



About the Care Quality Commission





The Care Quality Commission (CQC)

is the independent regulator of all health and adult social care in England.

We regulate all health and adult social care services in England, whether they're provided by the NHS, local authorities, private companies or voluntary organisations. And, we protect the interests of people held under the Mental Health Act.

We make sure that essential quality standards are being met everywhere care is provided, from hospitals to private care homes, and we help them to improve. We promote the rights and interests of people who use services and we have a wide range of powers to take action if services are unacceptably poor.

Our vision is of high-quality health and social care which:

- supports people to live healthy and independent lives;
- helps individuals, families and carers make informed decisions about their care; and
- responds to individual needs.

Our mission is to make care better for people, by:

- regulating health and adult social care services to make sure services are high quality and safe, encouraging improvement and stamping out bad practice;
- protecting the rights of people who use services, particularly the most vulnerable and those held under the Mental Health Act;
- providing accessible, trustworthy information on the quality of care and services so people can make better-informed decisions about their care and so that those who arrange and provide services can improve them; and
- reporting to the public on how commissioners and providers of services are improving the quality of care and providing value for money.



**By high-quality care,
we mean care that:**

- is safe;
- has the right outcomes, including clinical outcomes (for example, do people get the right treatment and are they well cared for?);
- is a good experience for the people who use it, their carers and their families;
- helps to prevent illness, and promotes healthy, independent living;
- is available to those who need it when they need it; and
- provides good value for money.

Our aim is to make sure better health and social care is provided for everyone, whether that's in hospital, in care homes, in people's own homes, or anywhere else that care is provided.

We do this by:

- registering, inspecting and regulating health and adult social care services;
- protecting the interests of people held under the Mental Health Act;
- working with those who provide services and those who arrange services locally (commissioners) towards improving those services;
- giving individuals, families and carers clear information about what care is available and the quality of services provided;
- taking action where services are unacceptably poor;
- reporting on how people arrange services locally to make sure high quality services are provided; and
- involving people who use services, and their families, in our work.

Throughout all of our work we focus on the rights, interests and experiences of people who use services. Our priority is to improve what happens to them as a result of the care they receive.

Bringing together the independent regulation of health and adult social care

We bring together the regulation of health and adult social care in England. Before 1 April 2009 this work was carried out by the Healthcare Commission, the Mental Health Act Commission and the Commission for Social Care Inspection.

Having one regulator of health and adult social care helps to make sure there are consistent standards of quality across all services. It also helps to improve the way hospitals, care homes and social service providers work together for the benefit of the people who use their services.

By providers we mean those who actually provide services – for example hospitals and care homes.

One regulator of health and adult social care helps to make sure there are consistent standards.



Registering with CQC

From April 2009 independent health care and adult social care services are registered with us under existing rules. And for the first time, NHS providers such as hospitals and ambulance services must be registered with us to show they are protecting people from the risk of catching infections such as MRSA. From April 2010 a new registration system means that health and adult social care providers must be registered with us to show they meet a wide range of essential quality standards. If they are not registered with us, they will not be able to operate.

Registration allows us to give the public the reassurance that, wherever they receive care or treatment, they can expect essential standards of quality of care. These standards make the system fairer and clearer and they make it easier for providers to be compared with one another.



Working towards improving the quality of health and adult social care services

We encourage improvements in services by helping to identify and share good practice.



