Care home performance across England

March 2019

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Whatever happens as we get older, we all want to remain independent and live life on our own terms. That's why, as well as offering regular friendly contact and a strong campaigning voice, Independent Age can provide you and your family with clear, free and impartial advice on the issues that matter: care and support, money and benefits, health and mobility. A charity founded over 150 years ago, we're independent so you can be.

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To see an interactive map of the variation in care home quality please visit: https://www.independentage.org/care-home-performance-across-england-2019

About this briefing

Following on from work conducted in 2017 and 2018, this briefing assesses the state of care home performance across England and looks at what is being done to tackle poor performance.

We have used publicly available CQC inspection data (taken from January 2019) to work out a total figure for the percentage of care homes in each local authority that are rated either "Inadequate" or "Requires Improvement". Using research from the last two years we have tracked which areas have demonstrated improvement and which have worsened.

This briefing also outlines how we as an organisation want to see care home quality develop and what factors are key to ensuring that care home quality does improve.

Key findings

In the last year, more than a third (37%) of local authorities have seen care home ratings get worse in their area.

This is an extremely concerning trend and a significant increase on the 22% of local authorities that saw care home ratings in their area fall between 2017 and 2018. With an ageing population and increased pressures on social care, it is imperative that the social care system is of a sufficient quality to meet the current and future demands. This trend shows the system is not ready and the variation in care home quality is only increasing. Access to a choice of good quality care home settings is still very much a matter of luck.

The variation in quality of care homes between regions in England is recognised by older people and their families. One focus group participant told us "My sister-in-law … lives in Cambridgeshire and … the homes there seem to be run totally different to the homes here [in Bexley]".

Over the last year, 2.6 Million older people are now more likely to face poor choice of care home

More than two and a half million older people live in the 56 local authorities where care home ratings have deteriorated. During the last year their chances of facing a poorer range of care choices increased, at a time when high costs and lack of accessibility already creates vast challenges.

Many older people we spoke to have a real fear of care homes. In Manchester which, in 2019, tops the table of local authorities where care homes performance is declining, we heard from one focus group participant: *"I'm frightened of care homes in case I have to go in one".*

What does a 'Requires Improvement' or 'Inadequate' rating look like?

For a care home to receive a 'Requires Improvement' or 'Inadequate' rating, the service must be failing to deliver the minimum quality of care that is expected, in categories including safety and caring.

Issues highlighted in care homes with these ratings have included:

- Residents not receiving medicine as they were prescribed.
- The service not always being caring
- Staff failing to monitor individual's nutrition and hydration.
- Residents not always treated with dignity in their interactions with staff
- Audits and processes not being followed so that safety cannot be guaranteed.

These are issues no individual should have to endure, particularly when they may be paying a very high weekly cost. They help to make concrete what a poor rating really means for the people living within that home.

We believe every older person is entitled to good quality care, and therefore should be entitled to a 'Good' or 'Outstanding' care home.

Care Home Performance: 2018-2019

2018-2019

37% ↘ Local authorities saw care home quality get worse

2017-2018

22% ↘ Local authorities saw care home quality get worse

2.6 million older people
are more likely to face a poor choice of care home

% point increase in poorly rated care homes 2018–2019

Local Authority	%
Southwark	18.2%
Luton	15.1%
Blackburn with Darwen	13.8%
Middlesbrough	13.2%
Reading	12.1%
Ealing	10.8%
Lewisham	10.6%
Redcar and Cleveland	10.5%
Camden	10.0%
Rutland	10.0%
Herefordshire, County of	9.6%
Medway	9.2%
Bolton	9.1%
Warrington	9.0%
Tower Hamlets	8.3%
Bracknell Forest	7.7%
Nottingham	7.5%
County Durham	6.9%
Knowsley	5.3%
Worcestershire	4.9%
Gateshead	4.9%
Hillingdon	4.9%
West Sussex	4.8%
Bournemouth	4.6%
Isle of Wight	4.5%
Lambeth	4.3%
Central Bedfordshire	4.1%
Calderdale	4.0%
Thurrock	3.6%
Bury	3.6%
Solihull	3.5%
Darlington	3.1%
North Yorkshire	2.9%
Peterborough	2.8%
Cambridgeshire	2.8%
Shropshire	2.7%
Havering	2.5%
Northamptonshire	2.3%
Northumberland	2.2%
Warwickshire	1.9%
Milton Keynes	1.8%
Croydon	1.6%
Blackpool	1.5%
Wokingham	1.4%
Coventry	1.3%
Torbay	1.2%
Greenwich	1.1%
Halton	1.1%
Nottinghamshire	1.0%
Leicestershire	0.7%
Richmond upon Thames	0.6%
Wiltshire	0.6%
Waltham Forest	0.4%
Doncaster	0.4%
Dorset	0.3%
Manchester	0.2%

What needs to happen now?

