

CQC INTELLIGENCE · SECTOR REPORT · OCTOBER 2026

The State of Home Care in *England*

An analysis of the 15,688 home care agencies registered with CQC in England: how they are rated, how many have never been inspected, and where the gaps are.

The register and the *ratings*

15,688 home care agencies (domiciliary care providers) are registered with the CQC in England, 51% of all adult social care locations. 9,983 (63.6%) hold a current overall rating. The other 5,705 (36.4%) do not, and 5,649 of those have never been inspected or assessed at all.

Among the agencies that are rated, quality looks better than in care homes: 12.8% fall below Good, against 17.4% of care homes. That comparison flatters home care. The CQC has reached fewer agencies, and the gap between the register and the ratings is the larger story.

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 agencies only. Below Good means a rating of Requires improvement or Inadequate.

Why it matters

62% of home care agencies have not been inspected or assessed in five years, or ever. For residential homes the figure is 40%. People who receive care in their own homes have the least visible oversight.

62%

NOT SEEN IN FIVE YEARS, OR EVER

9,726 agencies: 5,649 never inspected or assessed, 4,077 last seen more than five years ago.

64%

HOLD A CURRENT RATING

9,983 of 15,688 agencies, against 92% of care homes.

12.8%

OF RATED AGENCIES BELOW GOOD

1,282 of 9,983: 1,222 Requires improvement and 60 Inadequate.

EIGHT FINDINGS FROM THE DATA

Home care is over half the sector

15,688 of 30,583 adult social care locations (51%) are home care agencies.

36% of agencies have never been inspected or assessed

That is 5,649 agencies, against 8% of care homes. Adding the 4,077 last seen more than five years ago takes the figure to 62.0%.

New agencies are almost never visited

76% of the 7,119 agencies registered since January 2022 have never been inspected or assessed, against 3% of those registered earlier.

Rated agencies look better than care homes

12.8% are below Good, against 17.4% of care homes. The CQC has rated only the agencies it has reached, so the comparison says little about the 5,705 it has not.

The assessment model finds more problems

19.7% of agencies rated under the assessment model are below Good, against 10.3% of those rated by inspection. The CQC assessed riskier agencies first.

Leadership and safety are the weak points

98.7% of below-Good agencies fail on Well-led and 93.1% on Safe. Caring is the strongest domain: 16.2% fail on it.

Outstanding is the oldest rating

61.8% of Outstanding ratings are more than five years old, against 43.7% of Good ratings.

Where an agency is changes the odds

The West Midlands has the highest below-Good rate (19.5%) and the North East the lowest (5.7%). Lewisham leads the councils at 41.2%.

RATING DISTRIBUTION

How England's home care agencies are *rated*



Share of the 9,983 rated home care agencies. Inspection and assessment ratings are counted together; where an agency has both, the more recent counts.

RATINGS: HOME CARE AND CARE HOMES

Type	Total	Rated	Outst.	Good	Req. imp.	Inad.	Below Good
Home care	15,688	9,983	484	8,217	1,222	60	12.8%
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%

RATINGS BY CQC RATING MODEL

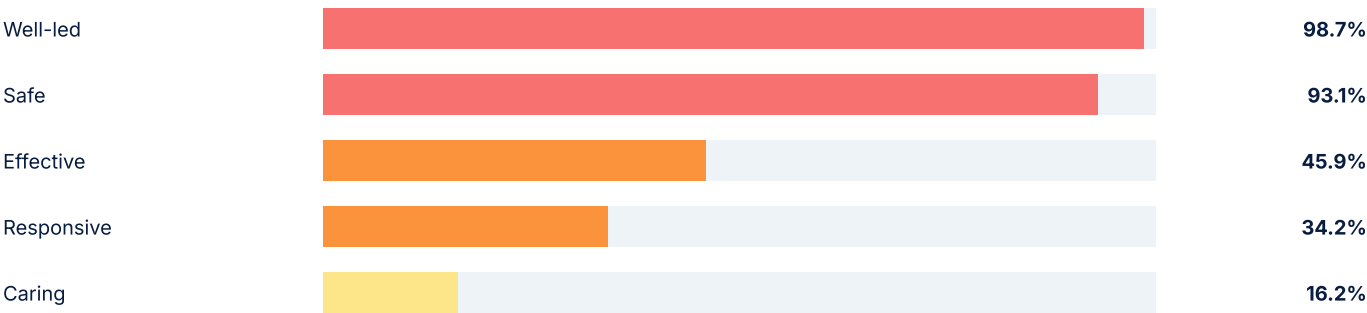
Model	Rated	Below Good	Inadequate
Inspection	7,304	10.3%	9
Assessment	2,679	19.7%	51

63.6% of agencies hold a rating, against 91.7% of care homes. 5,705 agencies have no current rating under either model.

