

# The future of adult social care regulation

**Chris Badger, Chief Inspector of Adult Social Care and Integrated Care**  
Care England Annual Conference  
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Credit: Disabled and Here

# My vision for adult social care - becoming a *collaborative regulator*

- Inspecting **more frequently** re-thinking risk
- **How** CQC in adult social care will work
  - Engagement and ***co-production***
  - Re-build ***relationships*** between local CQC teams and providers to help spot problems early
  - Embedding ***sector-expertise***
  - Data and insights gathered through relationships should drive ***improvement*** in our sector
- A strong and **credible advocate** for adult social care nationally and locally

## Providers and systems of care

To help them improve  
and innovate.

We work with care providers and systems to improve quality and equity. We set clear, evidence-based expectations, identify risks early, and support innovation through strong relationships and data-driven insight.

# The last six months... and the next six months

Return to teams that specialise in adult social care

Strengthened oversight of information of concern

Increasing number of inspections - **ongoing**

Finalise assessment framework - **summer**

Clearing stuck assessments

Changes our approach to risk and prioritisation

Strengthening provider relationships - **ongoing**

Improved registration process for homecare providers of care

Consultation and collaborative engagement redesigning the assessment framework

Engagement on LAA assessment frameworks – **23 March**

Best practice insight for the sector - **September**

Increasing the number and frequency of inspections

Publication: Good Practice Guidance to prevent choking deaths in people with a learning disability - **July**

Dementia statutory guidance – **Autumn onwards**

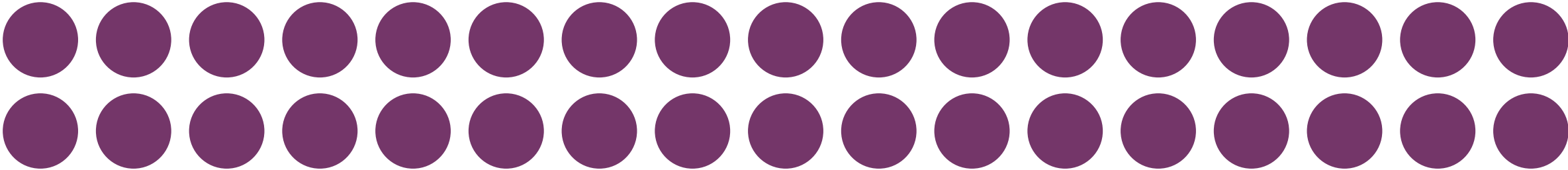
# Our very own assessment framework

34 to.... 24

Quality statements

Key lines of enquiry (KLOEs)

- Clear what GOOD is
- Scoring at key question level
- Moving from 34 Quality Statements to 24 KLOEs
- **Can we go further?**
- Regulations are unchanged



# An overview: Draft ASC framework

SAFE	EFFECTIVE	CARING	RESPONSIVE	WELL-LED
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Safety culture</li><li>• Managing risks during care and treatment</li><li>• Safe systems, pathways and transitions</li><li>• Safeguarding</li><li>• Safe environments</li><li>• Safe staffing</li><li>• Safe use of medicines</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Assessing needs</li><li>• Delivering evidence-based care and treatment</li><li>• Supporting people to live healthier lives</li><li>• Consent to care and treatment</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Kindness, compassion and dignity</li><li>• Person-centred care</li><li>• Independence, choice and control</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Care provision, integration and continuity</li><li>• Listening to and involving people</li><li>• Timeliness and equitable access</li><li>• Equity in experiences and outcomes</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Strategic direction</li><li>• Workforce equity and culture</li><li>• Capable and compassionate leaders</li><li>• Governance and management</li><li>• Partnerships and communities</li><li>• Improvement, innovation and learning</li></ul>

# Register your interest

- Full-day events led by our Chief Inspectors, bringing together a diverse mix of participants.
- Sessions marking the next stage in developing our assessment frameworks and methodology.
- Designed both to share our progress and to collaboratively shape the work with those who will use and be impacted by it.

👉 Sign up before Friday 20 March to register your interest.



