

Why the Care Quality Commission registration process is important to Independent Health Providers

The Care Quality Commission, otherwise known as the CQC, is the independent regulator of health and social care in England. They define their purpose as, 'regulating care provided by the NHS, local authorities, private companies and voluntary organisations.' They go on to state that they, 'aim to make sure better care is provided for everyone - in hospitals, care homes and people's own homes.' They also work to protect the interests of people whose rights are restricted under the Mental Health Act.

As part of their role as regulator, the CQC asks that all healthcare bodies, whether they are part of the NHS or not, register with them, declaring that the services they provide are compliant with a series of quality standards that the CQC have put into place to ensure that all healthcare services, regardless of provider, are at an acceptable standard. After an organisation has registered, a member of the CQC will visit the provider site in order to verify that the declaration made is true to the standard of service delivered.

There are lots of reasons why the registration process with the Care Quality Commission is important to Independent Healthcare Providers. Probably the most important reason is that all Healthcare Providers **have to** be registered and assessed by the regulatory body. If you are found to be practicing or providing a service without having registered, then you can either be shut down or heavily fined. So, if you want to continue practicing and providing your service, then you must ensure that your application form and supporting documentation is submitted to the CQC promptly.

But there are other internal reasons as to why the CQC assessment or registration process is important to Independent Healthcare Providers too. Having that seal of approval from the Care Quality Commission means that your clients can see that your services are provided to the very highest of standards, and this gives them confidence in their provision of care. In addition, potential clients are more likely to choose a service that is clearly registered with the CQC over one that isn't, or that has terms and conditions against its registration.

Furthermore, preparing for the Care Quality Commission assessment is a huge task which requires a massive overhaul of internal documentation. The documentation you have in-house is reviewed and measured by the Care Quality Commission's assessor, and it spans about 3 arch lever files in length. To prepare correctly for this assessment, all internal documentation relating to HR, clinical practice, policies, patient facing leaflets, information governance, and documented processes have to be reviewed, revised, updated and where there are gaps...created! Whilst this is a challenging task, it is also a worthwhile one as it means that all of your internal documentation is up to date and comprehensive.

Finally, part of the CQC's requirements is that a number of training programmes have been written and provided to staff. These include safeguarding training, data protection, manual handling, information security and working with vulnerable adults. So undertaking your CQC assessment drives you to get your training material in place...and to deliver it!