

QCS Inspection Ready Checklist

Has it been years since your last inspection?

In September 2025, the Homecare Association published an article that stated that 70.3% of community social care providers had ratings of 4-8+ years old or had never been inspected. The story is similar in care homes where, in April 2025, it was claimed that over 6,000 care homes had not been inspected since 2020.

If you're one of the providers who have not been inspected in a while, you may be wondering what you can do in advance before you receive that call, or an inspector is knocking at the door. We've created this checklist to get you thinking about the things that inspectors are likely to be looking for – with some handy tips to help you on your way.

Key Question: SAFE

What to Check	Tip Translation	Yes	No	Comments
Is your safeguarding system clear and understood by all staff, and most importantly is it used?	Do you have an up-to-date policy, can you verify that it is clear and that staff understand and use it?	☐	☐	
Do staff know who to approach if they have concerns?	Is there evidence that staff know who they should approach – is it clearly written in your policy?	☐	☐	
Are concerns recorded and escalated appropriately?	Think: ⦿ Escalation to local authority safeguarding team How can you evidence this?	☐	☐	
Do you operate with safe staffing levels?	Are the right number of staff on duty? Are the right staff supporting the right people?	☐	☐	
Are the staff suitably skilled to deliver the care or support required for each unique person supported?	Do your staff have the right skillset and are they allocated to the relevant people? Ensure there is the correct skills match at your service.	☐	☐	

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What to Check	Tip Translation	Yes	No	Comments
Do you have contingency plans for staffing?	What are your back up plans? Are there any in-house standbys, agency staff or suitably skilled office staff?	☐	☐	
Do you have robust infection prevention and control measures in place?	Do you have an up-to-date policy? Can you verify that it is clear and staff understand and use it? How can you evidence this is embedded in day-to-day care?	☐	☐	
Do staff have suitable training that reflects the needs of their role?	Staff receive training (that is evidenced) suitable to the expectations of their role. This includes competency checks and updates.	☐	☐	
Are your recruitment practices compliant?	Think: - DBS checks - References - Full job history explaining gaps - Right to Work Checks - Induction - Shadowing	☐	☐	
Do you follow clear accident and incident procedures that are then analysed?	Do you have an up-to-date policy. Can you verify that it is clear and staff understand and use it? Do you keep a record of all accidents/incidents, and can you evidence lessons learnt?	☐	☐	
Are there risk assessments in place for all the people you provide a service to?	Think: - Individual risk assessments that cover all aspects of mobility, continence, nutrition, swallowing, behaviours, medication, community access - Environmental risk assessments – hazards, fire, slips trips and falls - Individual staff risk assessments - Are these assessments monitored and updated regularly?	☐	☐	
Does each person supported have a relevant MAR chart?	Each person should have an individual, accurate MAR chart which is completed, without any gaps.	☐	☐	

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What to Check	Tip Translation	Yes	No	Comments
Are there clear protocols for medication management, including PRN and controlled drugs?	Do you have up-to-date policies? Can you verify they are clear and that staff understand them and most importantly, use them?	☐	☐	
Are medicines stored in an appropriate way for your organisation and according to the individual needs of the people you support?	Care homes and home care do not follow the same safe storage practices. Make sure that you follow the guidance that applies to your organisation.	☐	☐	
Do you complete regular medication audits, and are the findings used for improvement where appropriate?	Think: ⊙ Skilled staff ⊙ 6 rights of medication followed ⊙ Time sensitive medication ⊙ Missed ⊙ Late doses Any findings that are not in line with safe practice or that require improving such as missed medications should have an action plan for improvement. You should be able to evidence this and evidence what the improvement action was and when it was taken. Also take a look at QCS Audit Centre for a digitalised solution to your auditing needs.	☐	☐	
Do you make sure that any equipment used is safe and in date?	You should have regular servicing arrangements for all equipment on site or in the case of home care, work in partnership with the providers responsible for servicing the equipment. Staff should complete safety checks before they use any piece of equipment, e.g. hoist sling - check for signs of wear, fraying, fabric weakness. You should be able to evidence this.	☐	☐	

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Key Question: **EFFECTIVE**

What to Check	Tip Translation	Yes	No	Comments
Do staff receive training in a timely manner?	Think: ☉ Staff induction during onboarding ☉ Care Certificate within the first 3 months ☉ Training updates before they expire ☉ Competency checks when there have been areas of concern or after staff have received further support ☉ Training matrix	☐	☐	
Do staff receive regular working observations and spot checks?	You should be able to evidence a responsive, competency-based approach. The point of working observations and spot checks are to verify that staff are working as trained, and in line with your company values – that's difficult to check and evidence if you're only completing them annually.	☐	☐	
Do staff receive regular supervisions and appraisals?	These should be at consistent intervals and are an opportunity to provide formal feedback, discuss any goals or training requirements. They should be used as a tool for staff growth and development.	☐	☐	
Do care plans reflect the unique needs and preferences of the people supported?	Think: ☉ Bespoke pre-service/pre-admission assessments ☉ 'About me' sections ☉ Care plans that are reflective of their current needs ☉ How often are they updated? ☉ Do staff read the care plans?	☐	☐	

