The importance of CQC registration for healthcare providers

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is the body that regulates all health and social care providers. From the 1st October 2010 new laws came into place that state that every health and social care provider that provides regulated activities must be registered with the CQC, this includes private companies, voluntary organisations and the NHS. This registration means that the CQC will continuously monitor compliance against a number of set standards, classified as the essential standards. CQC registration is a legal requirement and is intended to ensure that high standards of patient care are achieved and maintained.

In being registered with the CQC, providers are demonstrating that they meet all of the recognised standards with respect to areas such as cleanliness and infection control, safeguarding, patient safety and staffing. CQC registration therefore indicates to service users that they are receiving care and treatment within a safe environment that follows best practice guidelines. The CQC have provided definite guidance on what it takes for a provider to demonstrate that they comply with the essential standards and all providers must have a good working knowledge of this guidance to be able to demonstrate compliance.

Patients are currently being made aware of the fact that CQC registration is a legal requirement and as such they will be looking for evidence that you are achieving the prescribed standards and indeed that you as their health or social care provider have been approved and registered with the CQC. Any failings to comply or to be registered can be reported to the CQC by any individual, with significant consequences in place for any providers who do not comply.

There are a range of deadlines that have been set by the CQC for different providers to obtain registration, failure to register in time could result in a number of outcomes being implemented, including the imposition of variation conditions to your practice which will mean that you will not be able to carry out the regulated activity, there may also be fines applied or in the most serious cases prosecutions. In the same way, if you are not able to comply with the essential standards necessary for registration you will be required to produce robust action plans to demonstrate how you intend to improve conditions to meet these standards. Failing to do so could lead to a suspension or cancellation of your CQC registration meaning that you will not be legally allowed to deliver services.

It is vital therefore that anybody providing regulated activities in health and social care starts the registration process as soon as possible, not only so the provider has an opportunity to assess their current practices and make any necessary amendments to ensure that they are delivering the highest levels of patient care, but also to avoid potential criminal proceedings being brought against them.