

CQC INTELLIGENCE · SECTOR REPORT · OCTOBER 2026

The State of Primary Care in *England*

An analysis of 6,172 NHS GP practices, 2,626 private and other doctor services, and 12,058 dental practices registered with CQC in England.

Rated Good, seen *long ago*

8,798 locations are registered with the CQC as doctors or GPs (aesthetic clinics excluded). 6,172 carry an NHS practice code and are NHS general practices. The other 2,626 are private GPs, online doctors, occupational health and urgent care. They behave very differently, so this report separates them. A further 12,058 dental practices are registered, and the CQC does not rate them.

NHS practices are rated, but the ratings are old. 5,952 (96.4%) hold one, and almost all are Good or Outstanding: 4.2% fall below Good. 3,804 practices (62%) have not been inspected or assessed in five years, or ever. The median wait is 7.4 years.

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

Why it matters

General practice is where most NHS care starts. 1,289 practices were last inspected in 2016, and 1,171 have gone ten years or more without an inspection or assessment. Their ratings still stand today.

58%

NHS PRACTICES LAST SEEN 5+ YEARS AGO

3,605 of 6,172; 199 have never been inspected or assessed.

4.2%

OF RATED PRACTICES BELOW GOOD

250 of 5,952: 236 Requires improvement and 14 Inadequate.

4

RATED DENTAL PRACTICES

Of 12,058 dental locations. The CQC does not routinely rate dentists.

EIGHT FINDINGS FROM THE DATA

- **Three in ten doctor locations are not NHS general practice**

2,626 of 8,798 doctor locations have no NHS practice code. Findings below are for the 6,172 NHS practices unless stated.

- **NHS practices are rated, but the ratings are old**

96.4% hold a rating. 58.4% were last inspected or assessed more than five years ago; 2,612 have waited eight years or more.

- **Ratings are almost uniformly Good**

5,424 of 5,952 rated practices (91.1%) are Good and 278 Outstanding. 4.2% are below Good and 14 are Inadequate.

- **Most Outstanding ratings date from years ago**

77.7% of the 278 Outstanding practices were last inspected or assessed more than five years ago.

- **The assessment model is harsher**

9.1% of practices rated under assessment are below Good, against 2.7% under inspection.

- **Inspection gaps vary widely**

In Gloucestershire, 82.5% of practices have not been seen in five years or ever; in Herefordshire and Worcestershire, 34.6%.

- **Private doctor services are multiplying, and most are unseen**

63% of the 2,626 non-NHS locations have never been inspected or assessed, and 36% are in London, against 18% of NHS practices.

- **Dentists carry no rating at all**

4 of 12,058 dental locations hold a rating. 41% have never been inspected.

RATING DISTRIBUTION

How NHS GP practices are *rated*



Share of the 5,952 rated NHS GP practices. Inspection and assessment ratings are counted together; where a practice has both, the more recent counts.

RATINGS BY CQC RATING MODEL

Model	Rated	Below Good	Inadequate
Inspection	4,551	2.7%	7
Assessment	1,401	9.1%	7

Almost uniformly Good

95.8% of rated NHS practices are Good or Outstanding. The sector's problem is not poor ratings but ratings that are years old.