KEY QUESTION ANALYSIS

The five domains behind every *rating*

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



Share of the 1,282 below-Good agencies with a failing (Requires improvement or Inadequate) rating on each key question.

FAILING EACH KEY QUESTION: HOME CARE VS CARE HOMES

Key question	Home care	Care homes
Safe	93.1%	93.0%
Effective	45.9%	45.7%
Caring	16.2%	22.2%
Responsive	34.2%	31.1%
Well-led	98.7%	98.2%

Share of below-Good services failing each question.

Why Safe failure matters

Home care is delivered in people's own homes, where medication, moving and handling and missed visits are the agency's responsibility. 1,412 rated agencies are Requires improvement or Inadequate on Safe.

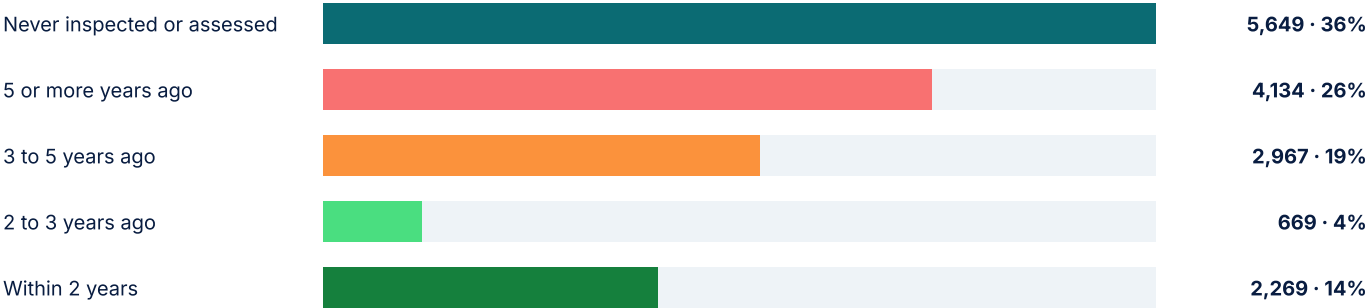
When was each agency last seen?

The Single Assessment Framework, introduced in late 2023, replaced routine ratings inspections with ongoing assessments. Most agencies are still waiting to be assessed.

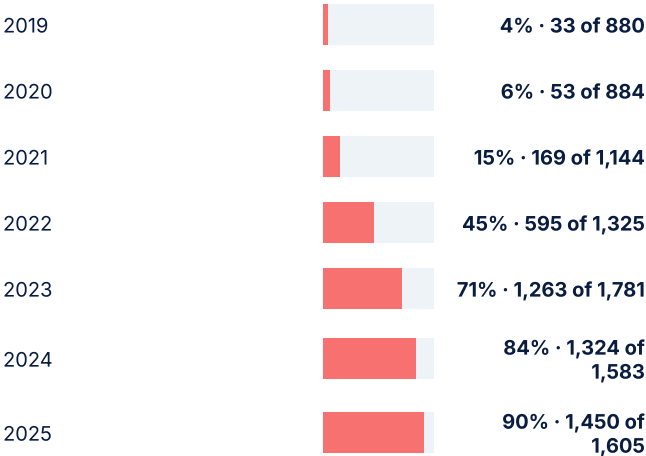
THE HEADLINE

62% of agencies have not been inspected or assessed in over five years, or ever.

Only 2,269 agencies (14%) have been seen within the last two years. 5,649 have no inspection or assessment on record.



NEVER INSPECTED OR ASSESSED, BY YEAR REGISTERED



7,119 of today's agencies (45%) registered since January 2022, and 76% of those have never been inspected or assessed. Even among agencies registered in 2019, 4% remain unseen.