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What to Check	Tip Translation	Yes	No	Comments
Are the specific needs of people supported monitored and are actions taken?	Think: - People with specific conditions or health concerns - Nutrition and hydration - Pressure areas - You need to have measures in place to evidence your support and/or escalation.	☐	☐	
Do you have a high turnover of staff for the people supported?	Do staff get to know a few key people or are there many faces they see? If there are many, does this negatively impact their view of the service they receive? How many times does someone have to repeat their story?	☐	☐	
Do you have strong working partnerships with other professionals?	Think: - GP - Speech and language therapist - Community nurses - Social workers - Commissioners - Local authority representatives - Physiotherapists - Occupational therapists	☐	☐	
Does your service fully understand the Mental Capacity Act principles and how to apply them?	Think: - Capacity - Best Interest decisions - DoLS and CDoLS applications Do you have relevant policies that cover the Mental Capacity Act 2005, as well as Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards? Are they in date and do staff understand how to use them? You should be able to evidence all best interest decisions.	☐	☐	

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What to Check	Tip Translation	Yes	No	Comments
Can you evidence the involvement of the people you support in their care?	Think: ⦿ Assessment processes ⦿ Forming care plans together ⦿ Daily records ⦿ Reviews ⦿ Telephone calls	☐	☐	
Can you evidence the involvement of family and friends where applicable?	Think: ⦿ Assessments and reviews where they have attended ⦿ Consent ⦿ Family portal (if using a digital software system) ⦿ Regular updates and working together to find solutions	☐	☐	

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Key Question: CARING

What to Check	Tip Translation	Yes	No	Comments
Do you have a set of company values that are reflected in day-to-day practice?	Your values are the golden threads of the organisation. They are your staff motivation and what the people you support will come to expect. ☉ Are they reflected in the way your organisation provides the service? Do staff: ☉ Know them? ☉ Understand them?	☐	☐	
Can you evidence that people are involved in decisions about their care?	Think: ☉ Assessments ☉ Reviews ☉ Daily records	☐	☐	
Are peoples' privacy and dignity respected?	Think how this is evidenced in: ☉ Daily records ☉ Care planning ☉ Staff training ☉ Staff competencies ☉ Feedback from the people who use your service ☉ Feedback from families	☐	☐	

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What to Check	Tip Translation	Yes	No	Comments
Are the interactions between staff and the people supported compassionate and respectful?	Think how this is evidenced in: ☉ Daily records ☉ Care planning ☉ Staff training ☉ Staff competencies ☉ Feedback from the people who use your service ☉ Feedback from families ☉ Working observations	☐	☐	
Are the cultural, social and emotional needs of the people you support met?	Think how this is evidenced in: ☉ You assessment processes ☉ Care planning ☉ Adjustments made to accommodate these needs ☉ Staff training ☉ Staff competencies ☉ Feedback from the people who use your service ☉ Feedback from families ☉ Working observations	☐	☐	
Do staff understand the core principles of choice and why this is important?	Think how this is evidenced in ☉ Training ☉ Care plans ☉ Daily care records ☉ Working observations ☉ Meetings ☉ Positive feedback	☐	☐	

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Key Question: **RESPONSIVE**

What to Check	Tip Translation	Yes	No	Comments
Can you evidence that you adapt to care/support needs as they change?	Think ☉ Care plans ☉ Reviews ☉ Feedback received Make sure you log every phone call and copy every email to the service user file – this evidences your timeframe.	☐	☐	
Does the care and support provided reflect the unique needs of the individual?	Think ☉ Assessments ☉ Care plans ☉ Reviews ☉ Feedback received ☉ Partnership working with professionals and families ☉ Rehabilitation	☐	☐	
Are complaints dealt with swiftly and properly?	Do you have up-to-date policies? Can you verify they are clear, that staff understand them and most importantly, use them? Does everyone know who to raise their complaint with? Can you evidence your timelines? If there is a complaint about the registered manager, is it clear who it should be directed to? (This is especially important if they hold dual roles and are also the nominated individual). Consider an external provider in these cases.	☐	☐	
Do you keep a log of concerns?	If someone has not made a formal complaint but has a concern or feedback that requires action, you should treat it in principle in the same way as you would a complaint. Log it and evidence how you have improved/changed to make it better.	☐	☐	

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What to Check	Tip Translation	Yes	No	Comments
Do you work well with other organisations to ensure that people receive coordinated care?	Make sure you log all flexible care or support you provide to accommodate and promote best outcomes for people. ☉ Log every phone call ☉ Log every email ☉ Log all feedback ☉ Evidence what you have done to make things better	☐	☐	
Do the activities you offer reflect the unique preferences of the people who use your service?	Think about how you ask about and evidence: ☉ People's life history and interests ☉ Physical capabilities ☉ Mental health and anxieties ☉ Choice ☉ Cultural background ☉ Preferences ☉ Person-centred approach ☉ Staff training and awareness ☉ Feedback received – as not everyone's preferences stay the same Make sure you keep records of all your activities offered and delivered.	☐	☐	
Do you keep a log of all the positive feedback you receive?	Make sure you do this, share it with staff and add it to your newsletters. People like to know when things have gone well and it helps boost morale too. At QCS we have a Book of Diamonds that can be used for this, as well as QCS Feedback Centre for a digitalised solution to your feedback needs.	☐	☐	
Can you evidence that action has been taken from alerts sent through on a digital system?	All this should be time stamped, and you should be able to clearly account for any action or inaction. Avoid complacency and make sure each alert is treated as though it has come through for the first time.	☐	☐	