RATED LOCATIONS: NHS PRACTICES AND PRIVATE DOCTORS

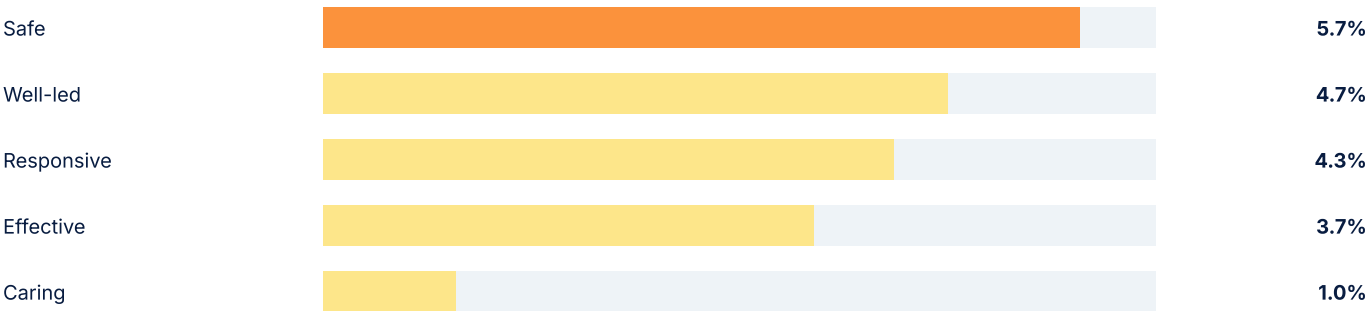
Type	Total	Rated	Outst.	Good	Req. imp.	Inad.	Below Good
NHS practices	6,172	5,952	278	5,424	236	14	4.2%
Private and other	2,626	902	23	838	40	1	4.5%

Private and other doctor services are mostly unrated: the CQC rates only some of them.

KEY QUESTION ANALYSIS

The five domains behind every *rating*