## Event dates:

Manchester | Tuesday 14 April

Birmingham | Wednesday 22 April

London | Tuesday 12 May

Online session | Wednesday 6  
May *(for those unable to attend in person)*



# Assessments, inspections and technology

- Longer term improvements to our assessment approach and technology are underway:
  - Strong digital transformation and change leadership to deliver recommendations made in the independent review we commissioned
  - Ensuring the process is manageable and effective
  - Linking improvements in technology to other ongoing foundational improvements
- We have streamlined our processes internally to help our staff carry out more inspections at a quicker pace, with an increase in support and training.
- We have been working with our expert adult social staff to explore and collaborate on improvements...
- We have been continuing to review and implement improvements to our regulatory platform, tools and processes which we plan to begin implementing towards the end of the year.

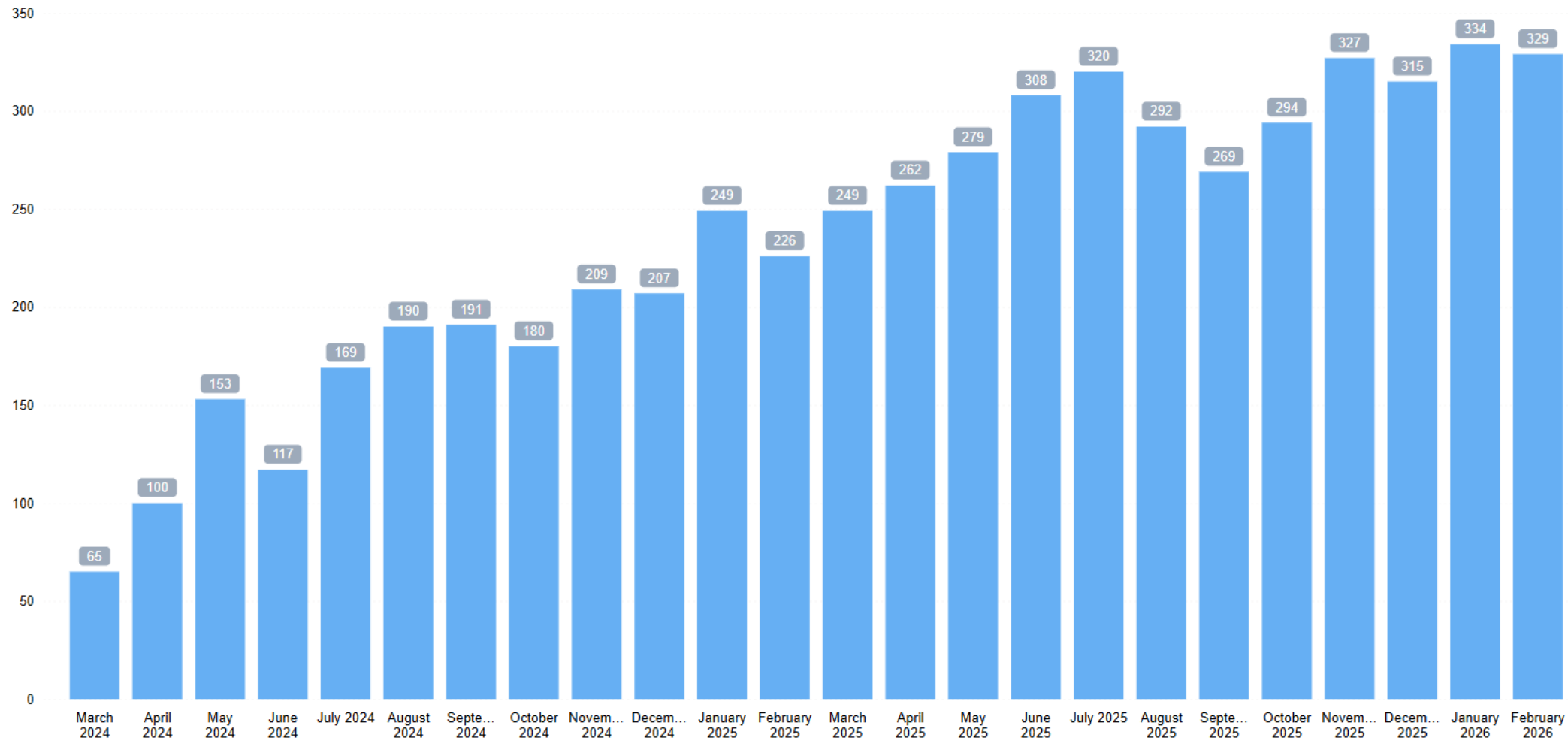


# Increasing assessments

Return to Good

Short reports

Portfolio Management



Source: All adult social care assessments March 2024 - March 2026

## Return to Good

- **What:** An intelligence-led assessment approach for lower-risk services rated good by the CQC reducing unnecessary document review and focusing more on people's experiences and observations.
- **Why:** To address inspection backlogs, increase regulatory throughput while maintaining assurance.
- **How:** Updating assessment principles, setting clear risk-based eligibility criteria, using intelligence-led planning, and testing the approach with inspectors, providers, and people using services.
- **Rollout is planned for April/May 2026.**

## Short reports

- **What:** Developing and testing a simplified inspection report format for the CQC to present findings more clearly and support faster action from providers.
- **Why:** To improve report quality and accessibility while reducing inspector time spent writing, in response to staff feedback and independent reviews.
- **How:** Creating a prototype informed by research and feedback, testing it with a small group of services, and refining it before wider rollout.
- **Rollout is planned for April/May 2026.**

