



Helen Wilcox | Manager
Phone: 0121 558 9809
Email: helen@carefirstgroup.co.uk
135 Londonderry Lane, Smethwick
West Midlands, B67 7EL
www.ashlodgcarehome.co.uk

TIPS FOR VIEWING ASH LODGE CARE HOME

Shortlist in advance the key questions you'd like answered as a priority. Don't be afraid to ask lots of questions: the more information you have the more comfortable you will feel.

- Make a list of any follow-up questions you'd like to ask later on it's helpful to discuss this sort of thing with someone else after the visit.
- It can be useful to make a second unannounced visit, Ideally at a different time of day
- Pay attention to what you see, hear and smell during your visit, and how the experience makes you feel.
 - This is just as important as what you're told by the home's staff?

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

- Are the buildings and the grounds well maintained?
- Is there a friendly and welcoming environment for residents and guests?
- Are individual rooms and the home generally clean and comfortable?
- Is the temperature comfortable throughout the home?
- Are there any unpleasant smells?
- Is there plenty of activity and conversation among staff and residents?
- Is there an adequate number of staff on duty?

LOCATION

- Is it easy to reach the home by car or public transport?
- What's the surrounding area like?
- Are there useful facilities nearby, such as shops, parks and places of worship?

THE ROOM

- Can you view the room you might be offered?

- Would you have to share a bathroom or bedroom at any time?
- Can you bring your own furniture and possessions?
- Is there adequate storage space for clothing and other belongings?
- Is the room suitably adapted, including the bathroom?
- Are there grab rails, for example, if needed?
- Is there an emergency call system in the room?
- Is there wi-fi in the room and in public spaces around the home?
- Is the room equipped with power sockets, a TV or a telephone?
- Is there somewhere secure to keep money and valuables?
- Can residents lock their own rooms?

COMMUNAL AREAS AND FACILITIES

- Are rooms, corridors and other spaces accessible for someone using a walking frame or wheelchair?
- Is the home well laid out? Is it easy to find your way around?
- Is there a garden or other accessible outdoor space for residents and guests to use?
- Is there a communal lounge?
- Is there a quiet area where residents can relax, without music or TV?
- Is there a café or similar place where residents can meet with guests?
- Are residents allowed their own pets, or can pets be brought to visit?

CARE AND SUPPORT

- How will the home assess your care needs?
- Is the home equipped to meet your specific care needs 24 hours a day?
- If your condition should worsen, is the home equipped to cater for your changing needs?
- Are residents and their families involved in decisions about their care?
- Can the home provide in-house nursing care if required?
- What other specialised support is available, if any - dementia care, for example?
- Is there a nearby GP practice that's responsible for residents' health care needs?
- What other healthcare services can be arranged - optician, dentist, physio or chiropodist, for example?
- What procedures are in place to keep residents safe and secure?
- What technology is available to keep residents safe, such as alarms and monitors?
- Is there support available for end of life (palliative) care?

DAY-TO-DAY LIVING

- Can residents go to their room if they want to be alone?
- Will staff knock before entering a resident's room?

- Does the home encourage family members and friends to be actively involved in their loved one's life - for example, doing their hair or taking them out to a coffee shop?

HOW FLEXIBLE IS THE DAILY ROUTINE?

- Can residents choose the times they prefer to get up or go to bed?
- Are mealtimes flexible?
- Who provides the food? Can you see a menu or even sample a meal?
- Does the home cater for your dietary preferences - for example? if you are vegan or vegetarian, or require halal or kosher options?
- How does the home support residents to practice their religious or spiritual beliefs?
- What steps does the home take to identify and respect the residents' cultural preferences?

ACTIVITIES AND SOCIAL LIFE

- Is there a regular programme of activities to keep residents active, such as music therapy, arts and crafts, exercise or gardening?
- If they're not already catered for, can the home arrange activities to suit your interests?
- Are there regular social activities for residents, such as outings or family days?
- Are resident's life stories and interests recognised and celebrated - through photos, personal effects or paintings and drawings, for example?
- Is there an additional cost for any of the activities on offer?

STAFF

- What is the ratio of care workers to residents during the day, at night and on weekends?
- Is there a supervisor on duty at all times?
- What experience and qualifications do the manager and senior staff have?
- What training do staff members get?
- Is there a frequent turnover of staff? How many staff members have worked at the home for a long time?
- Are residents allocated a primary carer who's responsible for monitoring their care?
- Can residents choose to have male or female carers?
- If a resident is not a native English speaker, is there anyone who can speak their language?

GUESTS AND VISITING

- Are there set visiting times for guests?

- Are children welcome?
- Can guests stay overnight?
- Can guests stay for meals? Is there a charge for this?
- Are there any private rooms, other than bedrooms, where residents can meet with guests?

FEES AND CONTRACTS

- How are fees calculated?
- What do they include and exclude?
- When are fees collected?
- Are they paid in advance or in arrears?
- Are there any additional charges, such as a management fee?
- Is it necessary to make an advance payment or deposit? Is it refundable?
- If relevant, how are NHS-funded nursing care payments accounted for in the fee structure? (They should be deducted from the overall fee.)
 - Are residents tied in to the contract for a minimum period?
 - How much notice must be given if a resident wants to leave?
 - What would happen if a resident starts off self-funding but subsequently qualifies for local authority funding? Could they continue living in the same room?

OTHER PRACTICAL ISSUES

- Is there a waiting list? When would a room be available?
- What is the procedure for giving feedback or raising complaints?
- What is the home's quality rating (from the CQC or another regional regulator) and when was their most recent inspection?
- Does the home have a food hygiene rating?
- What is covered by the home's insurance policies?
- Is there a family support group or regular relatives' meetings?
- Does the home have policies in place to prevent discrimination, on the grounds of ethnicity, nationality, religion, sexuality or gender identity?



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