"Instead of thinking, 'Oh my God, I'm going to end up there!' I actually want to think, 'If I do have to go into care, I want to look forward to how fantastic it would be.'" Independent Age focus group participant, Birmingham

It is well known that social care is in crisis. At the heart of this crisis is the chronic underfunding of the system with social care spending shrinking by £7 billion since 2010[1]. Without ring-fenced funding to protect social care. Local authorities are planning to push through social care cuts of £700 million in 2018/2019 - nearly 5% of their total budget[2] - in order to balance their books.

At a time when our population is ageing, local authorities are facing increasing demands on their social care services, and when care quality is such an issue, this is a situation that cannot continue.

However, money is not the only issue. It is essential that a poor rating triggers urgent, comprehensive action so that care homes are provided with the support they need to improve the quality of care they are delivering.

How can we improve care home performance in England?

The CQC have identified some common themes amongst those care homes who had successfully improved upon a poor care home rating[3]. These themes include:

- Leadership
- Cultural Change
- Person-centred care
- Staffing
- Building a community
- Working with partners

All of these factors have been used to ensure a change of direction at care homes, helping them take poor quality care and turn it into high quality care that places the wellbeing of residents at the centre.

Whether it's a change of manager at the top, or working with other care homes who have themselves improved, research has demonstrated that these factors can play a significant role in improving a care home's rating.

An inconsistent approach?

However, we know that care homes and local authorities do not have a consistent approach to shaping their care home market and helping make these much needed improvements.

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[1] ADASS, Budget Survey 2018, 2018
[2] Ibid
[3] CQC, Driving improvement: Case studies from nine adult social care services, June 2018

In an FOI sent to all local authorities in 2017[4] we sought to identify how local authorities go about fulfilling their Care Act requirements to engage with the care market in their area and thereby drive up quality.

While every local authority acknowledged their responsibility in this regard, it was clear that some local authorities put more resources and effort into engaging with the market, than others.

Good practice includes regular assessments of care homes, but also active engagement with care homes to maintain a comprehensive understanding of their costs of care and other pressures they are facing. This was achieved through provider forums and market engagement events as well as in some cases a newly appointed team within the local authority to specifically look at increasing care quality within the area.

An example of how Leicestershire County Council supported the care providers in their area can be seen below.

A case study of local authority care home improvement – Leicestershire County Council

Leicestershire County Council (LCC) has developed a novel approach to supporting local care providers to improve the quality and standard of care available to users. Since 2012, LCC has hosted a Quality Team consisting of individuals with social care expertise (ex care home managers and a nurse among them) who work alongside providers to help them make improvements. This activity is funded by the Better Care Fund and forms part of the Council's overall approach to quality assurance and improvement.

The goal of the team is to support social care providers to deliver good quality, safe care by working with them to enhance staff capability in terms of practical skills, knowledge and leadership. Any local provider can access the support free of charge, regardless of whether they hold a contract with LCC, although providers are prioritised according to the risk posed to users. The majority of the providers that the Quality Team works with are referred to them due to contractual compliance and safety concerns for service users.

Members of the Quality Team meet with key staff from providers in their practice settings and through education, coaching and the provision of tools and resources they aim to change practice and ways of thinking in a sustainable way. The team develops a programme of support tailored to the provider's needs that covers diverse topics including care plans, medication, risk assessment and training. In these interactions, the team play a wide variety of roles including counsellor, mentor, advisor and mediator.

The Quality Team has engaged with 111 of the 182 care homes in the region, though to differing degrees. LCC's portfolio of care homes is better than surrounding areas, with a higher percentage of them rated as 'Good.' The Quality Team initiative has also resulted in improved relationships between providers and the Council more generally.

The ELSCQua project at the Personal Social Services Research Unit at LSE will be releasing a detailed case study report looking at local authorities initiatives to improve social care quality (including Leicestershire) in April 2019. This work has been funded by the National Institute for Health Research School for Social Care Research.

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[4] Independent Age, *Caring for the Care Act: A freedom of information research briefing*, November 2017

A lesson from schools?

Care homes remain an overlooked sector in public services. Data shows that we tolerate poor care home quality far more than failing GP surgeries or schools.