# Comparison of care home inspection approaches

Aspect	England (CQC)	Scotland (Care Inspectorate)	Wales (CIW)
Length (approx average)	20 pages	12 pages	14 pages
Report structure	5 Key Questions	5 Key Questions	4 Domains
Rating system	4-point scale	6-point scale	Narrative judgements
Focus	Safety, compliance, governance	Continuous improvement, leadership	Well-being, cultural needs
Style	Structured, ratings based	Narrative + scoring	Narrative, improvement focused
Enforcement	Legal compliance	Areas for improvement	Priority Action Notices
Person centred care	Evident, but compliance-framed	Strong emphasis on outcomes	Central to report
Language / Culture	Neutral	Inclusive	Welsh language active

## Portfolio Management

- We have restructured our teams back into **sector specific inspection teams**.
- Across all sectors colleagues are starting to **re-introduce relationship owners** (Provider Oversight Leads)
- Piloting named inspectors for around 1,500 locations, refining the model through stakeholder feedback and previous pilots.

Our aim is to have an **improved version of the relationship management** of the past

**Our evaluation report is due by the end of March 2026, with a decision on roll out expected in April.**

# Reflections from inspections and visits

## Attitude and approach...

- Personalisation and safety key
- Looking for good
- Empathetic and robust
- Focus on interaction with people who use services and staff is absolutely central
- 80% observation – 20% compliance
- An **improvement approach** with immediate learning
- Engagement from providers



# Key themes from Outstanding providers

Overall  
Outstanding



## **Person centred excellence**

- Services consistently “go the extra mile” and exceed quality statements.
- Strong empowerment of people and staff; creative methods of coproduction.

## **Innovative practice with demonstrable outcomes**

- Technology used in a way that clearly improves outcomes (e.g., PainChek).
- Research involvement or self driven research to improve care provision.
- Specialist training delivered by/with people, relatives or staff.

## **Strong external partnerships**

- Robust collaborative relationships with health, community, academic or voluntary sector partners that result in better experiences for people.

