

Cllr Rebecca Trimnell
Chair of Adult social Care and Communities Scrutiny Committee
Gloucester county Council

By email: Jo.Moore@gloucestershire.gov.uk

2 January 2026

Dear Cllr Rebecca Trimnell,

Thank you for your letter dated 1 December 2025. I am responding to you on behalf of the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

Within the letter you have raised concerns following your review of market quality that there has been a steady deterioration in provider quality as rated by our inspection process, and the increase in providers in the area not matching the number of inspections being carried out with a potential impact on data accuracy.

As I am sure you are aware in 2021, CQC launched a major change programme to make the assessment process for health and social care providers simpler, and more insight driven, drawing on a wide range of data about quality of care, with the ability to prioritise assessments and inspections. The change programme included new IT systems, changes to how operational (inspection) teams are structured and a new regulatory approach known as the single assessment framework (SAF).

In May 2024, Dr Penny Dash was asked to conduct a review into the operational effectiveness of the CQC. The purpose of the review was to examine the suitability Page 2 of 5 of CQC's new single assessment framework methodology for inspections and ratings of health and care providers. In October 2024, CQC welcomed the 'Review into the operational effectiveness of the Care Quality Commission' by Dr Penny Dash, which helped to set the future direction for the organisation. The review found significant challenges in the internal workings of CQC, including a deterioration in the ability of CQC to identify poor performance and support a drive to improve quality. This has had an impact on the capacity and capability of both the social care and the healthcare sectors to deliver much-needed improvements in care.

We also accepted the first report of the independent review by Professor Sir Mike Richards, which is detailed in the 'Review of CQC's single assessment framework and its implementation'. The review recommended changes to our inspection timescales, a focus on sector-specific assessment approaches and a move back to a provider relationship held by a named inspector.

We have publicly acknowledged the challenges brought about by the previous changes we had made, including the introduction of the single assessment framework and the changes made to the inspector role and wider operational inspection teams. Whilst we address these issues, which I will detail in our approach in the next section of this letter, we have been taking a risk-based approach to prioritising assessments. This has meant we have been focusing on those services where we have the most information of concern and where we need to take action to avoid people being at risk of harm. We know this has had an impact on other services that will want to be reinspected, and we apologise for this.

Improvements being made

We are using the findings and recommendations of the above reviews, along with an independent review of our technology, to continue to make the improvements we need to be an effective regulator. We are currently looking at how we can improve the single assessment framework and its methodology and making some changes to our inspection priorities for the coming year. We are reviewing the content of the assessment framework, developing new ratings characteristics and supporting guidance, and reviewing our approach to ratings judgements and the use of scoring and evidence categories. Technology systems, including our regulatory platform and provider portal, are not currently fit for purpose and we are progressing the recommendations made in recent reviews. We have reviewed our operational structure and in October 2025 we moved back to sector-specific teams, and also appointed four new Chief Inspectors to strengthen our senior level health and care expertise.

Inspection frequency our priorities - better regulation, better care: Consultation on improving how we assess and rate providers

On the 11 December 2025 our consultation looking at our proposals to evolve and improve our approach to assessing health and care providers closed. Within the consultation we set out the improvements we are currently making and the steps we propose to take to ensure that people receive safe, effective, compassionate, and high-quality care.

The changes we propose to our assessment framework and methodology in this consultation are based on extensive internal and external engagement. Some of these proposed changes return us to the best of what we had before. Within the consultation we have looked at how we support our inspection teams to deliver timely and expert inspections, publish impactful reports and develop strong relationships with providers. As well as making changes to our assessment frameworks and methodology, we know that we need to make other changes to our ways of working.

The independent reviews and other feedback have especially highlighted the need to improve the timeliness of our inspections, the clarity and impact of our inspection reports, and how we maintain relationships with the providers that we regulate.

Whilst we are making improvements there is still work to be done. From January 2026 we will be looking at increasing our assessment of services with aged rating and those services that have not been assessed since point of registration, whilst continuing to respond to risk.

Whilst we acknowledge the concerns you raised regarding the number of new providers awaiting assessment following registration, please be assured that all newly registered providers undergo a robust registration assessment and are required to be at a minimum ratings level of 'good' to register with the CQC.

Thank you for raising your concerns with us.

You also have the right to request a review of this case with the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman: Home - Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

I hope this response has been helpful to you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stefan Kallee". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stefan Kallee
CQC Deputy Director – ASC