Despite well documented challenges facing the education sector, Ofsted ratings are notably higher than CQC care home ratings with only 1 in 8 schools rated poorly. With this in mind, is helpful to compare the processes and structures that follow a poor school rating, contrasting it with the level of investment in tackling care home poor ratings.

More regular inspections

Following on from a rating of 'Special Measures', schools tend to be re-inspected on a termly basis. On each occasion a report will be published to provide a regular assessment of whether the school is improving.

This constant re-evaluation ensures that the school is made accountable for making the changes necessary to drive performance.

This is in contrast to the situation in care homes where the CQC is required to return six months after a poor rating is issued to see if changes have been made. This is a considerable period of time, particularly given that more than third of people will only be resident in a care home for a period of a year or less[5].

Executive experience

In some cases, once a school receives a poor rating, an experienced executive head teacher is employed to work in collaboration with the incumbent head and drive improvements in the school.

The use of an executive head can mean that a school's improvements are guide by an experienced professional with a grounded understanding of what measures will raise the school's performance

CQC research outlined occasions where a change in management was initiated to stimulate a change in culture and provide expert experience of how to make quick, sustainable changes which improved the quality of care being delivered. However, this type of support and change is not always available to care homes and having the luxury of gaining an experienced manager is not an option for many of those homes needing to make drastic change.

Collaborative working and learning

A key part of improving a school's Ofsted rating is linking that school with other organisations, including being sponsored by an academy chain, who have a background for improving similar schools. This gives the school the opportunity to engage with others who have experience of improving school quality and can help them shape the improvements that need to be made.

We believe the principles of urgency, collaboration and use of expertise are key in addressing the worrying trends in declining care quality.

Independent Age will be continuing to work with others to make the case for comprehensive and sustainable support packages for care homes that are currently struggling to provide high quality care.

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[5] PSSRU, Length of stay in care homes , 2011

APPENDIX 1

Care Quality Ranking Table

% of care homes rated either 'Requires Improvement' or 'Inadequate'

1.	Isles of Scilly	0.0%
2.	Kingston upon Thames	2.4%
3.	West Berkshire	2.4%
4.	Merton	5.1%
5.	Richmond upon Thames	5.3%
6.	South Gloucestershire	5.3%
7.	Windsor and Maidenhead	5.7%
8.	Thurrock	6.7%
9.	Bracknell Forest	7.7%
10.	Milton Keynes	8.3%
11.	Redbridge	8.5%
12.	Somerset	8.6%
13.	St. Helens	8.6%
14.	Peterborough	9.1%
15.	Brent	9.2%
16.	Darlington	9.4%
17.	Wokingham	9.4%
18.	Poole	9.8%
19.	Hounslow	10.0%
20.	Rutland	10.0%
21.	Bristol, City of	10.1%
22.	Southend-on-Sea	10.1%
23.	Shropshire	10.4%
24.	Blackpool	10.4%
25.	Southampton	10.5%
26.	Bedford	10.8%
27.	Cambridgeshire	11.0%
28.	York	11.1%
29.	Leicester	11.1%
30.	Sutton	11.5%
31.	Wandsworth	11.8%
32.	Reading	12.1%
33.	Hampshire	12.3%
34.	Islington	12.5%
35.	Harrow	12.7%
36.	Waltham Forest	12.7%
37.	Surrey	13.0%
38.	Cumbria	13.2%
39.	Sandwell	13.2%
40.	Central Bedfordshire	13.2%
41.	Oxfordshire	13.2%
42.	Brighton and Hove	13.3%
43.	Sefton	13.5%
44.	Bournemouth	13.7%
45.	Hertfordshire	13.7%

46.	Greenwich	14.3%
47.	Cornwall	14.4%
48.	Croydon	14.6%
49.	Northamptonshire	14.7%
50.	County Durham	14.7%
51.	Leicestershire	14.8%
52.	Dorset	14.9%
53.	Gloucestershire	15.0%
54.	Devon	15.1%
55.	Bury	15.4%
56.	Newham	15.4%
57.	North Lincolnshire	15.5%
58.	Havering	15.6%
59.	Sunderland	15.8%
60.	Warwickshire	15.8%
61.	Enfield	15.9%
62.	Lambeth	15.9%
63.	Worcestershire	16.3%
64.	Bromley	16.4%
65.	Buckinghamshire	16.8%
66.	Barnet	16.9%
67.	Lincolnshire	16.9%
68.	Suffolk	17.1%
69.	Essex	17.2%
70.	Rotherham	17.3%
71.	East Riding of Yorkshire	17.4%
72.	North East Lincolnshire	17.4%
73.	Lancashire	17.6%
74.	Rochdale	17.6%
75.	Doncaster	17.7%
76.	North Somerset	17.8%
77.	Southwark	18.2%
78.	Telford and Wrekin	18.2%
79.	Lewisham	18.3%
80.	Wigan	18.4%
81.	Plymouth	18.8%
82.	South Tyneside	18.8%
83.	Derbyshire	19.0%
84.	Bolton	19.1%
85.	Medway	19.4%
86.	North Yorkshire	19.7%
87.	Torbay	19.8%
88.	Nottinghamshire	19.8%
89.	Norfolk	19.9%
90.	Oldham	20.0%
91.	Camden	20.0%
92.	Slough	20.0%
93.	East Sussex	20.1%
94.	Gateshead	20.3%

