



# **A Survey of Interactions with the Care Quality Commission**

**Short report by Care Rights UK**

**October 2024**

# Table of Contents

Table of Contents.....	1
Introduction .....	2
Key findings.....	3
Key Quotes.....	3
Concerns regarding the quality of inspections.....	4
The Numbers:.....	4
What we were told: .....	4
Negative Repercussions and 'Revenge' Evictions .....	6
The Numbers:.....	6
What we were told: .....	6
Exclusion of Relatives and Poor Communication .....	8
The Numbers:.....	8
What we were told: .....	9
About this research .....	10

# Introduction

This short report summarises the results of a survey focused on recent experiences of the Care Quality Commission in action.

The survey was designed to capture people's experiences of care and of interacting with the care regulator for England, the Care Quality Commission. We invited people living in care services, their relatives, friends and advocates to complete the survey, as well as professionals working in care. The results offer balanced representation of different local authorities from across England.

The survey received a total of 439 responses between 30<sup>th</sup> November 2023 and 16<sup>th</sup> May 2024. Of these, 415 respondents were non-professionals (predominantly relatives of people in care), and 24 were professionals. In addition to the multiple-choice element of the survey, 284 respondents provided additional comments on their lived experiences. Please note that some of these additional comments are edited for brevity and to protect anonymity but have not otherwise been altered. All percentages are rounded to the nearest whole number.

This short report covers three key themes that arise from the data: (1) concerns regarding the quality of CQC inspections, (2) fear of negative repercussions and revenge evictions for reporting concerns to the CQC, and (3) exclusion of relatives and poor communication by the CQC. It presents a statistical overview of the respondents as a whole, accompanied by their additional comments.

## Key findings

1. Confidence in the CQC is exceptionally low.
2. Many respondents reported that they were hesitant to raise concerns to the CQC due to fear of negative repercussions from the care provider. In many cases, respondents referred to their fear of “revenge eviction”; some respondents had experienced this first-hand.
3. Friends and relatives do not feel adequately involved in the decisions made concerning the care of their loved one and many found that the CQC’s poor communication exacerbated this.
4. From the smaller “professionals” group, many had witnessed poor care, and a significant portion of that group had not reported it to the CQC.

## Key Quotes

*“The CQC appear almost powerless. It is common practice for Care providers find reasons to evict or threatened to evict residents if family members raise concerns. Safeguarding teams will excuse incidents rather than investigate and are almost afraid to challenge as there are shortfalls in available placements and a bad place is better than no placement in their eyes. Family members are left trying to “make the best” of very bad situations with no professional support.”*

*“Despite clear evidence of serious failures the CQC were powerless. They could only signpost to safeguarding and did not ensure that there was a full investigation or that involved parties faced action. Situations are often made worse for residents and families after contacting a body that is meant to regulate and protect.”*

# Concerns regarding the quality of inspections

Confidence in CQC inspections is exceptionally low. Both in the statistical data and respondents' additional comments, we saw clear dissatisfaction with both the lack of regular inspections and the diminishing quality of the inspections that do take place. A recurring criticism was the lack of unannounced visits – many respondents complained that care providers are given too much notice of CQC inspections, and will ensure that a façade of higher quality care is set up on inspection day.

## The Numbers:

66% of (non-professional) respondents were “not confident at all” (35%) or “not confident” (31%) in the CQC’s ability to fulfil the role of ensuring that health and social care services provide people with safe, effective, compassionate, high-quality care. The corresponding figure for professionals was 54%, with 38% of that group reporting that they were “not confident at all”.

## What we were told:

- “CQC last inspected the poor home in 2019 and have only done a review in 2023 which says they saw no reason to change their assessment. My concerns were ignored, my Dad suffered and I lost faith completely in the CQC.”
- “I had the belief that CQC has done at least one visit to care home this year following a complaint from someone. I'm unsure if this was unannounced visit. They checked usual things like number of staff on duty plus a few other things. I don't believe they stayed on site long enough to visit both floors.”
- “I noticed that on one occasion, when a planned inspection was about to take place that extra staff were brought in to check case files were updated, health & safety requirements were in line with requirements and generally the home was inspection ready. It's obvious that care home managers are well versed on how to present a positive well run care facility, if even for a short period of time, and more so if the visiting inspector is not particularly observant and probing.”
- “Despite clear evidence of serious failures the CQC were powerless. They could only signpost to safeguarding and did not ensure that there was a full investigation or that

involved parties faced action. Situations are often made worse for residents and families after contacting a body that is meant to regulate and protect.”

