

A poor inspection report can have a dramatic and detrimental impact on a care home. The consequences can often be severe and, if remedial work and required improvements are not made within the timeframes given, operators may be compelled to contend with anything from loss of support from local commissioning teams to home closure.

Services found to be providing 'Inadequate' care face special measures to ensure that they improve. This includes providing a clear timeframe within which the quality of care needs to improve to avoid further action.

Putting things right after being rated 'Inadequate' can be a daunting prospect. **BEN CHALLINOR**, co-founder and consultancy director of Caresolve, explains how it is possible to regain trust.



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Inadequacy: the road to recovery

So what can providers do in this situation? They need to be prepared to pull the rug back, unearth everything and be prepared to put it right. If trust is going to be rebuilt, there are key things to consider. The first is to understand how crucial it is to build a good relationship with the CQC going forward. Here's how:

- Before the report goes live, check to see if you agree with it. Make any challenges on the factual accuracy report – but be careful not to challenge for the sake of it and only when you have grounds on which to do so.

- Start by immediately contacting CQC - and the inspector if you have their name - to acknowledge receipt of their report.

- Review the report in detail and pull together a comprehensive action plan. It is essential that all breaches are covered and the plan contains sufficient detail.

- Once complete, respond to the CQC with the detailed action plan at the earliest opportunity. It is important to look – and be – proactive.

- Consider how the action plan will be carried out and implemented over the coming weeks and months. This is a good opportunity to consider if the home needs additional resources such as new staff, better cash flow or investment. Consider where these resources may be able to come from and where there might be gaps. Get a handle on the finances and understand the cost implications of everything that needs to be done.

- Make sure everything is followed through without targets or deadlines being missed. When a provider is in control of setting realistic deadlines, for example within the action plan, they should try not to make the mistake of setting unrealistic deadlines which cannot be met. You don't want to set yourself up to fail.

Embrace change. Be prepared to throw out bad habits and work differently going forward. After an 'Inadequate' CQC rating, it is often a question of working in a new more effective way, not just working harder or longer hours.

- Never underestimate the power of keeping a good line of communication going. It is why it's such a good idea to keep in touch with CQC throughout the process. Organise regular meetings with them, consultations and encourage their feedback. It's something you may feel is difficult to do, but it is very important for the future wellbeing of the business.

- It can be helpful to involve the local authority and other commissioners in the process. It is likely that they will have their own quality monitoring teams involved at this stage. Working together is critical.

- Organise meetings with the home's residents and their relatives to explain the situation and what is being done to address any issues. These people are your customers and you need to carefully

manage the situation. Poor communication can quickly lead to a bad reputation. Explain how you want to ensure that there is a minimal negative impact on the residents.

- Believe in yourself and your team. Don't panic. Try to stay in control. Avoid having open discussions in front of residents in respect of the report or the findings. Do it appropriately.

- Embrace change. Be prepared to throw out bad habits and work differently going forward. After an 'Inadequate' CQC rating, it is often a question of working in a new more effective way, not just working harder or longer hours.

- Take a hard look at existing processes and all the key individuals within the home. Be ruthless and consider if either have contributed to the root cause of the failings. If you suspect they have, you need to make all necessary changes. If management is inadequate, urgent changes need to be made. If the quality of care has been criticised, standards will have to be raised and staff potentially retrained.

- Avoid falling into the trap of encouraging a blame culture. When dealing with any of the authorities, try to tackle the issues at hand and focus on this rather than looking to make excuses or assign blame.

- Finally, if you are struggling to cope, consider bringing in outside help. For all sorts of reasons, it can often be beneficial to have an independent view. ☐