Because so few practices are below Good, the chart shows the share of all rated practices failing each key question.



Share of the 5,952 rated NHS practices that are Requires improvement or Inadequate on each key question.

Where practices fall short

5.7% of rated practices are below Good on Safe and 4.7% on Well-led; Caring is the strongest at 1.0%. Among the 250 below-Good practices, 87.6% fail on Safe and 82.0% on Well-led.

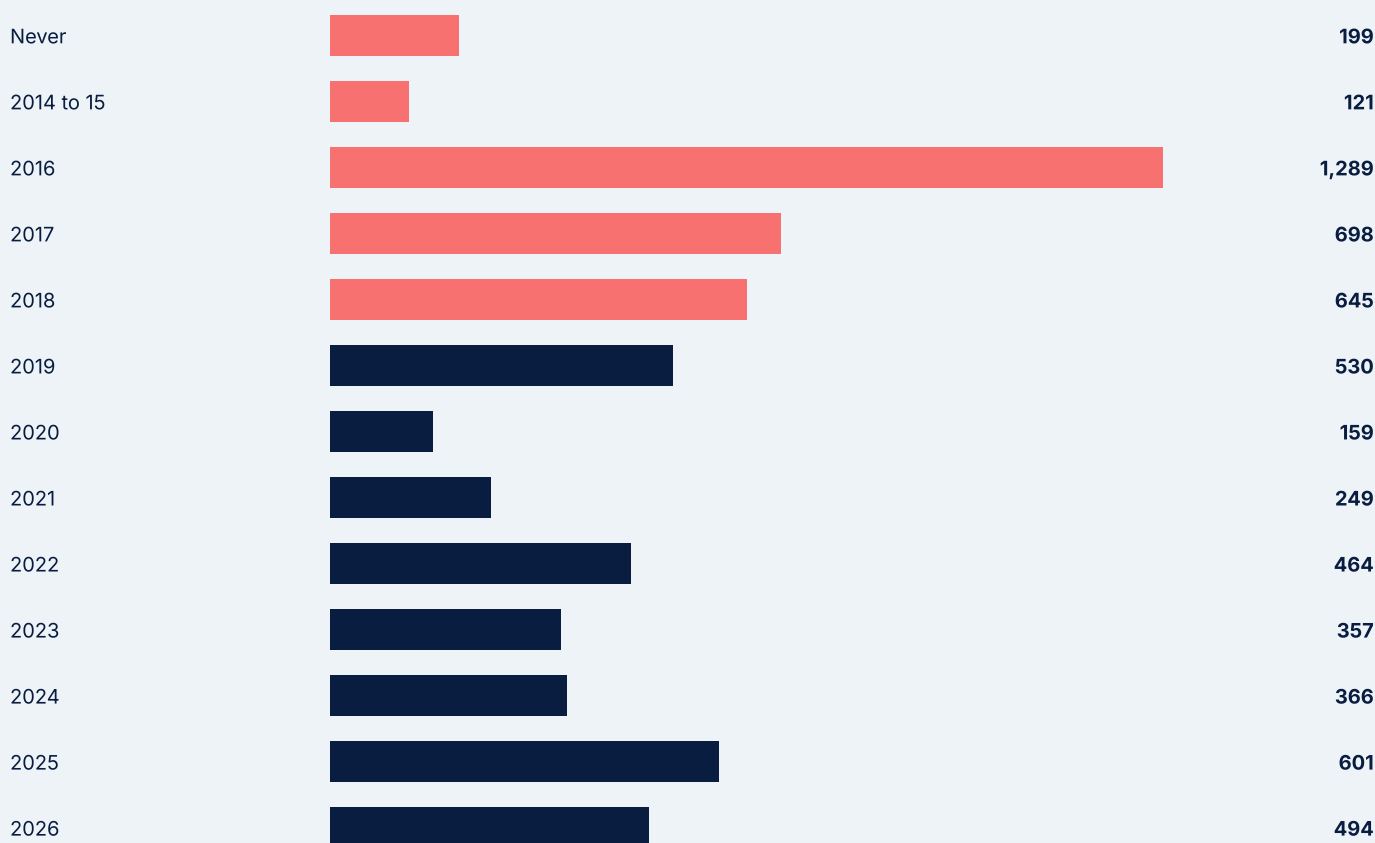
When was each practice last seen?

