

Social Care Services – Proposals

1. Ratings

It is proposed that, as indicated in '*A new start*', providers of care will be rated in one of the following categories:

- outstanding
- good
- requires improvement
- inadequate (this may be changed to 'poor' following consultation).

Operation of the ratings system is to be outsourced to 'rating providers' subject to enactment of the Care Bill currently before Parliament.

If legislation, consultation and evaluation of the ratings system permits, CQC will begin to award shadow ratings in Summer 2014. It anticipates that all adult social care services will be rated by March 2016.

2. Registration

CQC makes a commitment that the registration process will:

- make sure providers have the right values and motivations for providing care, as well as the right skills and experience.
- be flexible and will not stifle innovation or discourage good providers of care services
- ensure providers understand the commitment they are making and the consequences of not meeting registration requirements.

3. Inspection

The inspection process will change in a number of ways to include the following

- The frequency of inspections will be based on previous ratings backed up by a 'surveillance model', rather than being based on an annual inspection
- Inspections will be carried out by 'expert inspectors'
- Use insight from various sources to target where, when and what to inspect, for example trigger factors such as a change in ownership.
- There will be a much stronger focus on 'leadership, governance and culture'.
- Integration with health will be a factor in assessment.

The proposals contain a separate section on listening to people's views, complaints and whistleblowing, making it clear that CQC wishes to facilitate all of these and to ensure that it responds to them and to other information and evidence in the inspection and assessment process.

4. Guidance and Standards

CQC proposes to develop guidance on how it will rate care services. The guidance will be tailored for each sector and for some services within each sector. It will also consider how to use accreditation and kite marking and whether to give specific guidance on the induction and training qualifications it expects care professionals to have.

The proposals also points out that the Department of Health has consulted on proposals to take tougher action to hold directors or leaders of organisations to account for failures in the quality of care. This is subject to further legislation (in the Care Bill), but in any case CQC says that it will take tougher action in responses to breaches in the quality of care.

5. Monitoring the Finances of Providers

Following events, such as the failure of Southern Cross, a large care provider, CQC expects to monitor the finances of some providers, from April 2015, subject to the Care Bill. The Bill is intended to:

- clarify the duties on local authorities to ensure continuity of care for those receiving care in their area if their care provider fails
- establish CQC as the financial regulator for the sector overseeing the finances of an estimated 50 to 60 care providers that would be difficult to replace were they to go out of business.

6. Support for CQC staff

The qualifications of CQC inspection staff have been questioned in the media and other commentary. The proposals make certain commitments to developing specialist inspectors of adult social care staff and to supporting staff in understanding up-to-date evidence on good practice and receiving training on the Mental Capacity Act and safeguarding.