

Q&A Guide: The Care Quality Commission Fit Person Interview

What to expect when it's time for the CQC to interview you to determine your suitability as a registered manager



Introduction

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) fit person interview is a source of much anxiety for prospective registered managers of social care, GP and dental services providers.

As a registered manager you have joint legal liability with the registered provider for the quality and safety of the services provided. This applies to the specific regulated activities at the specific locations given in the registered manager application. Clearly, such an undertaking is not to be taken lightly.

Scandals about poor quality care have been attributed, in part, to regulatory failure and put the health and social care sector under significant scrutiny. This has resulted in a CQC management shake-up, new appointments and increased recruitment. To many this signals a toughening of the regulator's approach. For some it has led to the perception that the regulatory process and activities such as registration and inspections are going to be more difficult to navigate.

Every registered manager has to undergo the fit person interview to assess their suitability. As a result of the high level of responsibility and the CQC's need to raise standards, it is easy to form the impression that this is no easy ride.

Consequently, for many applicants, the prospect of a forthcoming fit person interview may be a somewhat uncomfortable proposition. This Q&A guide helps provide you with an indication of what to expect and offers hints and tips to help you thoroughly prepare for a CQC interview.

1. How long does a fit person interview last?

CQC may quote 2-3 hours for a fit person interview. Much of this assessment process is subjective; it's not a test to complete X questions in Y minutes, so there are no hard and fast rules. Realistically, for most applicants, the assessor should be able to gather enough information to enable a decision to be made in 1-2 hours.

2. Where do I have to go for the interview?

CQC fit person interviews are generally held face-to-face at a CQC regional office. They may also be held on-site at the service provider's premises or on the telephone if this is appropriate.

3. Am I going to be quizzed on the legislation?

It is unlikely that detailed knowledge of legislation will be required; an understanding of how legislation relates to CQC compliance requirements is advisable, including the name of the legislative instrument or Act.

4. Is detailed knowledge required of CQC compliance?

It is unrealistic to expect every candidate for registered manager to know every detail of the CQC compliance requirement inside out. However, a broad familiarisation with the scope of compliance and a good knowledge of essential outcomes should be regarded as the minimum level knowledge requirement.

5. Is my background important?

The CQC objective is to determine that you are the right person to be responsible for care services that look after the welfare of elderly and possibly frail, or otherwise vulnerable people. The CQC will certainly regard your background as very important.

6. Do I need a background in care?

Experience in the care sector is important, however this does not need to be decades long. Candidates should maximise the opportunity to appropriately relate their experience of working within care environments wherever possible. Good managerial or supervisory skills are readily transferable from other sectors as long as they are tempered with some experience of the care sector.

7. Are my motivations relevant?

The motivations of prospective registered managers are of great interest to CQC. The role may be challenging, and requires sensitivity, tact and understanding. The CQC want to be sure that you are the right person.

8. Are my personal values of any importance?

Personal values and beliefs are central to determining who is a fit person to be a registered manager. Expect to be asked questions on such matters. Attitudes to equality and diversity may be the launch pad for an expansive conversation.

9. Are my formal qualifications adequate?

Registered managers in social care

The current registered manager's qualification in England is the QCF level 5 Diploma in Leadership for Health and Social Care and Children and Young People's Services. Applicants may be in the process of working towards the qualification rather than already holding it.

This Diploma is designed for individuals working with adults and children across all social care settings as either managers or senior practitioners. There is a unit based approach for selecting Residential and Non-Residential pathway options.

Level 2-3 Diplomas in Health and Social Care qualify holders for non-managerial roles and are a stepping stone to the higher qualification. Holders of older versions of qualifications should carefully check equivalence.

Registered managers in GPs and dentists

For GP and dental service providers there are no mandatory qualifications for registered manager. This situation may not last indefinitely. Currently, registered managers need to be suitably qualified and competent persons to be in charge of delivering GP and dental services.

10. Are there any good ways to prepare?

Ask a co-worker or a mentor to put some hypothetical situations to you and ask you how you would act. Such scenarios allow you to bring different elements of your training, knowledge and experience together.

11. Are there any topics of particular importance?

All areas are important, however, don't just focus on the personalised care and support side of the services for which you will have responsibility; think about other areas too such as HR issues like recruitment, disciplinary procedures and training as well as important subjects such as safeguarding, health and safety and Quality Assurance.

12. Do I have to accept the decision of the interviewer as final?

The fit person interview is not a test or an exam that the applicant passes or fails. Matters may be re-visited and assessed outside of the interview. The outcome of an unsuccessful application process is given as a Notice of proposal to refuse registration, or as a Notice of proposal to register with conditions.

If the applicant disagrees with the Notice, representations may be made at a hearing. If the hearing outcome is unsatisfactory it is possible to appeal against the resulting Notice of Decision to the First-tier Tribunal.

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Further reading and references

Care Quality Commission
Registration under the Health and Social Care Act 2008
Guide to the application process - Guidance for new registered managers

https://www.cqc.org.uk/sites/default/files/media/documents/rp_poc1c_100743_20110701_v5_00_registered_manager_guidance_for_publication.pdf

Care Quality Commission
Step-by-step guide to applying as a new registered manager

<http://www.cqc.org.uk/organisations-we-regulate/registering-first-time/how-register/step-step-guide-applying-new-registere>

Department of Health
Strengthening corporate accountability in health and social care: A consultation

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/210734/Corporate_accountability.pdf