62% of NHS GP practices have not been inspected or assessed in five years, or ever.

THE HEADLINE

1,289 practices were last visited in 2016, more than in any other year.

The next most common year is 2017 (698). The median NHS practice was last inspected or assessed 7.4 years ago.

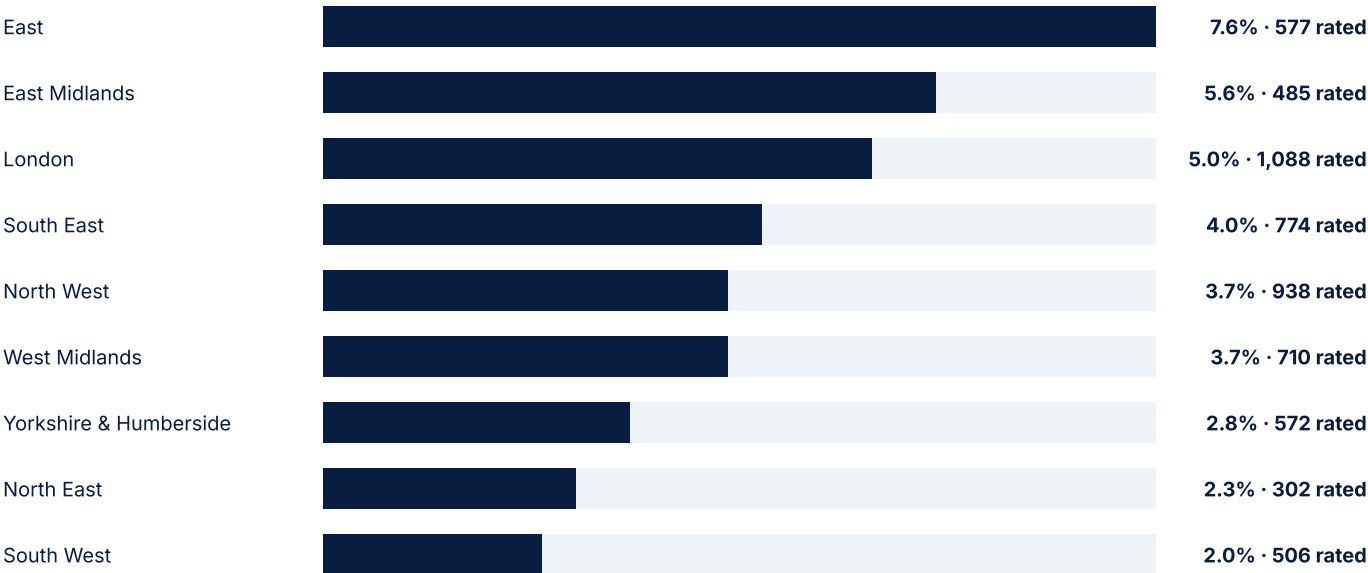


NHS practices by the year they were last inspected or assessed. Red marks years more than seven years ago.



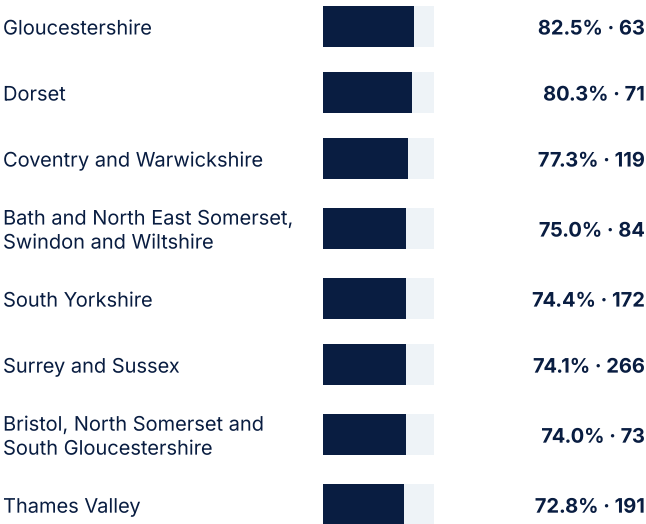
Where the gaps *are widest*

The East has the highest below-Good rate among NHS practices (7.6%); the South West has the highest share not seen in five years (71.9%).



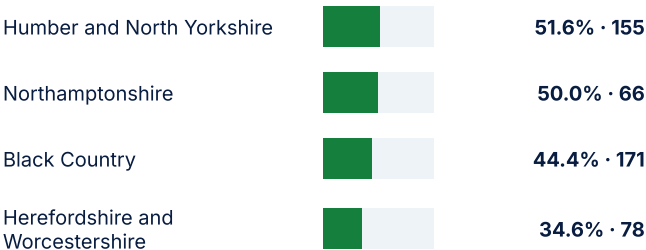
Share of rated NHS practices below Good, by region. Wales and unassigned locations excluded.

ICBS WITH THE LONGEST GAPS



Share of practices not inspected or assessed in five years, or ever, with the number of practices. ICBs with 60 or more practices.

ICBS WITH THE SHORTEST GAPS



COUNCILS: HIGHEST BELOW-GOOD RATE

Council	Rated	Below Good
Barking and Dagenham	33	15.2%
Lincolnshire	77	13.0%
Haringey	31	12.9%
East Sussex	47	12.8%
Waltham Forest	37	10.8%

The new entrants are *unseen*



Locations registered as doctors or GPs, by year of registration. Only those still registered are counted.

Private and other doctor services now outnumber new NHS practices. 482 non-NHS locations registered in 2025, against 120 NHS practices.

63% of the 2,626 non-NHS locations have never been inspected or assessed.