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Key Question: WELL-LED

What to Check	Tip Translation	Yes	No	Comments
Is your statement of purpose clear and up to date?	This needs to be accurate, outline key people, who you support and what your aims and objectives are. As this business evolves, this can change so it's important to review it at least annually or when something has clearly changed.	☐	☐	
Does the registered manager work enough hours to cover the needs of the service?	There is no official number of hours for a registered manager to work but they should be onsite or available for a reasonable amount of time each week to monitor the service and understand how it is operating. In a job share you must evidence that each person disseminates information thoroughly and there is a thorough handover as well as clear accountability.	☐	☐	
Are your policies and procedures in date and reflective of the work that you do?	Your policies should be reviewed annually, as a minimum, and they should be accessible to all staff. Make sure all your policies are reflective of the type of care you provide.	☐	☐	
Do you use your policies and procedures daily?	Use your policies daily – they shouldn't just be the go-to when something goes wrong. ☉ Can you evidence accessibility? ☉ Training? ☉ Reference to them in meeting minutes?	☐	☐	
Can you evidence your learning from accidents, incidents and complaints?	Keep a log of all these, along with any investigations, outcomes and improvement measures. Think: ☉ Duty of candour (how transparent you are) ☉ Your ability to admit a mistake when there has been one (we are all human) ☉ What you are prepared to do to make it better	☐	☐	

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Do you have an up-to-date business continuity plan?	This identifies what measures you will put in place in the event of an emergency? - Severe weather - Severe staff shortage - Power cut, and so on Make sure this is checked and updated annually as a minimum.	☐	☐	
Do you carry out regular audits, and can you evidence them?	It is not enough to carry out an audit. You need to evidence: - The regularity - The reason why (if it's an incident that has then instigated the need) - The outcome - Actions needed - Actions complete - Any further measure implemented or changes in the way you work Also take a look at QCS Audit Centre for a digitalised solution to your auditing needs.	☐	☐	
Do you carry out quality assurance, and can this be evidenced?	It's no longer enough to send out an annual questionnaire. You should gather feedback whenever you feel there is a need - essentially it needs to be more responsive. You can use systems that work for you and that meet the needs of the people you support.	☐	☐	
Can you evidence the systems you have in place to monitor staff performance?	Is everyone doing what you think they are doing? - Senior staff on duty - Competencies - Accidents/incidents and identifying patterns - Concerns reported and action taken	☐	☐	

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What to Check	Tip Translation	Yes	No	Comments
Do leaders have positive working relationships with staff?	Think about your culture: Are people supported to raise concerns? Do they feel able to? Do people feel listened to? Evidence in: ☉ Meeting minutes ☉ Feedback surveys ☉ Email logs ☉ Overall culture vibe	☐	☐	
Is there a clear organisational chart?	Staff and the people you support should know who to approach for each issue or item to discuss.	☐	☐	
Do you feel confident that staff will mirror what is said in your policies and procedures if asked by an inspector?	Making sure your staff receive suitable training and support goes a long way to ensure this happens. Think: ☉ Embedded policies and procedures ☉ Suitable and efficient training (that includes the why a task is completed in a certain way) ☉ Senior staff presence ☉ Competencies ☉ Supervisions ☉ Clear risk assessments and care plans ☉ Positive and supportive culture	☐	☐	

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Remember, inspectors don't just look at paper-based or digital evidence; they will want to speak with:

- ◉ The people you support
- ◉ Family and friends
- ◉ Staff

Most importantly, they will also want to speak with the registered manager to make sure they are fully aware of:

- ◉ What's going on in the service
- ◉ How people are supported, why and how this is reflected
- ◉ How staff are supported, why and how this is reflected
- ◉ Other professionals you work with, to understand how you work, the service standards from their perspective and how well you work with others to ensure the best outcomes for the people you support

Ultimately, they want to know that you are managing the service effectively, meeting people's needs in a way that is safe, person-centred, abides by the law and is essentially well-run.

QCS Compliance Centre doesn't only offer policies and procedures. We have an educational Resource Centre that houses lots of information on care and support provision, as well as documents to help you evidence your performance, not to mention our digital Audit Centre and Feedback Centre, and if that wasn't enough, you can also find Lyra, our new AI technology that gives staff instant, practical guidance based on your policies.

Resources

***An up-to-date policy means one that has been reviewed within the last 12 months.*

<https://www.homecareassociation.org.uk/resource/care-quality-commission-regulatory-performance-in-homecare-one-year-on.html>

<https://www.itv.com/news/2025-04-03/thousands-of-care-homes-not-been-inspected-since-2020-data-analysis-finds>