

Number 48

## Rating a care home – key lines of regulatory inspections for older people

As a part of the Commission for Social Care Inspection's (CSCI) ongoing modernisation of the inspection of social care services, they have produced new draft guidance on how inspectors are to judge services entitled, Key Lines of Regulatory Assessment (KLORA). CSCI hope they will be used as of 2007 to give a quality rating to care homes. The KLORA guidelines set out what CSCI Inspectors are looking for in order to decide whether to give a poor, adequate, good or excellent rating for a particular service. It should be noted that under the new consultation document *Inspecting for Better lives: A quality future*, the rating system has been changed to 'stars'. A rating of 4 stars will amount to an 'excellent' service and 1 star will amount to a 'poor' service. There are a number of KLORA that have been put out to consultation to cover all the services inspected by CSCI, although the consultation period for the care homes for older people has now closed.

The KLORA guidelines set out 8 different elements of a care home service. The 8 elements are as follows:

- Choice of home
- Choice of health and personal care
- Daily life and social activities
- Complaints and protection
- Environment
- Staffing
- Management and administration

- Equality and diversity

Under the further consultation paper, the 8 elements have slightly different headings and CSCI indicate that they will amend the KLORA to mirror these in due course.

For each of these elements CSCI have set out what they would be looking for to give a rating of poor, adequate, good or excellent and detail is provided under each rating. For example to achieve a rating of 'good' under the 'health and personal care' element of a care home, an inspector will be expecting to find, amongst other things, that

*"Residents have individual healthcare plans that give a comprehensive overview of their general health and act as an indicator for changing health needs. Residents have the choice to shower or bath when they wish, and are supported and facilitated to be independent in their personal hygiene."*

This is merely an example of the statements placed within the KLORA rating and the draft document is available in full at [http://www.csci.org.uk/Docs/klora\\_care\\_homes\\_260606](http://www.csci.org.uk/Docs/klora_care_homes_260606).

The English Community Care Association, which is the largest representative body for care providers in England responded within the consultation period to CSCI's

KLORA for homes for older people. They raised a number of concerns about the KLORA as drafted, one of which is the overall effect of introducing a rating system that has such rigid categories such as poor, adequate, good and excellent. Notwithstanding CSCI's response to this, by introducing a 'star' rating scheme still categorises a home's performance and creates the risk that a home's future viability and survival could be seriously compromised by an incorrect or inappropriate rating. Indeed at the present time there is no defined right of appeal against a rating awarded, other than the current CSCI complaints procedure or, in some cases, to seek judicial review of the 'decision' by the Court. A home will however, be given the opportunity to comment on a draft of the rating report before it is published.

A further concern is that the introduction of such a detailed quality rating in effect introduces a third tier of regulation for care homes. Care homes are currently regulated and inspected under the requirements of the Care Homes Regulations 2001 and the accompanying National Minimum Standards for care homes for older

people. However, there are concerns that, as with the implementation of the regulations and minimum standards, there will be potential for an inconsistent approach in the implementation of the new performance ratings.

Whilst we can appreciate the benefits that a rating system potentially brings, not only in assisting service users when choosing a home, but also in raising standards within homes generally, the rating of individual providers requires extreme care in implementation. One particular concern is that, whereas the choice of a home previously depended in part on the judgment of both service users and their family when viewing and considering homes, a new quality rating is likely to dilute the use of such judgment in the future. Simply because one particular home is given a rating of '4 stars' or 'excellent', does not mean in reality that it is the best home for a particular service user. It remains to be seen whether or not the KLORA guidance will ultimately benefit the ultimate end user.

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**January 2007**