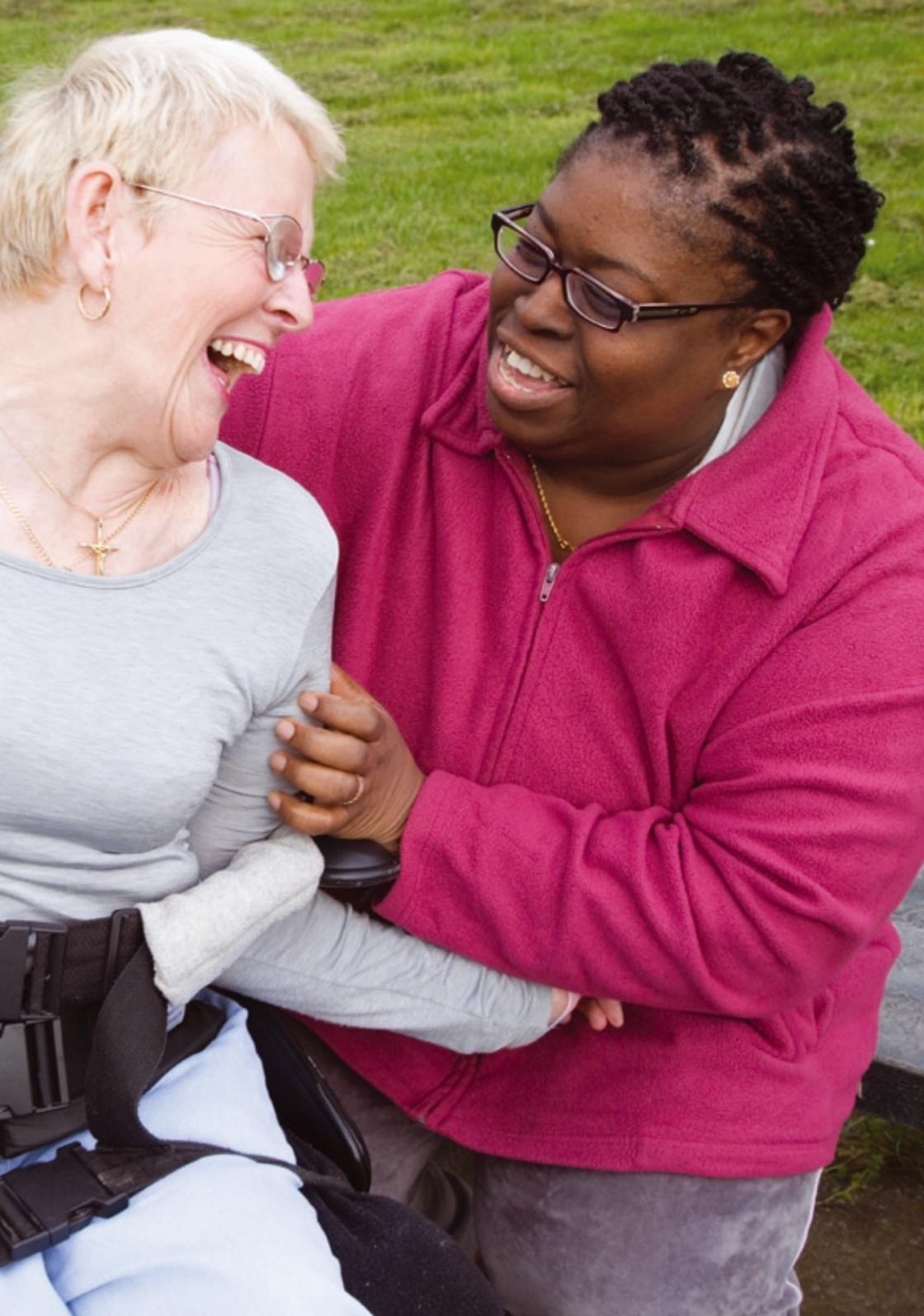
We promote improvements in the quality of care above and beyond essential quality standards. We do this by working with people who arrange local health and adult social care services – for example local councils and primary care trusts (commissioners) and those who provide them – for example hospitals and care homes (providers).

We encourage improvements in services by helping to identify and share good practice. Each year we carry out a series of reviews and studies of different aspects of care. They are guided by what people tell us is important to them. Our reviews and studies examine the entire service people receive, rather than one part of it. For example, a review might follow the experience of someone with dementia right through from seeing their GP, to their referral to hospital and then on to the social care support they might need when they leave hospital.

Our reviews also focus on how well local health and adult social care services are arranged, again by looking at the entire service people receive. Our assessments of this make a major contribution to overall assessments of the quality of local services. These overall assessments are called comprehensive area assessments.

The assurance you need
in health and social care





Checking that organisations are meeting essential quality standards

As the health and adult social care regulator, our job is to make sure that providers continue to meet essential quality standards after they register with us. We do this by:

- analysing and inspecting services;
- asking providers to assess themselves; and
- collecting information to help us monitor how providers are performing.

If there is evidence of a serious and urgent problem that is putting people at risk, we will investigate and take immediate action if necessary.



Providing information about health and adult social care services

Because we are independent, we can be relied on to provide information which is fair, accurate, easy to get hold of and which can be trusted. We report our findings fairly and truthfully. We listen to service users and providers. And we communicate our findings with everyone concerned, from service providers to policymakers and the public.

Our information helps people to judge the quality of their local health and adult social care services. It helps those who arrange and provide services to:

- compare their performance with others;
- see where improvement is needed; and
- learn from each other about what works best.

Our information helps people to judge the quality of their local health and adult social care services.



We ask people to tell us about their experiences of care services and to give us their views.

Enforcing standards

If providers don't meet essential quality standards, or if we think that people's basic rights or safety are at risk, we take action. We have a wide range of enforcement powers, such as fines and public warnings, and we have flexibility about how and when to use them. We can apply specific conditions in response to serious risks. For example, we can demand that a hospital ward or service is closed until the provider meets safety requirements or is suspended. Or, we can take a service off the register if absolutely necessary.

Involving the public

Throughout our work we make sure that the voices of people who use health and adult social care services are heard. We ask people to tell us about their experiences of care services and to give us their views. We make sure they are at the heart of our reports and reviews. In some cases we involve patients and their carers directly in working alongside our inspectors to give an expert user view of services.

Our work and human rights

Human rights are at the heart of our work. We promote and protect the rights and interests of everyone who uses health and adult social care, particularly the most vulnerable, for example people who are held under the Mental Health Act.

Influencing policy and practice

We use our knowledge and experience of health and adult social care to inform government policy and local approaches to care. Through this work we make sure that the voices of people who use services are heard.

Human rights are at the heart of our work.



Where we are

Our London headquarters is at Finsbury Tower, 103-105 Bunhill Row, London EC1Y 8TG.

Our nine regions cover the same areas as the Government Offices for the Regions and Strategic Health Authorities.

For more details on our regional offices, please visit our website at www.cqc.org.uk

How to contact us

Phone: 03000 616161

Email: enquiries@cqc.org.uk

