



Protecting your privacy when using your information

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) makes sure that health and social care services provide people with safe, effective, compassionate, high-quality care and we encourage care services to improve. We regulate care and support provided by hospitals, GPs, dentists, ambulances, and services for adults in care homes and in people's own homes.

We inspect services to find out whether they are: safe, effective, caring, responsive to people's needs and well-led. We are also responsible for monitoring and reporting on the use of the Mental Health Act and we protect the interests of people whose rights are restricted under that Act.

If a service needs to improve, we will take action to make sure this happens.

Why we need to look at information about people

To support us in our role of protecting people from unsafe or poor quality care, the government has given CQC powers that allow us to look at records and other information that services hold.

Sometimes this information is about the people who use a service or who work in the service. If the information can identify them, we will only use it if we are sure that it would help our work to improve services and protect the people who use them. The following are some examples of how we may access personal information:

- Looking at medical records, care plans and medication records to make sure that they are accurate and complete, and that people are receiving safe and effective care.
- Reviewing records of how services have handled and responded to complaints to make sure that they responded properly and that they learned lessons.
- Checking that when different services provide care to the same person, they have passed information about the person between themselves properly.
- Contacting people who use services to ask for their views about their care.
- Receiving information from people who have concerns about their care and want to tell us about it.

We also receive statistical information that may not directly identify people, but could still be detailed enough that it might be possible to work out who it is about. However, we have strict agreements on how we can use this information and we do not try to identify people from it.

Protecting your privacy

We don't look at everybody's information as part of an inspection. In most cases we will only look at a small sample of records, or where we have specific concerns about a person's care.

We only make a copy of information if we really need to, for example if we find evidence of poor care and we need to take action against a service.

We make sure that we keep personal information securely and we don't keep it for longer than necessary.

If you don't want CQC inspectors to look at information about you, please tell your care provider so they can make a note about your preference. We will not usually look at the records of someone who does not want us to.

Sharing information

When we access information, we can only share it in special limited circumstances that are set out in law. It would be a criminal offence for CQC to disclose your personal information unless there is a special circumstance that allows it.

For example, we would be able to share information:

- if we needed to do so to protect someone from very serious harm
- if it was necessary to help another public body to protect people, for example, a local authority safeguarding board.

We make sure that reports or anything that we publish on CQC's website does not include personal information about people who use those services.

Your rights

If you think we might hold information about you and want to see what we have, you can email **information.access@cqc.org.uk** or write to the address below. We may need to ask you for proof of identity and a small fee.

When CQC handles information, we follow our strict **Code of practice on confidential personal information**. See our website for more details www.cqc.org.uk/privacy-statement.

How to contact us

Call us on: 03000 616161

Email us at: enquiries@cqc.org.uk

Look at our website at: www.cqc.org.uk

Write to us:

Care Quality Commission
Citygate
Gallowgate
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NE1 4PA

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