



FACTSHEET 17

The Care Bill - Chief Inspectors and the independence of the Care Quality Commission

"The care of our NHS patients is too important for political meddling – and our new legislation will make sure that ministers always put patients first"

Jeremy Hunt, Secretary of State for Health

This factsheet is about how the Care Bill will set in law new Chief Inspectors of Hospitals, Adult Social Care and General Practice and how it will increase the operational independence of the Care Quality Commission.

Background

The Francis Inquiry found that the proper regulation of healthcare is vital in protecting patients from harm. The Care Quality Commission (CQC) is responsible for checking the standard of care in hospitals, care homes, and GP and dental practices in England.

In order to do this job well, it is important that the CQC has expert leadership and is free from political interference. This will help the CQC to be a better regulator.

What the Bill will do

The Government amended the Care Bill at report stage in the House of Lords to introduce provisions that give CQC greater operational freedom from Ministers. The changes will increase the CQC's freedom to take action where poor care is provided to patients and service users.

CQC has already appointed new Chief Inspectors of Hospitals, Adult Social Care and General Practice. These Chief

Inspectors will lead the CQC's new teams of specialist inspectors and will develop new ways of working that will shine a light on the quality of care received by patients and service users. Where care is good or outstanding, the CQC will report this through its new performance ratings. Where the care is poor, CQC will identify this and will take action to make sure that it improves.

The Chief Inspectors are important posts in improving the CQC and making sure that the care patients and service users receive is safe and of a good quality. These roles are so important to the future success of the CQC that we have amended the Care Bill to set out in law that the CQC must have such posts and that the post-holders must be members of the CQC Board.

The Chief Inspectors will provide a clear judgement about the quality and safety of care. It is essential that they and the CQC are able to carry out their work without interference from politicians. The new provisions in the Care Bill will take away some of the powers that Ministers have to interfere in the day to day running of CQC. This would mean that the Secretary of State would no longer be able to prevent the CQC inspecting any provider, nor dictate how it should carry out inspections or how it will report its findings.

These changes will increase CQC's independence and authority and will allow it to take a stronger role in making sure that the care provided to patients and service users is safe and of a high standard.