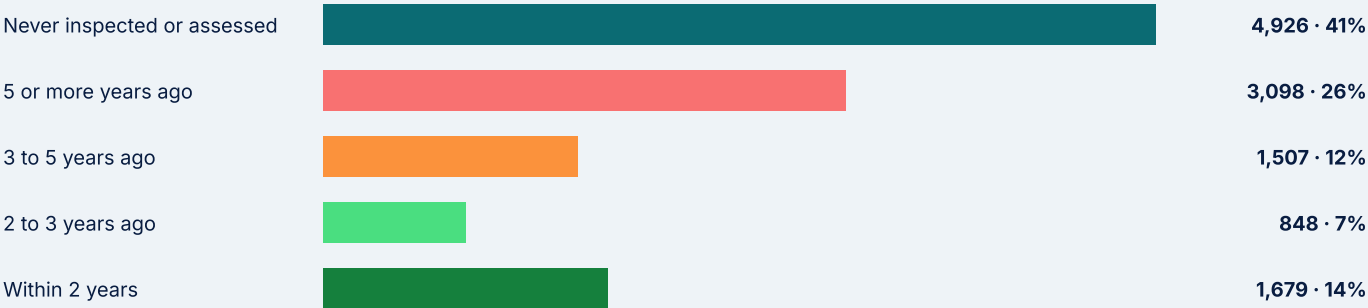
London is the centre

36% of non-NHS doctor locations are in London, against 18% of NHS practices.

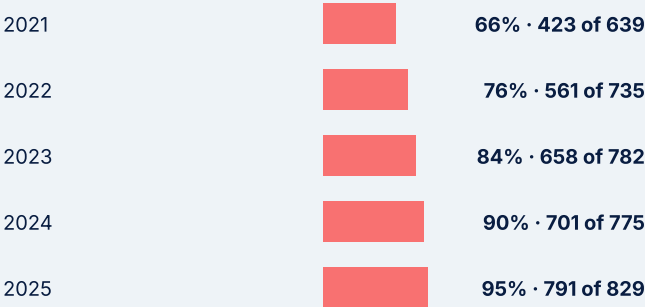
DENTISTS

Dental practices: no rating, *little oversight*

The CQC does not routinely rate dental practices: 4 of 12,058 hold a rating. 4,926 (41%) have never been inspected or assessed, and 3,073 were last seen more than five years ago.



NEVER INSPECTED, BY YEAR REGISTERED



DENTAL PRACTICES BY NHS STATUS

Group	Locations	Never inspected	Share
NHS-coded dental	6,661	1,493	22.4%
No NHS code	5,397	3,433	63.6%
All dental	12,058	4,926	40.9%

New practices are almost never visited

Of the 3,785 dental locations registered since January 2022, 89% have never been inspected or assessed.

By region, the South West has the longest gaps (81.1% not seen in five years or ever) and the West Midlands the shortest (46.4%).

What the data concludes

- 1

NHS general practice is rated Good, but the ratings are old

95.8% of rated practices are Good or Outstanding; 58% of all practices were last seen more than five years ago.
- 2

The gap between visits is the issue

The median NHS practice was last inspected or assessed 7.4 years ago, and 1,171 have waited ten years or more.
- 3

Private doctor services need first inspections

63% of non-NHS doctor locations have never been inspected or assessed.
- 4

Dentists need a visible quality signal

4 of 12,058 dental locations are rated, and 41% have never been inspected.
- 5

Place matters for coverage

The share of practices not seen in five years ranges from 34.6% to 82.5% between ICBs.

APPENDIX: NHS GP PRACTICES BELOW GOOD, BY REGION

Region	Rated practices	Below Good	Share
East	577	44	7.6%
East Midlands	485	27	5.6%
London	1,088	54	5.0%
South East	774	31	4.0%
North West	938	35	3.7%
West Midlands	710	26	3.7%
Yorkshire & Humberside	572	16	2.8%
North East	302	7	2.3%
South West	506	10	2.0%
TOTAL	5,952	250	4.2%

Data: CQC Syndication API, register and ratings as at 8 October 2026 · Platform: Bridgehead CQC Monitor · NHS practices are doctor locations with an NHS practice code. 158 other primary medical locations and 512 aesthetic clinics are excluded. Bridgehead Communications Ltd · Company No. 12736276 · bridgeheadcommunications.com