

Better regulation, better care: Consultation on improving how we assess and rate providers

CQC

December 2025

Part 1: Improving our assessment framework

Describing our expectations of quality for all our rating levels

We propose to re-introduce rating characteristics as part of our assessment frameworks. These would describe our expectations for the quality and safety of services, for each of our rating levels, to support providers to improve.

You can read more details about what we propose in the [Describing our expectations of quality for all our rating levels](#) section of our consultation document.

Question 1: To what extent do you agree that we should publish clear rating characteristics of what care looks like for each rating as part of our new assessment frameworks?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Providing a clearer view of quality and safety for the sectors that we regulate

We propose to reintroduce assessment frameworks that are specific to each sector, which more clearly reflect and articulate the context of those health and care sectors.

You can read the details about what we propose in the [Providing a clearer view of quality and safety for the sectors that we regulate](#) section of our consultation document.

Question 2: To what extent do you agree with our proposed approach to developing assessment frameworks that are specific to each sector?

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Question 2a: Do you have any comments or suggestions on how we should develop the sector-specific assessment frameworks?

We welcome CQC's proposed approach to development of sector-specific assessment frameworks. Meaningful co-production with the relevant sectors will be essential to ensuring that frameworks are contextually appropriate, operationally feasible and supportive of effective regulation. However, the frameworks alone will not achieve the intended impact. It is vital that inspectors have sufficient knowledge of the sector they are assessing in order to apply the framework accurately and fairly.

Making our assessment frameworks simpler and clearer

We propose to improve our assessment frameworks by removing content that could duplicate or overlap across the different key questions and simplify the language to make them easier to understand.

You can read the details about what we propose in the [Making our assessment frameworks simpler and clearer](#) section of our consultation document.

Question 3: To what extent do you agree with our proposed approach to making our assessment frameworks clearer and removing areas of potential duplication?

- **Strongly agree**
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Question 3a: Do you have any comments on the content of our current single assessment framework, or suggestions for how we should make our assessment frameworks simpler and clearer?

In our experience, inspection reports often contain contradictory statements, which can make them difficult for the public to read and understand. We recommend including an overarching, plain-language summary at the beginning of the document that covers all five areas of the framework.

The report as a whole should use accessible, easy to understand language. Currently, much of the wording - particularly the specific statements - is very legalistic. This does not allow the public to have a full understanding of the assessment outcomes.

Part 2: How we make judgements and award ratings

Simplifying our rating approach and strengthening the role of professional judgement

We intend to implement an approach to awarding ratings that clearly and simply reflects the quality of services. **To deliver this, we propose to no longer award separate scores underneath our key question ratings**, and for rating characteristics and professional judgement to have a key role in making judgements.

You can read the details about what we propose in the [Simplifying our rating approach and strengthening the role of professional judgement](#) section of our consultation document.

Question 4: To what extent do you agree that we should award ratings directly at key question level with reference to rating characteristics

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Question 4a: Do you have any comments or suggestions on our proposed approach to awarding ratings?

It is essential that both providers and the public clearly understand the rationale for any rating that is awarded.

Supporting our inspection teams to deliver timely and expert inspections, publish impactful reports and develop strong relationships with providers

You can read the details about what we propose in the [Supporting our inspection teams to deliver timely and expert inspections, publish impactful reports and develop strong relationships with providers](#) section of our consultation document

Question 5: Do you have any comments or suggestions for how we should support our inspection teams to deliver expert inspections, impactful reports and strong relationships with providers?

In order to deliver expert inspections, inspectors must have sufficient knowledge of the sector they are assessing. To achieve this, we recommend providing additional training for inspection teams. For hospice inspections, teams should access courses through [Sue Ryder's International Learning Academy](#), which delivers evidence-based education and practical training designed to enhance the quality of life for patients and their families.

The International Learning Academy offers a wide variety of training courses, all led by experienced educators and clinical specialists, with flexible options available both online and in-person.

To facilitate strong relationships, it is vital that CQC reinstate dedicated relationship officers/managers for healthcare providers. CQC should also regularly seek feedback on inspection teams following an inspection.

Reviewing and clarifying our approach to following up assessments and updating rating judgements

When updating ratings for a service we aim to ensure that our judgements are not affected by evidence or other ratings that are significantly out of date. We will consider the length of time since the last assessment and evidence of improved quality.

You can read the details about what we propose in the [Reviewing and clarifying our approach to following up assessments and updating rating judgements](#) section of our consultation document

Question 6: To what extent do you agree with the approach to following up assessments and the principles for updating rating judgements?

- Strongly agree
- **Agree**
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Question 6a: Do you have any comments on our proposed approach?

Question 8: We'd like to hear what you think about the opportunities and risks to improving equality and human rights in our proposals. Do you think our proposals will affect some groups of people more than others (for example, those with a protected equality characteristic such as disabled people, older people, or people from different ethnic backgrounds). Please tell us if the impact on people would be positive or negative, and how we could reduce any negative effects?

Question 9: Do you have any other comments on our work, things we should consider, or suggestions for how we could improve?

It is important that the wording of reports is carefully considered, as some of the language currently used can appear overly negative and does not fully reflect the overall findings of the inspection. The reinstatement of dedicated relationship managers for healthcare providers is also essential.