95.	Herefordshire, County of	20.5%
96.	Sheffield	20.5%
97.	Wolverhampton	20.9%
98.	Halton	21.1%
99.	Solihull	21.1%
100.	Northumberland	21.4%
101.	Hackney	21.4%
102.	Swindon	21.6%
103.	Cheshire West and Chester	21.6%
104.	Redcar and Cleveland	21.8%
105.	West Sussex	22.1%
106.	Barking and Dagenham	22.2%
107.	Birmingham	22.4%
108.	Kent	22.6%
109.	Blackburn with Darwen	22.9%
110.	Hartlepool	23.1%
111.	Salford	23.1%
112.	Westminster	23.1%
113.	Derby	23.2%
114.	Leeds	23.3%
115.	Dudley	23.3%
116.	Bexley	23.5%
117.	Hillingdon	24.5%
118.	Newcastle upon Tyne	24.6%
119.	Kingston upon Hull, City of	24.7%
120.	Bath and North East Somerset	25.0%
121.	Hammersmith and Fulham	25.0%
122.	Haringey	25.0%
123.	Stoke-on-Trent	25.3%
124.	North Tyneside	25.5%
125.	Luton	25.6%
126.	Stockport	26.2%
127.	Nottingham	26.4%
128.	Kensington and Chelsea	27.3%
129.	Knowsley	28.0%
130.	Wakefield	28.1%
131.	Stockton-on-Tees	28.3%
132.	Liverpool	28.8%
133.	Ealing	28.8%
134.	Cheshire East	29.9%
135.	Middlesbrough	30.2%
136.	Wiltshire	30.4%
137.	Warrington	30.8%
138.	Trafford	31.5%
139.	Wirral	31.7%
140.	Coventry	31.9%
141.	Bradford	31.9%
142.	Walsall	32.0%
143.	Staffordshire	32.6%

144.	Kirklees	33.1%
145.	Tower Hamlets	33.3%
146.	Calderdale	34.0%
147.	Tameside	34.2%
148.	Barnsley	35.4%
149.	Isle of Wight	37.8%
150.	Portsmouth	39.5%
151.	Manchester	44.0%

APPENDIX 2

Care Quality by Region

Region	% of homes rated "Inadequate" or "Requires Improvement"	
	2018	**2019**
London	17.4%	15.2%
East of England	17.4%	15.8%
East Midlands	18.2%	17.5%
North East	18.3%	20.3%
South West	20.4%	15.8%
South East	20.4%	17.5%
West Midlands	21.3%	21.8%
Yorkshire and The Humber	26.1%	23.3%
North West	28.2%	21.7%

APPENDIX 3

Top 10 and Bottom 10 for improvement between 2018 and 2019

TOP – Most improved local authorities

% point decrease in proportion of care homes rated 'Requires Improvement' or 'Inadequate'

1.	St Helen's	-22.9%
2.	Tameside	-22.5%
3.	Kensington and Chelsea	-18.2%
4.	Windsor and Maidenhead	-17.8%
5.	City of Bristol	-17.7%
6.	Sefton	-17.5%
7.	Stockport	-17.1%
8.	Oldham	-16.8%
9.	South Gloucestershire	-15.5%
10.	Westminster	-15.4%

BOTTOM – Highest declining local authorities

% point increase in proportion of care homes rated 'Requires Improvement' or 'Inadequate'

142.	Camden	10.0%
143.	Rutland	10.0%
144.	Redcar and Cleveland	10.5%
145.	Lewisham	10.6%
146.	Ealing	10.8%
147.	Reading	12.1%
148.	Middlesbrough	13.2%
149.	Blackburn with Darwen	13.8%
150.	Luton	15.1%
151.	Southwark	18.2%