- “Inspection is not the answer...by the time CQC go in following a complaint it is too late. Too many care homes roll out the red carpet for a CQC inspection then take the red carpet up and resume normal service once the inspectors have left. There should be the equivalent of a social care HealthWatch group who can perform unannounced visits randomly.”
- “I personally think CQC is reactive rather than proactive. I'm generally happy with the level of care and I feel confident to raise any issues with staff at the home which is very helpful. Like any inspection regime I feel CQC has its own/prescribed agenda. I don't feel they challenge when needed and feel they let down everyone - residents and family when it was most needed - i.e. during COVID. There is perhaps a lack of clarity about who they work for - Government/Care Sector or residents. Personally I feel residents are last on the list”
- “Made complaint re previous care home in NE England but this did not appear reflected in subsequent inspection ratings. It seems too easy to manipulate inspections by steering inspectors towards particular residents/relatives...”

# Negative Repercussions and 'Revenge' Evictions

A worrying number of respondents reported that they avoided or were hesitant to report poor care to the CQC because they feared negative repercussions from their care provider, including so-called "revenge evictions".

## The Numbers:

Of 305 respondents who had witnessed poor care in a care setting in the past three years, 56% did not report this to the CQC. Of that group of 171, 89 (52%) reported that they were worried about negative repercussions.

Of 134 respondents who reported their concerns to the CQC, 24 (18%) responded that the resident was evicted as a result and 15 (11%) reported that access to the person in care was reduced by the care provider.

## What we were told:

- "The CQC appear almost powerless. It is common practice for Care providers find reasons to evict or threatened to evict residents if family members raise concerns. Safeguarding teams will excuse incidents rather than investigate and are almost afraid to challenge as there are shortfalls in available placements and a bad place is better than no placement in their eyes. Family members are left trying to "make the best" of very bad situations with no professional support."
- "My father passed away in 2021 as a direct result of 10 months failed care, neglect and evictions from 3 homes due to my speaking up. He entered in November 2020, spent 15 weeks in hospital due to the failures by the second home, 3rd home abused him and he was neglected and I was banned by home for several weeks before Social Services moved him for his own safety..."
- "It is almost impossible to report concerns to CQC whilst loved ones are in the care home for fear of reprisals and being found out and evicted. CQC need to make this process a whole lot easier to prevent further poor care going unchecked."
- "I did tell CQC on a previous inspection about my concerns but choose not to speak to them during the last inspection because it would have easily identified myself and my

brother. I had been discussing my concerns with the care setting in the hope that they would work with my and address the issues. Sadly the issues have further escalated."

- "I raised safeguarding for my dad to care home & CQC along with social services, the day after I was banned from the care home."
- "I know of numerous residents relatives reporting issues about the care home & nothing seems to be done. The ex manager & other staff have also spoken to them to raise concerns. 2 residents were given eviction notices as family raised the same issues multiple times & were told 'they could no longer offer the care the resident required'."
- "My relative was evicted to stop us talking to CQC inspectors and CQC said they couldn't do anything about it. Powerless and ineffective body."
- "The care home asked us to take part but I couldn't do that and give my honest opinion because I am worried about a revenge eviction."
- "Mum was evicted from her care home during Covid when I challenged visiting. The CQC did nothing to stop this happening or to support us other than telling us to contact the ombudsman."
- "The manager was a bully who threatened families who complained about anything with eviction of their loved one. I didn't want to take the risk of any repercussions on my mother."
- "Visiting was made intolerable due to intimidation and open hostility, which finally prevented me from visiting due to feeling extremely anxious."
- "It is also very difficult to make honest comments when either you are your loved ones are then left to live with the people you have complained about."
- "It would have been far too easy for the Care Home to know it was me that had made the complaint and therefore me fearful for Mum. I am aware the CQC Inspectors show the Care Home, complaints, logs of complaints, details of complaints. Yes CQC did say they could log some heads up information to the inspectors that could remain confidential but again only if I gave Mum's details. Anything written in an Inspectors papers during visits to Care Homes could be seen by the Care Home. My faith in Care Homes had been shattered, I was not going to make it potentially worse for Mum. Confidentiality is paramount to protect the resident."
- "...we were seen as 'troublemakers' if we reported anything. We had multiple concerns but found the care home excluded us from meetings, failed to give us information regarding things like hospital admission and generally 'froze' us out. In relation to visiting we were told we were only allowed once a week contact by telephone as the staff were 'busy'."



