



National Audit Office

Department of Health

The Care Quality Commission:
Regulating the quality and safety
of health and adult social care

Detailed methodology

DECEMBER 2011

Detailed methodology

1 This document accompanies the National Audit Office's report on *The Care Quality Commission: Regulating the quality and safety of health and social care* (HC 1665, Session 2010–12). It outlines the methods used in the course of our examination and supplements the summarised methodology contained in Appendix Three of the report.

Scope

2 This report examines how the Care Quality Commission (the Commission) used its resources in carrying out its 'quality and safety assurance' work, which comprises:

- registering health and social care providers against 16 essential standards of quality and safety;
- checking registered providers are complying with the essential standards, including by carrying out inspections;
- taking enforcement action against providers where services fail to meet the essential standards; and
- carrying out special reviews of particular aspects of care, and investigations where concerns about quality have been identified.

Methodology

3 The methods used in this report were:

- analysis of data held by the Commission and the Department of Health (the Department);
- review of key documents;
- interviews with staff at the Commission and the Department;
- observation of the Commission's inspections; and
- consultation with stakeholders.

4 We undertook our fieldwork between August and October 2011.

Analysis of data

5 We drew on existing data sets held by the Commission. We analysed a variety of data including:

- financial data covering the Commission's budget, funding and spending;
- staffing data covering staff numbers and vacancy rates;
- activity data covering registration, compliance and enforcement;
- performance data, including data published in the Commission's corporate performance scorecard; and
- data on complaints and whistleblowing.

Review of key documents

6 We reviewed a range of documents held by the Commission and the Department, and other publicly available material. The purpose of the document review was to gain an understanding of:

- the Commission's role and responsibilities, and the wider landscape for oversight of health and social care;
- the background to the establishment of the Commission;
- how the Commission has used its resources in regulating health and social care;
- the Commission's policies and processes for regulating health and social care, including how it takes account of risk; and
- the Commission's performance in regulating health and social care.

7 Key documents we reviewed included:

- the Care Standards Act 2000 and the Health and Social Care Act 2008;
- annual reports and accounts of the Commission and its predecessor bodies, the Commission for Social Care Inspection, the Healthcare Commission and the Mental Health Act Commission;
- minutes and papers from the Commission's Board meetings;
- minutes and papers from the Department's quarterly accountability meetings with the Commission;
- policy and guidance documents published by the Department and the Commission, such as the Department's operational guidance for arm's length bodies and the Commission's guidance for providers on the registration and compliance processes;

- internal Commission documents, including performance reports, internal audit reports, risk registers, guidance to staff, and surveys of staff and providers;
- the Health Committee's 2011 report on the Commission's annual accountability hearing and evidence provided to the Committee; and
- evidence presented to the Mid-Staffordshire NHS foundation trust public inquiry.

Interviews with staff at the Commission and the Department

8 We held semi-structured interviews with staff at the Commission, including members of the executive team and staff with responsibilities for: operations; finance; human resources; intelligence and data management; regulatory risk; and complaints handling. The interviews were designed to gain an understanding of:

- the Commission's role and responsibilities, and the wider landscape for oversight of health and social care;
- how the Commission has used its resources in regulating health and social care;
- the Commission's policies and processes for regulating health and social care, including how it takes account of risk;
- the reasons for trends in performance, funding, spending and staffing, and the actions taken to address particular issues; and
- the action taken in the light of the Winterbourne View case (where a BBC *Panorama* programme exposed serious abuse of patients by staff) and the winding-up of Southern Cross, previously the largest care home provider in the UK.

9 We also visited the Commission's shared service centre to gain an understanding of the arrangements for liaising with customers (care providers and the public), including the registration process, business-as-usual registrations and whistleblowing procedures.

10 We held semi-structured interviews with staff at the Department to gain an understanding of:

- the Department's arrangements for overseeing the Commission;
- the Commission's role and responsibilities, and the wider landscape for oversight of health and social care;
- the background to the establishment of the Commission, including how the timetable for registration was set;
- how the Commission's budget and funding is set; and
- the interactions between the Department and the Commission, particularly around issues such as staff vacancies and terms and conditions.

Observation of inspections

11 We accompanied the Commission's inspectors on two visits, one to a general hospital, part of an NHS trust, and one to a residential care home for elderly people. This allowed us to observe how inspections are carried out, to gain an understanding of how inspectors form their judgements on whether providers are complying with the essential standards of quality and safety, and to seek the views of compliance inspectors and managers on the registration and compliance processes.

Consultation with stakeholders

12 As part of our preliminary work, we held semi-structured interviews with a number of stakeholders to inform the scope of the study, including the English Community Care Association, the National Care Forum, the Social Care Institute for Excellence and Which?

13 We then undertook a written consultation exercise with stakeholders to seek views on:

- whether the Commission's roles and responsibilities in respect of its quality and safety assurance work are clear;
- the Commission's performance in respect of its safety and quality and assurance work;
- whether the Commission takes account of risk appropriately in its safety and quality assurance work; and
- the overall regime for the regulation of health and social care.

14 We received responses from Age UK, the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services, the British Ambulance Association, the British Dental Association, the English Community Care Association, the National Association of Private Ambulances and the NHS Confederation.

15 We also held semi-structured interviews with the Parliamentary and Health Ombudsman, which deals with complaints relating to the NHS, and Monitor, which regulates NHS foundation trusts, to gain an understanding of the interactions between the different organisations involved in overseeing health and social care.