

# CQC and councillors

A short guide for local councillors  
about the Care Quality Commission

March 2015

## About this guide

This short guide explains the work of the Care Quality Commission (CQC). It aims to increase confidence and ambition about how councillors can share information with CQC to help improve the regulation and quality of local health and social care services. It sets out the information CQC holds that councillors can use in their role as community representatives and in their executive or scrutiny roles. A short guide for district and borough councillors and a more detailed guide for councillors involved in scrutiny are also available from the CQC website.

This guide explains:

- CQC's role
- How CQC works
- The CQC inspection teams
- How councillors can share information with CQC
- How councillors can use CQC information.

Comments and questions about this guide are welcome and should be sent to [engagementandinvolvement@cqc.org.uk](mailto:engagementandinvolvement@cqc.org.uk).

### **CQC's commitment to local councillors**

CQC will use evidence from local councillors about their communities' experiences of health and care services to:

- Inform CQC's development
- Influence what, where and when we inspect services

We will share information from CQC inspections more effectively for local councillors to use.

## CQC's purpose and role

The Care Quality Commission is the independent regulator of health and adult social care in England. Our purpose is to make sure health and social care services provide people with safe, effective, compassionate, high-quality care and we encourage care services to improve. Our role is to monitor, inspect and regulate

services to make sure they meet fundamental standards of quality and safety. We publish what we find including performance ratings, to help people choose care and share good practice.

We are also responsible for monitoring and reporting on the use of the Mental Health Act and our findings inform our ratings of services. We protect the interests of people whose rights are restricted under the Act, including handling individual complaints about its use. We also monitor and report on the use of the Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLs) across England.

CQC puts people at the heart of its new approach to inspecting health and care services. We need to be able to gather and use the experiences of patients, people who use services, their families and carers and local communities about their care – to identify concerns and to celebrate outstanding care.

CQC and Centre for Public Scrutiny are working together to help inspection teams and councillors share and use each other's information about people's experiences of care. Working together we can help ensure services are meeting the standards of care all your constituents have a right to expect.

## How CQC works

Most of the health and adult social care services in your area have to register with CQC in order to provide care. There are 'regulated activities' that CQC is required to monitor and inspect across health and care services. Go to [www.cqc.org.uk/content/what-registration](http://www.cqc.org.uk/content/what-registration) for details of who has to register with CQC.

Service providers have to inform us if they set up a service or vary a service to provide different sorts of care. The main types of services we regulate are set out below.

### **Health and adult social care services that have to register with CQC**

**Hospitals** – including maternity and children's services, medical and surgical care, end of life care, urgent care, outpatients and ambulance services

**Community health services** – including community hospitals, services for people with long-term conditions and district nursing services

**Clinics** – which offer services such as IVF, cosmetic surgery and advice or treatment to help with family planning or weight loss

**GPs and doctors** – including GP practices, out-of-hours services and walk-in centres

**Dentists**

**Care homes** – both with and without nursing care, extra care housing services, shared lives and supported living services including dementia care

**Services in your home** (home care agencies)

**Services for people with mental health problems** – including hospital, community and crisis care, and drug or alcohol misuse services

**Services for people with a learning disability**

**Hospice services**

**Healthcare services in the criminal justice system** – including prisons (with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons)

**Healthcare in children's services** (with Ofsted)

**These services may be run by the NHS, private companies or charitable organisations.**

### **We monitor and inspect services**

Our inspection programmes are led by three chief inspectors, responsible for monitoring and inspecting adult social care, primary and integrated care, and hospital care (which include mental health, community, acute hospital and ambulance care). Our inspection teams carry out inspections of all the services listed above.

On all our inspections, we ask five questions about a service:

- Is it safe?
- Is it effective?
- Is it caring?
- Is it responsive to people's needs?
- Is it well-led?

We publicly announce inspections of NHS and independent healthcare services, community and mental health services in advance. Inspections of adult social care and primary care services are not publicly announced. They take place on a rolling programme across the country on an ongoing basis. Our Mental Health Act visits take place unannounced at any time to places where people are detained and are also part of our mental health service inspections.

All CQC inspection teams gather and use information and feedback from people using services, their carers and families, and their representatives. This includes national data such as patient surveys, as well as people's stories sent to CQC. Individual councillors, scrutiny committees and local Healthwatch are invited to contribute evidence about people's experiences of care, as are other patient and public representatives and voluntary and community groups. This information can be shared with CQC at any time, as well as just before an announced inspection.

CQC also asks local partners, including local authorities, health and wellbeing boards and clinical commissioning groups, to share information about the quality of services before our inspections. During the inspections, our inspection teams check on different aspects of care, the environment, the staff and how the service is run. They observe care, talk to people using the services and their carers, and to staff, and check policies, records and care plans to decide on the quality of the care.