## **Reducing inequalities**

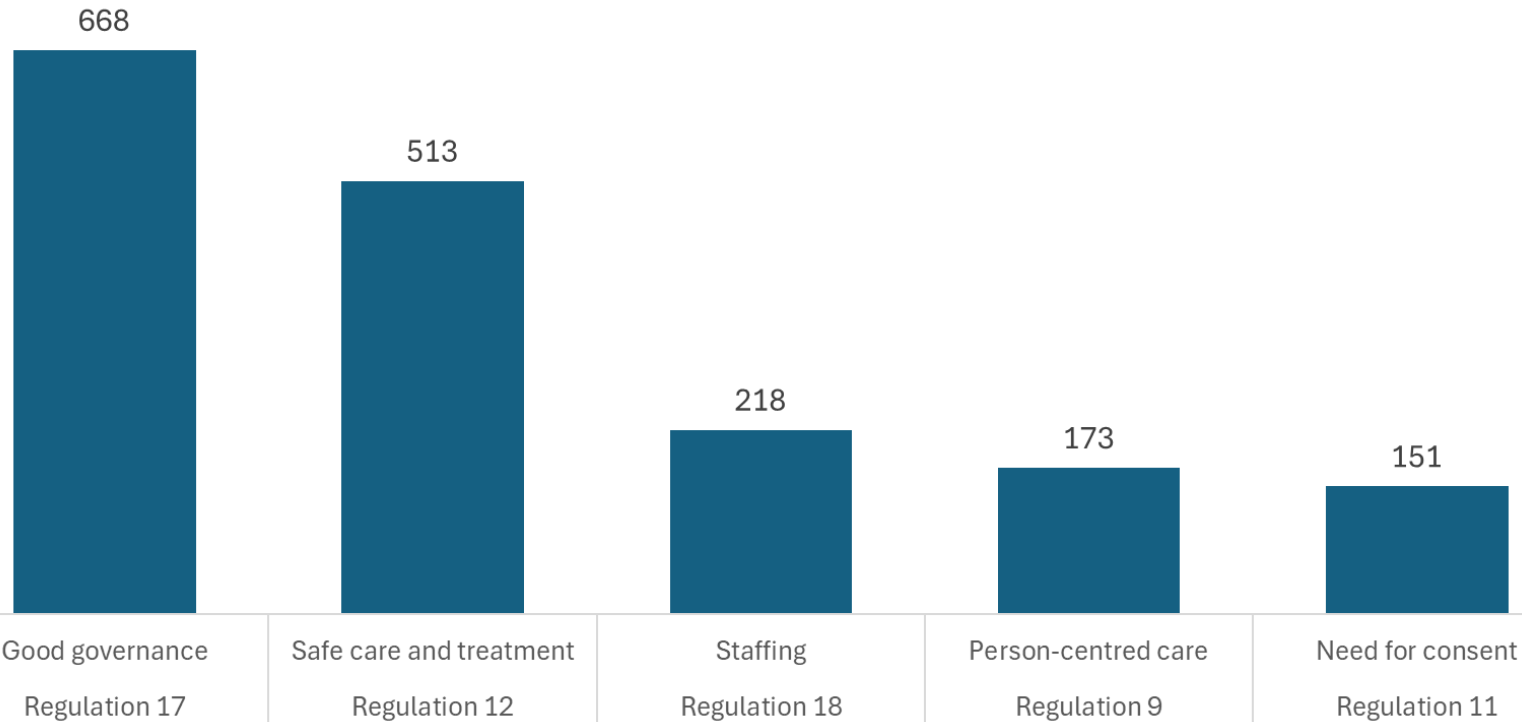
- Targeted work addressing poor outcomes for people with complex or advanced needs (pain, fluids, sleep, distress, inequalities).

## **Recognition and accreditation**

- Awards and external validation such as Stirling Gold for dementia friendly environments.

# Enforcement themes and trends

Regulation Breaches resulting in Action Plans Issued (Last 12 Months)



## Common regulatory actions

- Frequent use of Warning Notices (Reg 12 & 17)
- Notice of Proposals (NOPs) for cancellations.
- Staffing and recruitment breaches seen in some cases.

# A clear, sequenced improvement plan



Feedback

Codesign

Test

Strengthen

Implement

- Publishing our draft assessment frameworks
- Engaging with you, partners in care and CQC staff to strengthen and refine draft assessment frameworks – don't forget to sign up!
- Testing new methodology and technology to support the new assessment frameworks
- Co-designing new digital and technology systems to support our whole regulatory process, including improving the provider portal and digitising our registration process
- Setting out a clear and consistent approach for managing relationships between CQC and providers
- Implementing new assessment frameworks
- Continuing to strengthen our registration processes

# Any questions?



[cqc.org.uk](https://www.cqc.org.uk)



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