Care Quality Commission

What standards you have a right to expect from the regulation of your GP practice

About this booklet

This guide is for you if you receive treatment or care from a GP practice in England.

It helps you understand what standards of care you have a right to expect from your GP practice and what you should do if you receive poor quality care.

This guide explains how we work to make sure that GP practices meet national standards of quality and safety, and the action we can take if we find GP practices are not meeting those standards.

About us

We are the Care Quality Commission (CQC), the independent regulator of health and adult social care services in England.

We make sure health and social care services provide people with safe, effective, compassionate, high-quality 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, including performance ratings to help people choose care.

We also protect the interests of vulnerable people, including those whose rights are restricted under the Mental Health Act.

We put the views, experiences, health and wellbeing of people who use services at the centre of our work, and we have a range of powers we can use to take action if people are getting poor care.

Registering and inspecting GP practices

By law, all GP practices in England must make sure that the care and treatment they provide meet national standards of quality and safety.

We register GP practices if they can show us that they are meeting these standards. If GP practices are not registered with us, they will not be able to provide services.

We inspect GP practices to make sure they are meeting the national standards. We can inspect a GP practice at any time if there are concerns about the care it provides.

On the following pages we summarise what you should expect when a GP practice is meeting national standards of quality and safety.

1 You can expect to be respected, involved and told what's happening at every stage

- You (or someone acting on your behalf) will be involved in discussions about your care and treatment.
- You will get support if you need it to help you make decisions and staff will respect your privacy and dignity.
- Before you receive any treatment you will be asked whether or not you agree to it.

Aneesa and her family are patients at a local GP practice. Aneesa's family have a basic knowledge of the English language but communicate more effectively in Urdu. Her GP practice provides information leaflets about common treatments written in Urdu.

When Aneesa's eight-year-old daughter needed antibiotics for a throat infection, she and her daughter could understand what was involved and why the medication was necessary, so they agreed to the GP's prescription.

2 You can expect care, treatment and support that meets your needs

- Your personal needs will be assessed to make sure you get safe and appropriate care that supports your rights.
- You will get the care that you and your GP agree will make a difference to your general health and wellbeing.
- Your healthcare needs are co-ordinated if you move between care services.
- Staff respect your cultural background, sex (gender), age, sexuality (whether you are a lesbian, gay, bisexual or heterosexual person), religion or belief, and your disability, if you have one.

Andy is 65. He recently visited his GP after he started to get severe heartburn and had difficulty swallowing. After a medical assessment, the GP suspected that Andy may have stomach cancer. He made an urgent referral for Andy to be seen by a specialist at a hospital. Early the next week Andy was contacted by the hospital to confirm an appointment for him to see the specialist.

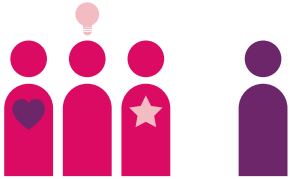
When Andy went to the appointment, the specialist had a copy of the GP's referral form giving relevant information about Andy's medical history and his symptoms.

3 You can expect to be safe

- You will be cared for in a clean environment where you are protected from infection.
- Where appropriate, you will get the medicines you need, when you need them, and in a safe way.
- You will be treated in a safe and accessible place.
- You will not be harmed by unsafe or unsuitable equipment.
- Your GP practice will take appropriate action if they suspect that a patient is at risk of harm.

A GP practice is not accessible for people who use a wheelchair or have severe difficulty walking because it can only be reached by a narrow flight of stairs. It is not possible to have a lift installed in the building. The practice has fitted secure handrails to the staircase and installed a buzzer at the door to call for help.

Since the practice is still not accessible for some people, it provides a home-visit service for any existing patients with disabilities. New patients who want to register with the practice are told about the stairs and, if necessary, referred to a local GP practice that is accessible.



4 You can expect to be cared for by staff with the right skills to do their jobs properly

- Your general health and welfare needs will be met by staff who are properly qualified.
- There will always be enough members of staff available to provide safe care and meet your needs.
- You will be looked after by staff who are well managed and have the chance to develop and improve their skills.

A large GP practice employs several GPs and nurses. The practice regularly monitors waiting times and appointment times to make sure that they have enough staff to meet the needs of patients.

As a result, appointments are rarely cancelled or rescheduled.

5 You can expect your GP practice to routinely check the quality of its services

- The GP practice regularly monitors the quality of its services to make sure you receive the care you need.
- Your personal records will be accurate and kept safe and confidential.
- You, or someone acting on your behalf, can complain and will be listened to. Your complaint will be dealt with properly.

The partners of a large GP practice are committed to continuously improving the quality of the service they provide to patients. Patients are encouraged to provide feedback through comment cards and the practice's website. The practice reception area has leaflets about how to complain, and their complaints procedure is on their website.

The partners hold a meeting once a month to review complaints and other feedback to agree how they will learn from the feedback and make improvements, where necessary. The practice's website gives information on how they have performed in national and local patient-satisfaction surveys, and what actions they've taken to improve the service they provide.

What to do if you think your GP practice is not meeting national standards

If you, or someone you care for, experiences poor care you can:

- raise your concerns with the GP practice, including making a formal complaint; and
- tell us about the matter.