### **We are introducing ratings of all services**

The ratings tell you whether we have found an organisation and its main services to be:

-  **Outstanding**
-  **Good**
-  **Requires improvement**
-  **Inadequate**

### **We publish reports of our inspections**

After every inspection, we publish a report setting out what we have found. This includes examples of good practice, as well as areas for improvement. The report includes the rating we have given the organisation and its services. We publish all reports on our website at [www.cqc.org.uk](http://www.cqc.org.uk). You can sign up to receive alerts about the inspection reports in your area.

### **We take action where we find poor care**

We have a number of powers we can use if we find services are not meeting the new regulations for care set out by the government. These set out the fundamental standards of care below which no service should fall. Details of the new regulations can be found on our website. Our powers to take action range from warnings and fines, to cancelling a service's registration so it can no longer provide care, through

to prosecuting those responsible for the service. We are strengthening our enforcement powers and you can read more at [www.cqc.org.uk](http://www.cqc.org.uk).

### **We have powers to carry out special reviews**

CQC has powers to run special reviews looking at how care is provided for people with particular health needs or across different services. For example, during 2015/16, CQC is running special reviews about the quality of crisis care, end of life care and integrated care for people over 75.

We also have powers to protect people’s rights who are detained under the Mental Health Act, including providing them with a second opinion about their medical care, handling their complaints about the use of the Mental Health Act, and monitoring any activity to restrict people’s rights.

## **CQC inspection teams**

There are CQC inspection teams for each sector in every part of the country, and in most cases, our inspectors work in the area where they live. The following diagram shows the areas they cover and the main groups of services they inspect. Our registration teams work across all sectors.

### **CQC local inspection teams**

Hospital inspection teams:

- Work across NHS trust areas
- Inspect acute, ambulance, mental health and community health trusts and independent healthcare, and monitor the Mental Health Act

Primary and integrated care inspection teams:

- Work across CCG areas
- Inspect GP practices, out-of-hours services, dentists, healthcare in the criminal justice system and in children’s services

Adult social care inspection teams:

- Work across local authority areas
- Inspect care homes, home care agencies, hospices

## **How CQC works with councillors and council scrutiny**

As part of CQC’s new approach to inspecting services, we are improving our communication and information sharing with councillors and council scrutiny. This is part of CQC’s response to the Francis report into the Mid Staffordshire NHS Trust.

CQC and the Centre for Public Scrutiny have published a guide for overview and scrutiny committees for health and social care, setting out how CQC and scrutiny committees can work more effectively together. We have also produced a joint guide for district councillors. A number of district council functions and district-level scrutiny bring together evidence that CQC inspection teams can use when planning inspections. In return, CQC's information about the quality of care can be useful for scrutiny committees and district councils planning their work programmes, and for keeping up-to-date on CQC ratings of care in their area.

## How local councillors can share information with CQC

There are lots of ways councillors can share information with CQC about people's experiences of local services.

- You and your constituents can share experiences of care with CQC (both good and poor care) using the 'share your experience' form on the CQC website at [www.cqc.org.uk/sye](http://www.cqc.org.uk/sye) or by ringing us on **03000 616161**.
- Share the trends and issues that you hear about the quality of health and care services in your area from local people using the phone number above or by emailing [enquiries@cqc.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@cqc.org.uk)

### Top tips for sharing information with CQC

- If in doubt, share information with CQC and name the service or services you are describing.
- Focus on information you have gathered or has been shared with you.
- Do not identify patients or people using services by name unless an individual gives their agreement for you to do this.
- Information about people's complaints is very useful for CQC inspection teams to inform inspections, but it is the job of local services to respond to individual complaints.
- If you are concerned about someone's safety or believe someone is at risk, please contact your local authority safeguarding team in the first instance. They have the primary responsibility for responding to safeguarding concerns and will share this information with CQC.

## What CQC will do with information from councillors and from council scrutiny

Any information shared will help CQC inspection teams:

- Spot unregistered services.
- Decide when to inspect an organisation or particular services.
- Decide what to focus on during the inspections – for example, the care for particular groups of people, wards or departments in the service, or how the service links to other health and care services in the area.
- Spot problems or concerns in local services that need to be acted upon quickly.
- Give services a rating.
- Decide if providers should make improvements or need to be placed in ‘special measures’ if they fail to improve.

### Where to go for more information

- Telephone **03000 616161** to check if services are registered, or to ask to speak to one of our local inspectors if you need to discuss a range of issues or services in your area. The customer services team will contact an inspector who will get back in touch with you.
- Check the CQC website for news of forthcoming announced inspections.
- CQC publishes inspection reports after every inspection under the name of the provider of the service. You can receive alerts about inspection reports in your area or look these up at [www.cqc.org.uk/emailalerts](http://www.cqc.org.uk/emailalerts)
- You can also sign up to receive the CQC bulletin for the public, which brings you news about our national reports about the quality of care, consultations we are running and opportunities to get involved in CQC’s work at [www.cqc.org.uk/newsletter](http://www.cqc.org.uk/newsletter)