

CARE FRANCHISING COMPLIANCE

FREE · 47 QUESTIONS · 15 MINUTES

THE CQC SELF-AUDIT

47 questions inspectors actually ask.

Find your gaps before CQC does.

BUILT FOR

Domiciliary care providers · Supported living services
Extra care housing · Day services
Outreach services · Personal Assistant frameworks

Built on 21 years of running a CQC-rated community care service in Bristol

carefranchisingcompliance.co.uk · Care Horizons Limited (Companies House 05093285, trading since 2004)

How to use this self-audit

This audit takes around 15 minutes to complete. It covers 47 of the documentation gaps that UK community care providers most commonly fail to evidence at CQC inspection. It is built on 21 years of running a CQC-rated community care service in Bristol, and reflects the Single Assessment Framework introduced by CQC in 2024.

The audit is structured around the five CQC Key Questions, plus an opening **Quick Critical Checks** section covering the five gaps that most often appear in inspection reports as immediate concerns.

How to score yourself

Tick **Yes** only if you have a documented policy that meets the standard described AND your team can produce the evidence on request. Tick **Partly** if you have a policy but it is out of date, missing key elements, or lacks operational forms. Tick **No** if you have no policy or your existing one would not satisfy the question as written.

Be honest with yourself. The point is to find your gaps before an inspector does. Generous scoring helps no-one — least of all you.

How to interpret your final scores

Score range	What it means	Recommended action
85–100%	Inspection-ready. Strong documentation across all areas.	Continue your audit cycle. Address the few remaining gaps as standard improvement work.
65–84%	Manageable gaps. Several documentation areas need attention.	Prioritise the gaps in your weakest Key Question. A targeted policy bundle covers most situations efficiently.
40–64%	Significant exposure. Multiple critical gaps. Inspection readiness is weak.	Consider a comprehensive bundle (CQC Inspection Ready or Complete Library). Engage on the rebuild within 30 days.
Below 40%	Urgent. Documentation foundation is missing. CQC inspection at this level produces enforcement action.	Engage immediately. Complete Library + dedicated build time. Consider external compliance support if internal capacity is limited.

Quick Critical Checks

5 questions

These are the five questions inspectors most commonly cite as immediate concerns. Failing any of these does not mean you fail an inspection — but each gap appears repeatedly in inspection reports and improvement notices.

#	Question	Yes	No	Partly
1	Do you have a current, signed-off Adult Safeguarding Policy that names your Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) and includes a 24-hour escalation pathway?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Do you have evidence of completed Mental Capacity assessments for every service user where a question of capacity has arisen — including the date, the decision specific to that capacity assessment, and a record of best-interest considerations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Is your Duty of Candour Policy aligned with the Patient Safety Incident Response Framework (PSIRF) introduced post-2022, including notifiable safety incident triggers and 10-day escalation timeframes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	Do you have a documented audit cycle that covers all five CQC Key Questions (Safe, Effective, Caring, Responsive, Well-Led) — with a defined frequency, named auditor, and improvement action log?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Are your DBS records current (within 3 years for enhanced checks, or evidence of subscription to the Update Service) for every member of staff currently delivering regulated activities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 2 — SAFE

8 questions

Are people protected from abuse and avoidable harm? The Safe Key Question covers safeguarding, medication, infection control, risk management, falls prevention, lone working, and the clinical foundations of harm avoidance.

#	Question	Yes	No	Partly
6	Does your Medication Policy specifically cover the safe management of controlled drugs, refused medication, covert administration (with MCA assessment), and 'when required' medication including pain relief?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Do you maintain a documented Risk Assessment for every service user that is reviewed at least annually, on significant change, and after any incident — with named risk owner and review date?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Does your Falls Prevention Policy reflect NICE NG161 standards, including post-fall observations, lying-and-standing blood pressure checks, and bone health considerations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	Do you have an Infection Prevention and Control Policy aligned with NICE QS61 and the IPC BBE (bare below the elbows) standard, with documented staff competency assessment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10	Does your Moving and Handling Policy reflect MHOR 1992 / LOLER 1998 / PUWER 1998 requirements, including individual risk assessment, equipment maintenance records, and bariatric considerations where relevant?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11	Do you have a Lone Working Policy specific to community settings — covering buddy systems, check-in protocols, escalation when contact is lost, and personal alarm provision?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12	Does your Safeguarding Children Policy cover the Adult Setting context (e.g. children visiting service users, FGM duty under the Serious Crime Act 2015, contextual safeguarding)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13	Do you have a Sepsis Awareness and Escalation Policy that uses NEWS2, the Sepsis Six framework, and clear non-clinical staff escalation triggers?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 3 — EFFECTIVE

8 questions

Are people's care, treatment and support based on the best available evidence and assessment? The Effective Key Question covers care planning, MCA capacity, consent, induction, training, delegation, continuity of care, and reablement.