Raise your concerns with the GP practice

If you have concerns about the care being provided by your GP practice, the first thing you should do is tell the practice manager. If the problem cannot be solved, you can go through their formal complaints process.

By law, every GP practice must have an efficient procedure for dealing with complaints.

If your complaint is about NHS treatment and you are not happy with the way your GP practice deals with your complaint, you can contact the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman on **0345 015 4033**. Your rights are explained at **www.nhs.uk/NHSConstitution**.

If you pay for your treatment privately and you are not happy with the way your GP practice has dealt with your complaint, you can contact the Independent Healthcare Advisory Service (IHAS) at **www.independenthealthcare.org.uk**. You can also phone the General Medical Council (GMC) on **0161 923 6602**, or visit their website at **www.gmc-uk.org**.

Tell us

Our role as regulator does not give us the legal power to investigate or settle complaints, but we still want you to tell us about your experiences of care. Your information is valuable to us. It helps us decide when, where and what to inspect.

When we find that a GP practice is not meeting the standards we will take action. You can tell us about concerns even when you do not want to make a complaint to the GP practice.

We also want to hear about good experiences of care. The best way to get in touch with us is by filling in our 'Share your experience' form online at **www.cqc.org.uk**.

You can also phone us on **03000 616161** or write to us at the address shown on the back of this guide. You can also tell us about your experience of care through your local Healthwatch team.

How we carry out inspections

When we carry out an inspection we talk to people and look at their experiences of care, as well as checking systems and processes. We often involve other experts in our inspections, including people with experience of care.

If we think that services aren't meeting national standards, we take action. We can make the GP practice tell us what they will do to put things right. We can also:

- issue fines or formal warnings; and
- suspend or cancel a GP practice's registration.

We publish any formal action we have asked a GP practice to take on our website at **www.cqc.org.uk**.

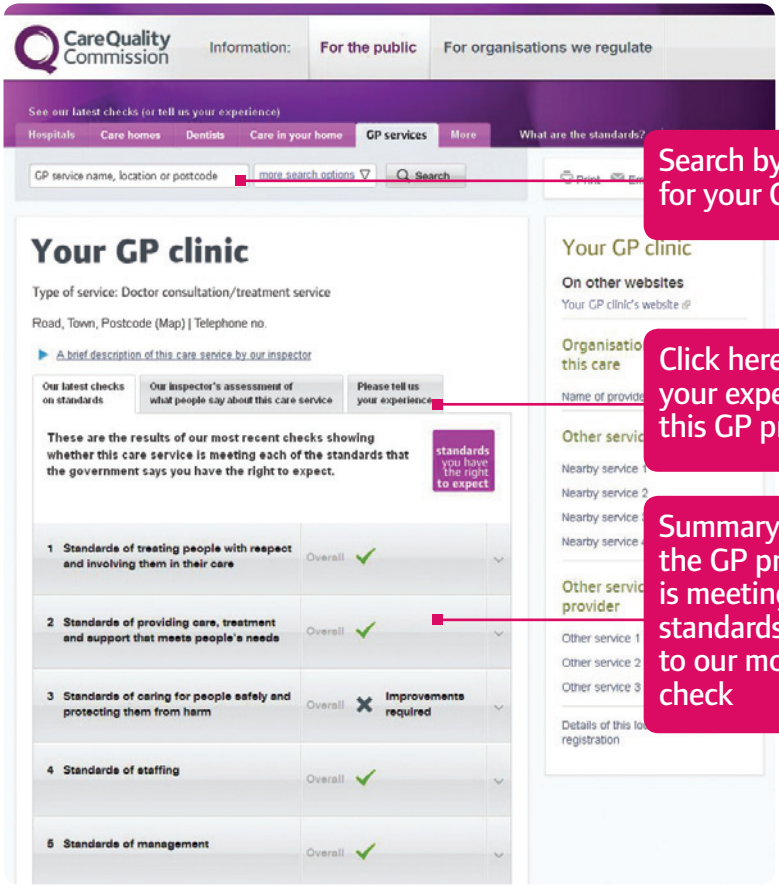
We update our website when the GP practice has made the necessary improvements to meet the national standards.

How we keep you informed

On our website at **www.cqc.org.uk** we publish details of how the GP practices we regulate meet national standards of quality and safety. You can search for any GP practice to see how it is performing against the standards you have a right to expect.

You can also sign up to receive:

- an email from us when we inspect, and publish reports on, GP practices you are interested in; and
- our monthly e-newsletter to get the latest news from us.



Other booklets available from our website

- What standards you have a right to expect from the regulation of your hospital
- What standards you have a right to expect from the regulation of your care home
- What standards you have a right to expect from the regulation of agencies that provide care in your own home
- What standards you have a right to expect from the regulation of your dental practice

How to contact us

Call us on: **03000 616161**

Email us at: **enquiries@cqc.org.uk**

Look at our website at: **www.cqc.org.uk**

Write to us at:
Care Quality Commission
Citygate, Gallowgate
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 4PA

Follow us on Twitter: @CareQualityComm

Read more and download this booklet in other formats at: **http://www.cqc.org.uk/gpstandards**

Scan this code on your phone to visit the site now.

Please contact us if you would like this booklet in another language or format.

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Clarity approved by Plain English Campaign

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