

CQC INTELLIGENCE · SECTOR REPORT · OCTOBER 2026

The State of Care Homes in *England*

An analysis of the 14,875 residential and nursing homes registered with CQC in England: how they are rated, where they fall short, and how long since they were last seen.

Where care homes fall *short*

14,875 care homes are registered with the CQC in England: 10,382 residential and 4,493 nursing, with 486,640 registered beds between them. 13,636 (91.7%) hold a current overall rating under one of the CQC's two rating models, 9,401 made by inspection and 4,235 under the assessment model introduced in late 2023. The other 1,239 have no current rating.

Most rated homes are Good or Outstanding. The 2,378 that fall below Good (17.4%) have one thing in common: 98.2% of them are failing on Well-led, more than on any other key question. 93.0% fail on Safe, where medication, risk and infection control are the recurring concerns.

This report draws on Bridgehead's CQC Monitor, which holds the CQC's published register and ratings. Counts are as at 8 October 2026 and cover registered homes only; services that have closed are excluded. Below Good means a rating of Requires improvement or Inadequate.

Why it matters

85,503 beds, 17.6% of all care home beds in England, are in homes rated below Good. A further 49,423 beds (10.2%) are in homes with no current rating.

17.4%

OF RATED HOMES BELOW GOOD

2,378 of 13,636 rated homes are Requires improvement (2,270) or Inadequate (108).

85k

BEDS IN HOMES BELOW GOOD

17.6% of 486,640 registered beds.

40%

NOT SEEN IN FIVE YEARS, OR EVER

1,200 never inspected or assessed; 4,810 last seen more than five years ago.

EIGHT FINDINGS FROM THE DATA

- One in six rated care homes falls below Good**
 2,378 of 13,636 rated homes (17.4%): 2,270 Requires improvement and 108 Inadequate.
- Nursing homes carry the highest risk**
 19.8% of rated nursing homes fall below Good, against 16.4% of residential homes and 12.8% of home care agencies.
- 85,503 beds sit in homes rated below Good**
 4,583 of them are in the 108 homes rated Inadequate. A further 49,423 are in unrated homes.
- Leadership is where homes fail**
 98.2% of below-Good homes fail on Well-led and 93.0% on Safe. Caring is the strongest domain: 22.2% of below-Good homes fail on it.
- The assessment model finds more problems**
 27.4% of homes rated under the assessment model are below Good, against 13.0% of those rated by inspection. The CQC assessed riskier homes first, so the two are not like for like.
- Four in ten homes have not been seen in five years**
 6,010 homes (40.4%) have never been inspected or assessed or were last seen more than five years ago. Of 534 homes registered in 2023, 19% still have not had a first visit.
- Outstanding is the oldest rating**
 57.8% of Outstanding ratings are more than five years old, against 40.0% of Good ratings.
- Where a home is changes the odds**
 West Midlands has the highest below-Good rate of any region (22.0%) and the North East the lowest (8.4%). Rochdale leads the councils at 35.8%.

RATING DISTRIBUTION

How England's care homes are *rated*



Share of the 13,636 rated care homes. Inspection and assessment ratings are counted together; where a home has both, the more recent counts.

RATINGS BY TYPE OF HOME

Type	Total	Rated	Outst.	Good	Req. imp.	Inad.	Below Good
Residential	10,382	9,599	427	7,595	1,510	67	16.4%
Nursing	4,493	4,037	198	3,038	760	41	19.8%
All homes	14,875	13,636	625	10,633	2,270	108	17.4%