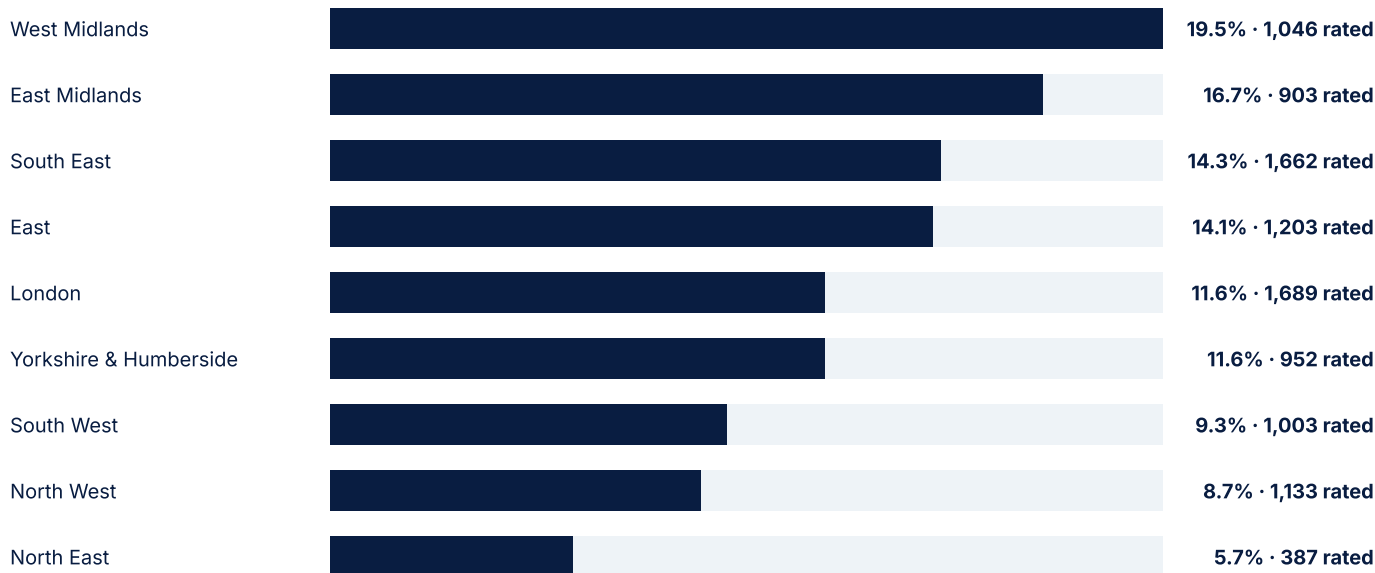
The 4,077 agencies last seen more than five years ago are a second hidden group. Outstanding ratings are the oldest: 61.8% are more than five years old.

Commissioners

A current rating is available for 64% of agencies. Since late 2023 the CQC has assessed services on an ongoing basis rather than through routine ratings inspections, so an agency's rating stays on the record until the next assessment replaces it.

Where home care quality concentrates

The West Midlands has the highest below-Good rate (19.5%) and the North East the lowest (5.7%).



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

HIGHEST BELOW-GOOD RATES AMONG COUNCILS

Council	Rated	Below Good
Lewisham	51	41.2%
Luton	39	41.0%
Bexley	41	39.0%
Greenwich	60	38.3%
Medway	52	36.5%

LOWEST BELOW-GOOD RATES AMONG COUNCILS

Council	Rated	Below Good
Wandsworth	33	0.0%
Sunderland	41	0.0%
Merton	52	0.0%
Herefordshire, County of	36	0.0%
Dorset	68	1.5%

Councils with 30 or more rated agencies (126 of them). 4 have no rated agency below Good.

THE SPREAD

Between the best and worst councils, the below-Good rate runs from 0.0% to 41.2%.

Lewisham (41.2% of 51 rated agencies) and Luton (41.0%) top the list. With so many agencies unrated, a low rate may reflect who has been inspected as much as who is performing.

What the data concludes

- 1

Home care is the CQC's blind spot

62% of agencies have not been seen in five years or ever, against 40% of care homes.
- 2

A good rating is not the full picture

12.8% of rated agencies are below Good, but only 64% of agencies are rated at all.
- 3

New agencies need a first visit

76% of agencies registered since 2022 have never been inspected or assessed.
- 4

Leadership and safety come first

98.7% of below-Good agencies fail Well-led and 93.1% fail Safe.
- 5

Place matters, but so does coverage

The below-Good rate runs from 0.0% to 41.2% between councils, and unrated agencies make the comparison uncertain.

APPENDIX: HOME CARE AGENCIES BELOW GOOD, BY REGION

Region	Rated agencies	Below Good	Share
West Midlands	1,046	204	19.5%
East Midlands	903	151	16.7%
South East	1,662	237	14.3%
East	1,203	170	14.1%
London	1,689	196	11.6%
Yorkshire & Humberside	952	110	11.6%
South West	1,003	93	9.3%
North West	1,133	99	8.7%
North East	387	22	5.7%
TOTAL	9,983	1,282	12.8%

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 6 home care agencies deregistered on 6 October and 12 newly registered. On the 7 October register there were 15,682 home care agencies, 9,981 of them rated and 1,280 below Good; on this register there are 15,688, 9,983 rated and 1,282 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 · Home care agencies are locations registered as domiciliary care; care homes are covered in a separate report. Bridgehead Communications Ltd · Company No. 12736276 · bridgeheadcommunications.com