



Care Quality Commission
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Una O'Brien
Permanent Secretary
Department of Health

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5 June 2015

Dear Una,

Thank you for your letter of 4 June 2015 concerning the Health Group Internal Audit report which considers the circumstances around two particular CQC procurements in February 2013. I welcome the fact that there has been an independent review of these allegations. CQC accepts the findings of the review and I regret that there were procedural errors in the way these procurements were handled. We have made substantial improvements to the way we carry out procurements, and now have clear professional leadership of our procurement function through the appointment of a Head of Commercial and Contracts post.

As noted in the report, at that time, in February 2013, the organisation was under a great deal of pressure to introduce radical changes to the way we inspected health and adult social care services and how we were organised and managed. The drive for these important changes was to ensure that CQC was ready to respond quickly to Sir Robert Francis QC's report from his Mid Staffordshire Public Inquiry, and also to enable the Government to make an early commitment to create chief inspector roles within the CQC. CQC regrets that in the haste to make changes, some procurement procedures were not correctly followed.

I welcome your recognition of the progress that has been made in the period since then, in changing the way we inspect health and care services and delivering a robust and sustainable organisation to deliver these changes.

Your letter draws out recommendations from the Internal Audit report. I accept the recommendations and appreciate that you note that CQC has addressed some of these through the work already done to strengthen our procurement function. For example, we have introduced stronger governance of procurement through our Investment Committee and are ensuring that senior and middle managers are better trained with relation to procurement. We have also commissioned, through our Internal Audit Plan, an independent review of the progress made in relation to procurement and identification of areas that would benefit from further strengthening and this will report through our Audit and Corporate Governance Committee, which will also monitor progress.

I am committed to CQC achieving excellence in everything we do, including procurement, and continuing improvement is a key pillar of our priorities for 2015/16. I am confident that in prioritising our efforts in these ways, and taking all opportunities to learn and improve, we will ensure that we do not fall short of the high standards we set for ourselves in respect of all aspects of the way that we work.

Like you, I am committed to transparency in the way that CQC works and as such I am pleased to confirm that we will be publishing this report on our website in parallel with the Department.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David Behan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped initial 'D'.

David Behan
Chief Executive