they ask

Assesses your empathy, communication and ability to resolve issues that affect residents' sense of safety and trust.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR: describe the situation, the task, the action you took, and the result. Keep the focus on what you did and what changed afterwards.

Example answer

"At a previous village, a resident's family complained that a repair to a bathroom rail had been delayed for over a week, and they felt the resident was at risk. I met with the family and the resident together, apologised for the delay, and explained the cause, which was a backlog with our regular trades. I arranged for a temporary safety measure that day and had the permanent repair completed within 48 hours. I then changed our triage process so any request involving mobility or safety was flagged as urgent and escalated to me directly. The family later wrote to say they appreciated the honesty and the quick fix."

3. How do you ensure a village stays compliant with retirement village legislation and work health and safety requirements?**Why they ask**

Checks that you can interpret regulation, maintain accreditation and keep the village audit-ready without letting compliance become a paperwork exercise.

How to structure your answer

Describe your system: keep up with changes, maintain a compliance calendar, conduct audits, train staff, document everything. Give an example of how you have applied it.

Example answer

"I keep a compliance calendar that lists every reporting deadline, audit and inspection. I subscribe to updates from the relevant state regulator and the retirement living peak body, and I review any changes with the team. We run monthly WHS walkthroughs and document hazards and actions in our resident management system. When the Retirement Living Code of Conduct was updated, I ran a short session with all staff on what it meant for our interactions with residents, and we updated our village rules and welcome pack. I also make sure all contractors have current insurance and police checks before they start."

4. Describe a time you had to lead a team through a difficult change, such as new software, a restructure, or a change in service model.**Why they ask**

Shows how you manage resistance, support staff and keep operations running while people adjust to something new.

How to structure your answer

Use STAR, and make sure the result covers both the operational outcome and how the team responded.

Example answer

"We moved from paper logs to a resident management system while I was managing a village. Some of the maintenance and administration staff were worried it would be harder than the old way. I ran hands-on training in small groups, paired less confident staff with a buddy, and made myself available for the first month. I also explained how the new system would reduce double-handling and give us better records for audits. Within two months, everyone was logging requests directly, and our reporting became far more accurate. The main lesson was to listen to the resistance and address the real concerns rather than just announcing the change."

5. Imagine you arrive on a Monday morning and discover a burst water main has cut water to half the village. How would you handle it?

Why they ask

Tests your ability to prioritise resident welfare, communicate under pressure and coordinate a practical response.

How to structure your answer

Use a judgement-under-pressure structure: immediate safety and resident welfare, communicate clearly, fix the problem, then review. Show you can prioritise and keep people informed.

Example answer

"First, I'd confirm the extent of the outage and call the plumber and the water authority. I'd make sure any residents with known health needs or mobility issues had bottled water delivered, and I'd put a notice on each affected door and in the community centre with a clear timeline and a contact number. I'd redirect staff to help residents who needed assistance and keep the office phone line open. Once the repair was underway, I'd send updates every couple of hours. Afterwards, I'd review our emergency plan and check whether we had enough stored water and a better way to reach residents quickly."

6. How would you go about building a strong community atmosphere in a village where residents have diverse needs and levels of independence?

Why they ask

Explores your resident engagement approach and whether you can support a genuine community rather than just run a facility.

How to structure your answer

Combine your philosophy with practical examples: consult residents, support a resident committee, offer varied activities, and be visible. Give an example of something you have done.

Example answer

"I'd start by listening. I'd hold a few informal sessions and a survey to find out what residents actually want, rather than assuming. Then I'd work with the resident committee to support a mix of activities, from exercise classes to social dinners, and make sure new residents are introduced to others. I'd also be visible around the village, not just in the office. At my last village, I started a monthly coffee catch-up with the manager, which gave residents a low-key way to raise ideas or concerns. It helped build trust and meant small issues were solved before they became complaints."