RATINGS BY CQC RATING MODEL

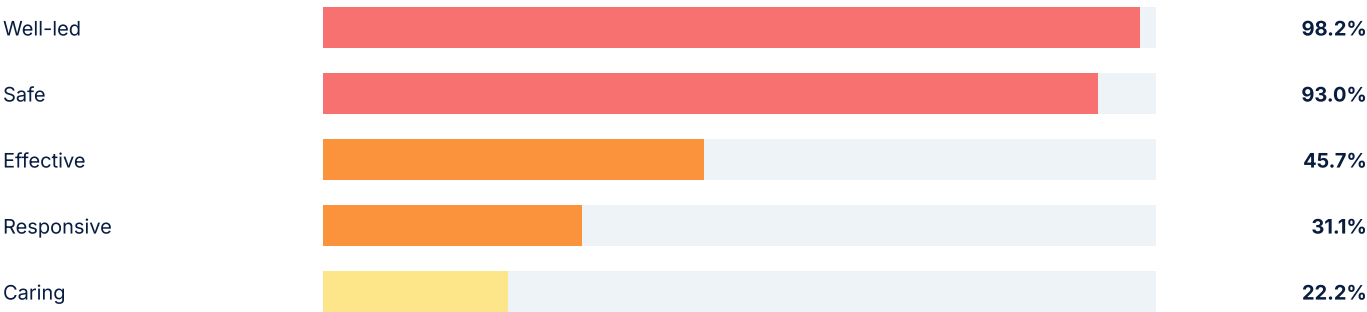
Model	Rated	Below Good	Inadequate
Inspection	9,401	13.0%	13
Assessment	4,235	27.4%	95

1,239 homes have no current rating: they await a first inspection or assessment, or were inspected without being rated.

KEY QUESTION ANALYSIS

The five domains behind every *rating*

Among homes rated below Good, the chart shows how often each of the five key questions is also failing.



Share of the 2,378 below-Good care homes with a failing (Requires improvement or Inadequate) rating on each key question.

BELOW GOOD ON EACH KEY QUESTION, BY HOME TYPE

Key question	Residential	Nursing
Safe	18.1%	22.6%
Effective	8.7%	10.4%
Caring	3.6%	5.4%
Responsive	5.9%	7.6%
Well-led	21.2%	25.2%

Why Safe failure matters most to residents

Well-led fails most often, but Safe carries the most direct risk to residents: 2,653 rated homes are Requires improvement or Inadequate on Safe. Nursing homes are weaker than residential homes on every one of the five questions.

Beds in homes rated *below Good*



Registered beds in residential and nursing homes, by the home's current rating. 486,640 beds in all.

BELOW GOOD BY SIZE OF HOME

Home size	Homes	Rated	Below Good
Under 10 beds	3,833	3,439	11.9%
10 to 29 beds	3,900	3,769	18.2%
30 to 59 beds	4,366	4,147	20.2%
60 or more beds	2,773	2,280	19.6%

Size matters, but not in a straight line. Homes with 30 to 59 beds have the highest below-Good rate (20.2%), and homes with under 10 beds the lowest (11.9%). The 49,423 beds in unrated homes are the larger unknown.

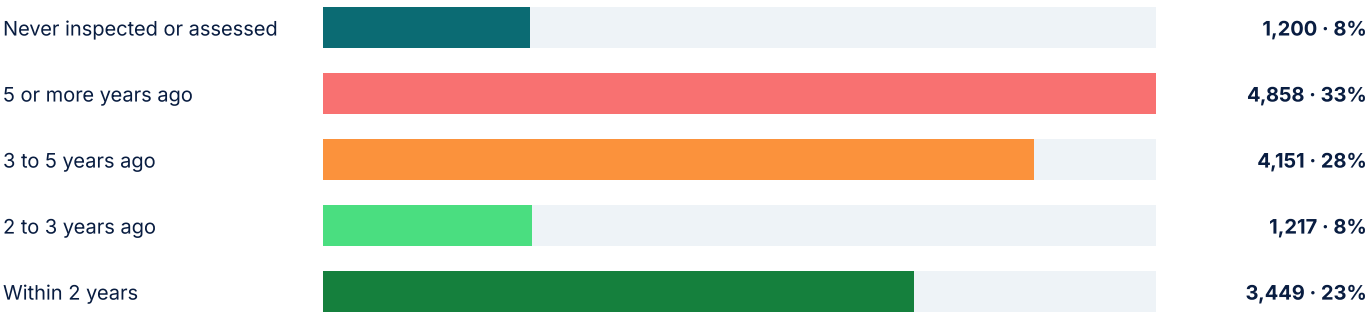
Inadequate homes

108 homes hold an Inadequate rating, with 4,583 registered beds between them: 42 beds per home on average.

