

Notes from care home online forum – 8 November 2023

Hosted by Derry Nugent (DN)

DN opened the forum and all participants introduced themselves.

Presentation by Linda Whitemore and Andrea Goodall, Care Quality Commission (CQC)

Linda Whitemore and Andrea Goodall, Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspectors, introduced themselves and gave an overview of the CQC remit and role in regulating and inspecting care homes.

Linda and Andrea inspect care homes and home care services in Northumberland and North Cumbria and report on what they've seen. They work as part of a multi-agency team within the local Integrated Care Board (ICB) footprint.

Linda explained the inspection process. An inspection could take place because of concerns raised about a care home, either by the local authority, other providers or service users and their relatives.

Service users and relatives can share their experiences via the CQC website or contact them by telephone. The inspectors will look at all of the intelligence received and decide whether to target a particular service. The lead inspector can take specialist inspectors along with them e.g., medicine specialists, and an expert by experience to gather views of service users and relatives.

After the inspection a report is written and published on the CQC website with any actions for the provider to work on (if needed). Hopefully a 'good' or 'outstanding' rating will be given but the CQC can also issue a warning or requirement notice (or other form of enforcement action) if in breach of regulations. In extreme cases, a registration can be cancelled.

Going forward there will be significant changes to the way CQC inspections and ratings work. The same reporting format has been used for the last ten years and only shows a snapshot of the service at the time of inspection. A lot can happen to affect the rating over a period of time between inspections e.g., staff leaving, Covid pandemic, more agency staff.

The new single assessment framework will provide a more reliable and meaningful continuous assessment and rating. The new system will start with a

pilot in the South of England at the end of November, with the North going live next February or March. It is hoped the new live rating will drive providers to improve.

Questions and comments

Attendees asked the following questions:

Is there particular legislation the care homes have to follow or regulations that the inspection focuses on

Linda said yes, all providers need to be registered with the CQC and must follow the required legislation. During the inspection the inspector will look at whether the service is following this legislation.

Information is on the [CQC website](#)

What does it mean when a care home is placed in 'safeguarding measures'?

Linda said this means the care home is in oversight with the local authority safeguarding team, usually following a number of concerns. The CQC team will work together with the safeguarding team in this situation.

Is there a prioritisation process for concerns raised to trigger an inspection?

All feedback is recorded on the CQC system and rated from low to high concern level. A high number of concerns does not always trigger an inspection – instead the CQC may work with the safeguarding team or the police. Positive feedback is also taken into account to build a bigger picture.

A representative from Carers Northumberland said the new system sounds like a really good idea. Carers often ask 'how do I find good care?' so this up to date information will be really valuable. Hopefully providers will be more focused on providing good care. This system will be more representative of what a service is like.

Andrea said it will be up to the service to show the CQC what they are doing that is good.

DN asked if the rating system will be the same?

Yes the ratings will stay the same i.e. outstanding, good, requires improvement, and inadequate, however the quality statements may change.

DN asked if any attendees had looked at the CQC website when choosing a care home.

One attendee said her family had. She used personal recommendations and the feel of the care homes she visited to make a final decision.

Andrea said the ratings are a good starting point to make a list of good and outstanding care homes to visit. When you visit you will know from your own observations and feelings whether it is the right choice. She suggested looking at things like residents cleanliness and clothing and do they have privacy etc.

Will the new system will involve more inspection visits?

Andrea said site visits will still be carried out based on the intelligence coming in.

Will inspections still involve talking to service users and relatives?

Yes, even more so. Most of the paperwork can now be done remotely leaving more time during the visit to speak to people and observe meal times. Andrea agreed it is always important to 'walk the floor'.

DN said it will be important for Healthwatch to consider how to help the CQC to gather more intelligence and information with this new way of working.

DN thanked Linda and Andrea and said she will follow up with them after the forum. Anyone with further questions please get in touch.

Current experiences of care homes

DN asked if anyone would like to share their current experiences of care homes, either positive or negative.

One attendee gave an overview of her role as a Care Coordinator. She said Care Coordinators work closely with care homes to provide personal care and support plans and have the opportunity to pick up on any concerns.

A representative from Carers Northumberland said they hadn't heard much feedback about care homes recently. She is still waiting for an answer from Alan Curry about respite care.

Adult Social Care Panel

DN said next week is the first meeting of the new Adult Social Care panel chaired by Healthwatch Northumberland. The panel is made up of six people who have recently used ASC services. DN thanked Carers Northumberland and Age UK Northumberland for helping to find the panel members. The panel will be a sounding board to help influence ASC strategy and policies. As the panel

develops there will be an open recruitment process with the aim to have 8-10 people on the panel with a broad range of voices.

DN asked if there were any other questions or comments.

Questions and comments

One attendee asked how often Healthwatch Northumberland goes into care homes?

DN said we know services very busy, and providers are wary of Healthwatch going in and taking up time so we take a measured approach using our published [Enter & View Policy](#)

Is the care home forum advertised?

DN said yes the forum is advertised but if there are any other channels to advertise through please let us know.

Linda said when inspecting a care home the inspector will look at whether information about local services like Healthwatch is displayed. If not, they will ask why but in most cases it is.

After the forum one attendee asked for clarification about whether there will be a rolling programme of inspections within a certain timeframe or just as and when required.

This question was passed on to Linda at the CQC who told us there would not be a rolling programme. Inspections will be based on intelligence, which may include when our last visit was.

AOB

Carers Northumberland – Carers’ Rights Day takes place on Thursday 23 November. There is a press pack being sent out to organisations, GPs etc. and a competition to spot posters.

Conclusion

DN said another forum date will be arranged for a few months’ time. If any issues arise or if information is needed, please get in touch. The best email for people to get a quick response from CQC is: enquiries@cqc.org.uk or visit the CQC website to leave feedback.