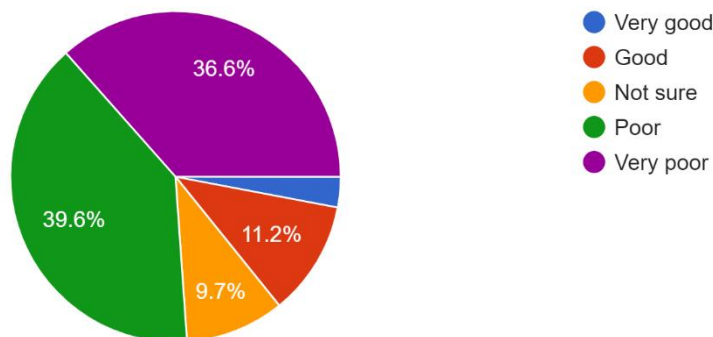
# Exclusion of Relatives and Poor Communication

Many respondents, of whom 78% were a relative or friend of someone currently or formerly receiving care, reported that they had felt excluded from the decisions affecting their care, including the inspections carried out by the CQC.

## The Numbers:

Of the 134 respondents who reported their concerns, 76% rated the CQC's communication as "very poor" (37%) or "poor" (40%).

How would you rate CQCs communication with you after you reported your concern?  
134 responses



Of the same 134 respondents, 47 (35%) reported that they did not hear back from the CQC.

Of the respondents who were aware that the care setting had been inspected in the past three years (55% of the larger sample), only 37% were aware of the inspection when it took place, and only 20% were asked to participate in it.

## What we were told:

- "The residential home does not seem to want to share information either with its residents or residents relatives. Until very recently I had no idea that they even had a relatives group meeting on a regular basis."
- "Information of complain procedure should be sent to the family representative on arrival to residency. CQC should confirm your complaint in letter or email with reference code and update you with how they followed up the concern. It appears they are in the interest of the home not the resident."
- "I registered my involvement and interest with CQC so that I would be recorded on their system as someone who wished to be able to contribute to a future inspection at the care home. I was ignored. The previous time when I did this I was also ignored."
- "CQC felt too National, unwieldy and uninterested. Previously used to be local inspectors which provided a much more personal manageable service. Used to be easy to contact and each inspector had good knowledge of the area and homes they covered."

## About this research

This report was written by George Hill, Researcher at Care Rights UK. The original survey was designed by Nicky Sharma, former Policy and Research Officer at Care Rights UK, with input from the team.

We would like to offer our heartfelt thanks to those who responded to the survey and took the time to share their stories with us, including our members and supporters and the Rights For Residents members.

Respondents submitted their experiences in the knowledge that their responses would remain completely anonymous, and that no identifying information would be shared. The opening page of the survey provided a brief introduction to the organisation's work and the purpose of the survey: to build a better understanding of the issues people face in the care system, and to use this to improve the system. They were also directed to the privacy notice available on the Care Rights UK website. Respondents were invited to visit the website in order to find out more about the organisation's work or to contact us regarding any of the issues raised in the survey.

## About Care Rights UK

Care Rights UK is the charity focused on promoting the rights of people in care. We want people to know their rights and how to use them.

We offer information, advice and support to empower people using care services and the relatives and friends who help them.

As a community of families and experts, we fight for better lives for people in care. We identify poor care and highlight good practice, and demand a better care system.