



Your checklist to achieving outstanding CQC inspection results

Achieving outstanding results is the aim of every care service - what do you need in place to make it happen?

Introduction

In this document we will explore each of the questions and look at what processes and systems you need in place in order to achieve a result of outstanding.

Technology is essential to a smooth inspection process. The Care Quality Commission (CQC) will need to see everything from your care plans to any complaints received and will need to understand how you're improving and responding. Making records easily available and being able to demonstrate your operational details and care planning is essential. It's also much easier to do when it's all digital.

Increasing emphasis is being placed on involving your clients in the process of their own care. This is again something that can be easily achieved using technology. From collaborating with them on their care plans, helping them to map out desired outcomes from your services and any potential changes in their care, to making information available to their loved ones, the CQC is keen to see care providers collaborate with, support and guide clients.

The CQC is tasked, as an independent regulator, with inspecting you as a care provider. The result of that inspection serves to reassure your clients and potential clients as to the quality of the services you provide. Since Covid, however, the number of inspections carried out by the CQC has dropped, meaning that you could end up with the same rating for a long time. The average age of inspection result is almost four years now, where it was two years pre-Covid. The volume of inspections was 15,757 in 2019, but dropped to just 1,820 by 30 July 2024. Inspections have always been important, but getting them wrong can leave an undesired rating hanging over your business for a while.

The CQC has launched its single assessment framework (SAF) to combat this. It's comprised of five quality assessments, or questions. The CQC will seek to determine if your services are:



1. Safe



2. Effective



3. Caring



4. Responsive



5. Well-led

So, what do you need in place for each aspect of the SAF?



1. Are your services safe?

Can you demonstrate:

- Clear communication between your services and clients?
- Easily accessible and transparent care records?
- That your clients know who to contact if they need help?
- That your staff are appropriately qualified and experienced?
- Records that can be shared with other services as required?
- That staff feedback is considered?
- That feedback from clients and their loved ones is considered?



Do you have?

- A web portal through which your clients and their families can interact with their care?
- A paperless, fully digital process for record keeping?
- An app through which care workers can update on visits and leave feedback?
- The means to make your records and reports easily available?
- Evidence of person-centred care plans and services provided?
- A record of medicines administered, as well as other relevant information from each visit?

Whilst the term 'safe' can seem somewhat opaque, there are clear steps you can take to demonstrate that your services are just that. Clear communication and record keeping are essential to this. What care have you provided? How do you set out your care plans? How do you appraise your care workers? How do you involve your clients and their loved ones in their care?

Having a fully digital, transparent care management system can record all of your activities and make them easily accessible at the point of inspection. Given the rate of CQC inspections has slowed post-Covid, this can also act as a great way of self-assessment, as well as reassuring clients as to the efficacy of your services.

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There are clear steps you can take to demonstrate that your services are safe.

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2. Are your services effective?

Can you demonstrate:

- That all information has been provided to your clients regarding their care and support?
- That clients have been asked how they wish to be communicated with?
- That your care plans follow recent laws and good practice?
- That client information is shared appropriately across your services to remove duplication of questioning with clients?
- Continuous monitoring of your care and the support provided to clients?
- How you receive and respond to feedback and complaints?



Do you have?

- A system that can integrate with other services to share and receive information?
- A system that is flexible to changing operational rules and procedures?
- Robust reporting tools to analyse your services and share insights?
- A web portal and mobile app for clear means of communication across your services, with staff and clients?
- A web portal and mobile app as a method for receiving feedback and complaints from staff, clients and their friends and family?

Proving how effective your services are relies upon deploying the correct care management system in your business. You need to be able to show your care plans, the outcomes of care visits and how you monitor and report on your services. Doing this manually is very time intensive, having a system in which you can easily call upon the data you need reduces the effort and stress of showcasing the effectiveness of your services to CQC inspectors.

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The care management software you use should support you in delivering outstanding, person-centred care.

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3. Are your services caring?

