

# Leading Social Care Consultants, Fulcrum Care, Responds to National Report on CQC Failings

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Fulcrum Care welcomes the recent report highlighting significant internal failings within the Care Quality Commission (CQC). As an independent national consultancy, Fulcrum Care has been at the forefront of supporting health and social care services, having worked closely with hundreds of care providers over the years. For context, Fulcrum supported 260 care services in 2023 alone. This extensive engagement has provided us with a comprehensive view of the challenges faced by the health and social care sector, particularly in the post-pandemic period, and more recently under CQC's new 'single assessment framework'.

In the past year, in the run up to and post the introduction of CQC's new inspection framework, the health and social care sector has experienced significant upheaval. While the framework aims to streamline inspections and improve care quality, it has also led to increased scrutiny and pressure on health and social care providers. The new system, intended to be more flexible and data-driven, has instead resulted in confusion and fear among providers, leading to a punitive environment rather than a supportive one.

At Fulcrum Care, we have seen firsthand the devastating impact of CQC's approach, not just on care providers, but also on the grossly under-reported impact on people who use health and social care services, their families and staff. We successfully prevented the closure of 32 care services last year, many of which were subject to enforcement actions that we believe were disproportionate. The overly stringent enforcement has not only placed undue stress on providers but has also driven many out of the sector, exacerbating an already critical shortage of high-quality health and social care services.

Furthermore, commissioning authorities and various other agencies, such as fire and environmental health services, have used CQC findings as a tool to beat care providers with, akin to a modern-day 'witch hunt'. This aggressive stance has added unnecessary pressure on health and social care providers, who are already struggling with the post-pandemic challenges of staffing shortages, increased operational costs, and the need to adopt new technologies.

Our role at Fulcrum Care is to support and guide health and social care providers through these turbulent times. In 2023, we supported providers to deal with over 60 contract sanctions and onerous safeguarding reviews. Fulcrum has acted as an expert witness in numerous cases brought forward against care providers by CQC. Our commitment to improving care standards while safeguarding providers from undue enforcement remains steadfast.

We call for a more balanced approach from the regulator, whether in current form as CQC, or as is likely to happen, a reinvented form of it under a different guise. We would also call other associated agencies which work with health and social care providers who look after vulnerable people to support improvement through collaboration rather than punitive actions. The health and social care sector needs an environment where providers feel supported and encouraged to meet high standards, not one where fear of retaliation looms over every inspection.

## About Fulcrum Care

Fulcrum Care is dedicated to enhancing the quality of health and social care across the UK. In 2023, we assisted 260 care services and supported 84 providers owning 676 services. Our interventions have been crucial in preventing care home closures, lifting embargoes, and ensuring compliance with regulatory standards. Our team of experts continues to provide invaluable support through audits, safeguarding reviews, and operational management.

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