#	Question	Yes	No	Partly
14	Does your Care and Support Planning Policy require that plans are written in collaboration with the service user (or advocate), reviewed at least annually, and updated on significant change?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
15	Does your Consent to Care Policy address the JB v The Court of Protection [2021] judgement on capacity to engage in sexual relations and the IVESO test for relevant matters?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16	Do you have a Mental Capacity Act Policy that requires capacity to be assessed for specific decisions, at the relevant time, and not as a blanket assessment of the person?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17	Does your Induction Policy require new staff to complete the Care Certificate (15 standards) within 12 weeks, with documented competency sign-off for each standard?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18	Do you maintain a Training Matrix that links each role to required training, tracks expiry dates, and triggers automatic renewal alerts at least 30 days before expiry?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19	Does your Delegation of Tasks Policy reflect the NMC Code Part 11 requirements — covering competency assessment, scope of practice, and accountability?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20	Do you have a documented Continuity of Care policy, including key worker assignment, agency staff briefing protocols, and minimum information required at every visit?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21	Does your Reablement Policy reflect Care Act 2014 wellbeing principles and the NICE NG74 framework for intermediate care?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 4 — CARING

6 questions

Do staff treat people with kindness, respect, and compassion? The Caring Key Question is where many providers lose marks at inspection — not for poor practice, but for failing to evidence the practice they deliver every day.

#	Question	Yes	No	Partly
22	Does your Dignity and Respect Policy specifically address the rights of service users in the most intimate aspects of care (continence, personal care, end-of-life, bereavement)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23	Do you have an Accessible Information Policy aligned with the NHS Accessible Information Standard (AIS) and the British Sign Language Act 2022, with evidence of identifying communication needs at assessment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
24	Does your Dignity Policy nominate Dignity Champions, and do you have evidence of their training, role-specific responsibilities, and reporting mechanisms?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
25	Do you have an Advocacy Policy covering Independent Mental Capacity Advocates (IMCA), Independent Mental Health Advocates (IMHA), and Care Act 2014 advocacy referrals — with named referral pathways?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
26	Does your Sexuality and Relationships Policy positively support the rights of service users to form and maintain relationships, with appropriate capacity considerations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
27	Do you have a Religion and Belief Policy that addresses spiritual care needs, dietary requirements, end-of-life rituals, and accommodation of religious observances?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 5 — RESPONSIVE

8 questions

Do services meet people's needs and adapt to changes? The Responsive Key Question covers complaints, equality and diversity, end-of-life care, advance care planning, personal budgets, and the rapidly-evolving area of online safety and domestic abuse responses.

#	Question	Yes	No	Partly
28	Does your Complaints Policy meet the LA/NHS Complaints Regulations 2009 — including 3 working day acknowledgement, 28 working day response, and PHSO/LGSCO escalation rights?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
29	Do you have an Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Policy that explicitly addresses the Equality Act 2010 protected characteristics, indirect discrimination, and reasonable adjustments?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
30	Does your End of Life Care Policy align with the NICE NG142 / NG31 standards, including ReSPECT, advance care planning, anticipatory medication, and bereavement support?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
31	Do you have an Advance Care Planning Policy that addresses MCA capacity, ADRTs, DNACPR, ReSPECT, and the difference between legally-binding and best-interest decisions?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
32	Does your Personal Budgets Policy address the Care Act 2014 personal budget requirements, including direct payments where requested, and four conditions for capacity?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
33	Do you have a Range of Services and Limits to Responsibility Policy that documents what your service does and explicitly does not provide, to manage commissioner and family expectations?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
34	Does your Service User Online Safety Policy address digital inclusion, online financial abuse, and the Online Safety Act 2023 implications for community care?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
35	Do you have a Workplace Domestic Abuse Policy reflecting the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 and the 2023 Worker Protection Act on third-party harassment?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Section 6 — WELL-LED

12 questions

Is the organisation governed properly? The Well-Led Key Question is where outstanding ratings are won or lost. It covers governance, audit, fit and proper persons, notifications, whistleblowing, data protection, cyber security, generative AI, conflict of interest, and contingency planning.