Can you demonstrate:

- Clients are supported with respect and dignity?
- Clients are supported to look after their own needs?
- Your care plans are person-centred, understanding of each client's needs?
- That you engage with your care workers on how they are faring?
- That you support your care workers in providing the best possible care to your clients?



Do you have?

- A web portal through which clients and their loved ones can provide feedback to you?
- Consistent rostering of care workers to provide continuity of care?
- A means of digitally recording information that really matters to each client and ensuring that their needs are respected through your service delivery?
- An app through which care workers can communicate with you?
- A process in place to regularly engage with your care workers?

Caring goes beyond your clients and needs to include your care workers, too. Being able to easily call upon past care plans and their outcomes will enable you to demonstrate this. Consistent scheduling of staff to care plans highlights that you've considered their relationships with your clients and their own areas of interest and expertise.

Regularly engaging with care workers is a great way of involving them in your services and considering their needs. This is something that the CQC will ask your care workers, so having a process in place and a means of recording the outcomes of any meetings will support you in demonstrating this.

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4. Are your services responsive?

Can you demonstrate:

- That your clients are in charge of their care?
- That your clients have control over who can access their personal information?
- The way in which your clients can leave feedback for you?
- That you support clients in their future planning, including end of life?



Do you have?

- An effective means of providing clients with access to their care records?
- A web portal through which appropriate and agreed upon information can be shared?
- Digital records of your services to make data sharing easier?
- A way of outputting client information in a way your clients want?
- A flexible system that supports sharing and sorting information according to client preferences?

Again, the care management system you use is crucial here. Collating all this information manually is unnecessary and inefficient; trawling through paper records shouldn't be an option. Setting up portals as a means of communication with your clients puts them front and centre of their own care, enables them to interact with their care planning and understand when visits are due to take place.

With everything stored digitally, you can easily showcase to the CQC all communications with clients, evidencing how you've involved and interacted with them. Where changes have been requested, you can evidence the request then how you responded to it.

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5. Are your services well-led?

Can you demonstrate:

- You have an overarching plan of what your services are aiming for?
- That your plans are understood by your staff?
- That managers have the requisite skills to manage staff and services?
- That you receive and act upon feedback from staff?
- That staff are comfortable leaving feedback?
- The systems you have in place to ensure your services are well run?
- That all people, staff and clients, are kept safe?
- That you're always learning about and improving your services?
- You understand how important it is to work with other services and the local community?
- That you recycle and appropriately dispose of equipment?

Everyone would like to think that their care services are well led. Evidencing this, however, is a challenge if you're reliant upon manual ways of working and can't show the processes that you have in place. Having a care management system that supports your services is a massive step in the right direction to achieving this.



Transparency is essential in showing how your care services are planned, delivered and improved upon. If you're reliant on manual methods of working, this can be extremely difficult to achieve.



Do you have?

- Clear records of staff skills, experiences and qualifications?
- Robust reporting capabilities to understand and enhance your services?
- A process for staff to provide feedback to you?
- Lone worker safety functionality such a panic button in an app?
- An interoperable system which supports working with other services?
- Environmental concerns as part of your service plan, for example recycling where possible and proper disposal of equipment used during care visits?



Conclusion

Achieving outstanding results is made much easier by having a care management system that is flexible and supportive of your business. Making all of your records digital makes them easier to access and share and reduces the likelihood of human error and GDPR concerns.

This satisfies much of what the CQC will seek from you, since you can easily make your records and processes available to them.

It will also ensure that you can demonstrate aspects such as feedback and complaints processing, with a clear record of communication with staff and clients.

The digital ecosystem brings about further benefits since you can implement apps and portals as part of your service. All means of making communication, record keeping and reporting easier will benefit you when it comes to CQC inspections. It means less time spent on administration and more time focussing on delivering outstanding person-centred care to your clients.

Certa from CACI is designed to help take the stress out of CQC inspections and help you answer 'yes' to all the questions above. For more information please visit caci.co.uk/certa.





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