



With the announcement from the Care Quality Commission that it is changing its regulatory framework in April 2023, care home providers, owners and management teams will need to be ahead of the curve when it comes to inspections. Fulcrum Care delves into the current system in place, what changes will be made and what this means for the care sector.

The current CQC regulatory system for care homes?

Challenges such as the coronavirus pandemic, recruitment issues, falling occupancy rates and insufficient budgetary support have had an ongoing impact on the care sector. These have not only had direct impact on care homeowners, managers and providers, but also the regulator, with the CQC having to adapt guidance and recommendations to accommodate changing situations.

A particular challenge has been the tightened restrictions on care home visitations, forcing the CQC to rely heavily on reporting to determine whether inspections are needed. The pandemic also created new pressures to keep up with changing Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) policies and procedures, for both the sector and the regulator.

What changes are coming to CQC regulation?

To put it simply, a lot. The previous regulatory system for care homes, which relied on meeting Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOEs) and ratings characteristics, are being replaced. The CQC's new framework will instead assess care home providers and local authorities with a consistent set of themes, from registration through to ongoing assessments.

Going forward, CQC inspections will be risk-based, with an increase in notifications leading to a higher level of safeguarding inspections. There will also be more attention given to care concerns, complaints and whistleblowing from care workers, which can increase the likelihood of a care home inspection significantly.

How will CQC regulation change?

Whereas the previous KLOEs used to rely on five areas of the safety, effectiveness, compassion, responsiveness and leadership of a care home service, the new framework will now rely on:

- **5 key questions** for structured resident feedback, relying on what residents expect from the care provider – rather than how they feel about the current care service
- **Quality statements** from the care provider, expressing the standards they should be held to account for
- **Specific evidence and quality indicators** collected from care staff, observation of the services and resident outcomes
- **Data** from similar or surrounding care services, such as Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG's) or local authorities.

What does this change mean for care sector providers?

The CQC has been clear that its new approach will be data-driven and people-led. This means they will be shifting to a framework that promotes smarter and more dynamic regulation, that provides more accurate data and information for proportionate response, and a stronger emphasis on learning and improvement. This will encourage collaborative improvement from care home workers, owners and providers. This includes strengthening the access that care services have to help improve the quality of care where it's needed most, as well as providing individual assurances regarding the quality of care in regional areas for all health and social care providers.

The most significant changes that care sector workers will see from this shift, are:

- A movement from multiple CQC framework systems to a single, universal assessment
- Ongoing monitoring inspection schedules based on previous ratings will now be replaced by quality and risk assessments that gather evidence
- KLOEs and inspections at a single point in time will now have more variety across a longer period, to allow for a greater understanding of what improvements are needed and where
- Rating characteristics will be replaced by scores based on evidence found, via online assessments or in-person inspections
- Narrative inspection report ratings will be updated to the new framework, with short statement summaries

How can care providers prepare for the upcoming CQC changes?

For care homes across the UK, new training and methodologies may need to be implemented to best meet the CQC's shift in policy. From installing new technologies, to regularly reporting care home data, care home management teams should be looking for and assessing care quality standards.

This could be through adopting a digital quality management system to keep a record of internal audits and processes, logging staff and resident outcomes as part of day-to-day care management. Having a digital framework in your care home is not only a powerful tool for keeping track of important, regular schedules, such as medicines and internal auditing, but also provides a source of valuable evidence for the CQC and the care provider to assess progress in their care service.

Some care homes may already have manual systems in place for internal auditing that they're used to, such as paper-based records, charts or acknowledgement slips. Whilst the CQC does currently still accept a variety of formats for audit evidence to be submitted, upgrading your care home protocols to a digital system may require training and onboarding for existing and new staff members. It can be beneficial to bring in a third-party care consultant to introduce a new system such as this, as it relies on all levels of the care staff to understand how it can be used as a team to reduce the potential for faults.

The upcoming changes to CQC regulation policy will also be focusing on care home staff and resident environment, relationships and comparison with other local care services, so creating more opportunities for regular service reviews and feedback would be advised. This could be in the form of arranging one-to-one meetings between the care manager and care workers, to listen to any comments or suggestions for improvement they may have, and by asking residents if there are any changes they would like to see that would promote a better care environment for them. This can help care home staff feel more valued and involved with the running of the care service, introduce different perspectives and potentially highlight areas that need improvement that hadn't been previously considered.

At Fulcrum Care, our team of expert care professionals work alongside care providers, owners and managers as a new member of their team. Equipped with experience and knowledge from across all levels of the care structure, we can help to identify the positives of your care service and the areas that may need improvement, to position your care home in the best possible way to meet the new CQC regulatory requirements.

If you are a care home manager or provider who needs expert advice on how to better deliver your care home offering, then [book a free 15-minute 121](#) with us.