

General Practice delivering improvement and innovation, despite facing “very real” pressures

The most detailed analysis yet of the quality and safety of general medical practice in England has found that nearly 90% of general practices in England have been rated as 'good', making this the highest performing sector CQC regulates.

With GPs facing ongoing pressures around capacity, patient demand and workload and at a time of service redesign, the best general practices are driving change and embracing innovation to make sure they are able to deliver even better care into the future.

In a national report, published today (Thursday 21 September 2017), the Care Quality Commission (CQC) has found that at the end of its first inspection programme of general practices when many had been re-inspected, 4% were rated 'outstanding', 86% were 'good', 8% were 'requires improvement' and 2% were 'inadequate' overall.

This is an improvement from the first ratings awarded to general practices (prior to any re-inspections) when overall, 4% were 'outstanding', 79% were 'good', 13% were 'requires improvement' and 4% were 'inadequate'.

CQC's regulation of primary care is supporting people to receive better care in general practice by setting clear standards of quality and safety and ensuring providers meet them, by sharing examples of what is working well, and by encouraging extra support for the sector through the General Practice Forward View.

82% of the general practices that were first rated as 'requires improvement' or 'inadequate' improved their rating following their most recent inspection.

The report also notes that on re-inspection, 2% of general practices were rated as inadequate for their safety. This improved from 6% in the first ratings CQC awarded. General practices with the highest ratings are those that demonstrate strong leadership; have an understanding of everyone's responsibilities in the practice team; have a clear knowledge of the different needs of their patient groups; and recognise the importance of working as part of their wider local health economies.

Prof Steve Field, Chief Inspector of General Practice at the Care Quality Commission, said: *“This is the first time that we have such a detailed national view of the quality of general practice in England, made possible through CQC's regulation. Having inspected and rated 7,365 general practices across the country, we have found that the clear majority are safe and of a high quality. Where we identified concerns, most practices have taken action and improved. GPs, practice managers and other primary care staff should be commended for their efforts.*

“The challenge is for this focus on quality to be maintained and for general practice to be supported in continuing to give patients this same high standard of care in future while embracing and driving the changes elsewhere in the system. The pressures on GPs are very real but we have found many practices are already delivering care in new and innovative ways to benefit their patients and the wider community.

“The General Practice Forward View sets out the plan for sustainable and high-quality primary care in England. Nearly eighteen months later, the commitments made must continue to be targeted and delivered appropriately to meet people’s local primary care needs. Otherwise, improvements in the quality of care will come to a standstill. We want to encourage continual improvement in the quality of care in general practice so that patients, whoever they are and wherever they are in England, get the high standard of care they have come to expect and deserve.”

In October 2014, CQC formally introduced its new regulatory regime for primary medical services. This saw the start of expert-led, specialist inspections that focused on what matters most to people using services – whether they are safe, caring, effective, responsive and well-led – as well as the introduction of performance ratings of ‘outstanding’, ‘good’, ‘requires improvement’ and ‘inadequate’ to help people make informed choices about their healthcare.

CQC has used these findings to develop how it monitors and inspects general practices across the country. Under proposals that CQC consulted on earlier this year, practices rated as ‘outstanding’ or ‘good’ would be re-inspected at intervals of up to five years, while those rated as ‘inadequate’ and ‘requires improvement’ would still be re-inspected by CQC after six months and 12 months respectively. Also, practices would be able to showcase their performance more proactively through annual data collections that would be used by inspectors to decide when to inspect. CQC will continue to respond quickly to protect people, when necessary.

Ends

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For general enquiries, please call 03000 61 61 61.

Notes to editors

1. For further information about CQC’s report on the state of general practice in England, 2014-2017, please visit the following page from 00.01 Thursday 14 September 2017: www.cqc.org.uk/StateofGP An embargoed copy of this report can be found by clicking the link at the very bottom of this email.
2. There are more than 7,500 general practices in England registered with CQC. All are required to register to be able to provide primary care.
3. For further information about how CQC inspects general practices in England, please refer to its guidance for providers: <http://www.cqc.org.uk/guidance-providers/gps>
4. Last month (August 2017), CQC’s consultation on its plans to change how it regulates general practice in England closed. Responses to this are currently being

reviewed by CQC. For further information about CQC's proposals, please visit:
www.cqc.org.uk/news/releases/cqc-seeks-views-next-phase-regulation

5. In April 2016, NHS England published the General Practice Forward View, which set out the national plan to invest an additional £2.4 billion a year to support general practice services by 2020/21, as well as improve patient care and access, and invest in new ways of providing primary care. For further information, please visit:
<https://www.england.nhs.uk/gp/gpfv/about/>

About the Care Quality Commission

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is the independent regulator of health and social care in England.

We make sure health and social care services provide people with safe, effective, caring, well-led and responsive care, and we encourage care services to improve.

We monitor, inspect and regulate services to make sure they meet fundamental standards of quality and safety and we publish what we find to help people choose care.