THE INSPECTION BACKLOG

When was each home last *seen*?

40% of care homes have not been inspected or assessed in over five years, or ever. Only 3,449 (23%) have been seen in the last two.



NEVER INSPECTED OR ASSESSED, BY YEAR REGISTERED

2021	3% · 16 of 484
2022	11% · 54 of 492
2023	19% · 99 of 534
2024	37% · 258 of 693
2025	48% · 324 of 682

A new home waits years for its first visit. 19% of homes registered in 2023 are still unseen, and 3% of those registered in 2021.

The oldest ratings are an invisible risk. A home rated Good in 2018 may have changed owner, manager and staff several times since.

Where care home quality concentrates

The West Midlands has the highest below-Good rate (22.0%) and the North East the lowest (8.4%).



Share of rated care homes below Good, by region. Wales and unassigned locations excluded.

HIGHEST BELOW-GOOD RATES AMONG COUNCILS

Council	Rated	Below Good
Rochdale	53	35.8%
Liverpool	80	33.8%
Wolverhampton	68	33.8%
Norfolk	294	33.7%
Walsall	58	32.8%

LOWEST BELOW-GOOD RATES AMONG COUNCILS

Council	Rated	Below Good
Gateshead	48	2.1%
Bristol, City of	85	2.4%
Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole	130	3.8%
South Gloucestershire	76	3.9%
North Somerset	92	4.3%

Councils with 40 or more rated care homes (112 of them). None has a clean sheet.

THE SPREAD

Between the best and worst councils, the below-Good rate runs from 2.1% to 35.8%.

Rochdale (35.8% of 53 rated homes) and Liverpool (33.8%) top the list; Gateshead (2.1%) is lowest. The ratings show where; they cannot show why.

What the data concludes

- 1

Most care homes are rated Good, but the tail is real

82.6% of rated homes are Good or Outstanding; 2,378 are not.
- 2

Leadership is the common thread

98.2% of below-Good homes fail Well-led. Improvement programmes that skip governance will not shift the figure.
- 3

Nursing homes need closer attention

At 19.8% below Good, nursing homes are 3.4 points worse than residential homes and fail more often on every key question.
- 4

The register is out of date

40% of homes have not been seen in five years or ever, and 8% hold no rating. A rating alone is a weak guide to a home today.
- 5

Place matters

A home's chance of falling below Good ranges from 2.1% to 35.8% between councils.

APPENDIX: CARE HOMES BELOW GOOD, BY REGION

Region	Rated homes	Below Good	Share
West Midlands	1,518	334	22.0%
East	1,473	307	20.8%
North West	1,723	352	20.4%
East Midlands	1,340	273	20.4%
Yorkshire & Humberside	1,357	266	19.6%
South East	2,598	470	18.1%
South West	1,753	192	11.0%
London	1,187	126	10.6%
North East	687	58	8.4%
TOTAL	13,636	2,378	17.4%

Reconciliation to the published report

The published State of Adult Social Care in England counts the register as at 7 October (30,617 services). Between that snapshot and this one, the CQC's register shows 47 care homes deregistered on 6 October and 7 newly registered. On the 7 October register there were 14,915 care homes, 13,681 of them rated and 2,390 below Good; on this register there are 14,875, 13,636 rated and 2,378 below Good. The published report is a day behind, so its totals differ slightly from these until it is next refreshed.

Data: CQC Syndication API, register and ratings as at 8 October 2026 · Platform: Bridgehead CQC Monitor · Care homes are locations registered as residential or nursing; home care and other adult social care services are covered in separate reports. Bridgehead Communications Ltd · Company No. 12736276 · bridgeheadcommunications.com