#	Question	Yes	No	Partly
36	Do you have a documented Audit Cycle Policy with monthly clinical audits, quarterly governance audits, and annual mock-inspection audits — with a Quality Improvement Action Plan (QIAP) for every gap?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
37	Does your Good Governance Policy reflect CQC Regulation 17 requirements — including a documented governance architecture, risk register, and Board reporting cadence?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
38	Do you have a Fit and Proper Persons Policy for Directors that reflects Regulation 5 — with evidence of background checks, ongoing competency review, and mandatory referral to the Disclosure and Barring Service?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
39	Does your Notifications Policy correctly identify all CQC Statutory Notifications under Regulations 16-18 of the Care Quality Commission (Registration) Regulations 2009 — including timelines and methods?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
40	Do you have a Whistleblowing Policy that meets the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, names a Freedom to Speak Up Guardian, and provides external escalation routes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
41	Does your Data Protection Policy meet UK GDPR requirements — including a Record of Processing Activities (RoPA), Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIA), and the 72-hour ICO breach notification requirement?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
42	Do you have a Cyber Security Policy aligned with NCSC Cyber Essentials, including BYOD, patch management, and the NHS DSP Toolkit standards (where commissioned by NHS)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
43	Does your Generative AI Policy address staff use of ChatGPT and similar tools, including UK GDPR considerations, intellectual property, and clinical-decision boundaries?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

#	Question	Yes	No	Partly
44	Do you have a Conflict of Interest Policy reflecting the Bribery Act 2010, with declarations register, gifts register, and Board-level review?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
45	Does your Business Contingency Policy cover the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 categories — including pandemic, fuel crisis, IT outage, and key staff loss scenarios?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
46	Do you have a Sponsorship Licence Policy that reflects the post-2024 Home Office reforms, including reporting duties, right-to-work checks, and salary thresholds?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
47	Does your Service Improvement Plan Policy require a documented improvement cycle following every audit, complaint, incident, and inspection — with named owner, timeline, and review point?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What to do with your gaps

Most providers complete this audit and find they have between 12 and 22 gaps. That is normal — the regulatory landscape has moved fast over the last three years, and most policy libraries have not kept up.

Below is the gap-to-bundle mapping. Each question in this audit links to a specific Care Franchising Compliance bundle that includes the policy, forms, and implementation guidance to close that gap.

Bundle	Suites	Coverage	Price
Safeguarding Essentials Bundle	14 suites	Safeguarding · MCA · DoLS · Restraint · Modern Slavery · FGM	£439
Staff Management & Recruitment Bundle	14 suites	Recruitment · DBS · Induction · Conduct · Sponsorship Licence	£439
Operational Excellence Bundle	22 suites	Care planning · Medication · Dementia · IPC · Records · Falls	£695
CQC Inspection Ready Bundle	24 suites	Audit · Governance · Duty of Candour · PSIRF · Notifications	£759
Governance & Leadership Masterclass	30 suites	Board-level · GDPR · Cyber · AI · Financial · CCTV	£949
Clinical & Specialist Care Bundle	20 suites	End of life · Sepsis · BLS · Diabetes · Wound care	£629
Rights, Dignity & Inclusion Bundle	16 suites	Dignity · Equality · Advocacy · Person-centred care	£499
Health, Safety & Environment Bundle	12 suites	Premises · PPE · IPC · Lone working · DSE	£379
Complete Policy Library	137 suites	All 28 CQC Fundamental Standards · Own forever	£2,995

If you have gaps across more than three Key Questions:

The Complete Policy Library at £2,995 is almost always the most economical option. It is less than the annual subscription cost of the leading mainstream provider — but you own it forever, without further fees. For larger services, multi-site providers, or franchise rollouts, this is the starting point.

Maintenance Subscription (optional) — £29 per month. Once you have your library, our optional Maintenance Subscription delivers regulatory alerts and updated policy versions when the rules

change. Cancel any time. No minimum term.

Why this audit, and why now

I have spent 21 years running a community care service in Bristol — Care Horizons Limited (Companies House 05093285, trading since 2004, CQC-rated Good, certified to ISO 9001 and ISO 45001). Over that time I have written and rewritten our complete policy library through every regulatory shift the sector has been through.

What I noticed, repeatedly, was the gap between providers who pass inspections cleanly and providers who get pulled up on documentation. The difference was almost never about quality of care — it was almost always about evidence. Inspectors look at documents. Providers who can produce strong, consistent, regulation-mapped documentation rate well, even when their service is similar to a competitor that gets dragged through the inspection process.

Care Franchising Compliance was launched to fix that gap for other UK community care providers. The library you can buy is the same one that has carried Care Horizons through 21 years of compliance — refined, generalised for white-label use, and made available as a one-time purchase rather than a perpetual subscription.

This self-audit is the same internal checklist I use to test our own readiness. If you find gaps, you are in the same position most other providers are in. The fix is straightforward.

Ready to close your gaps?

Visit carefranchisingcompliance.co.uk and use the gap-to-bundle table on the previous page to find the right starting bundle for your service. Each bundle is a one-time purchase. Each suite is a Word policy template, a forms workbook, individual printable forms, and a master implementation checklist — fully editable and white-label-ready.

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