

Health, Social Care and Sport Committee
Tuesday, 10 June 2025
18th Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

Care Inspectorate – Note by the Clerk

Background

1. At a recent work programme discussion, Members of the Committee decided they wished to undertake periodic scrutiny of the work of the Care Inspectorate in the form of a one-off evidence session.
2. The Care Inspectorate (CI) (legal name: Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland - SCSWIS) is the independent scrutiny and improvement body for social care and social work services in Scotland. The CI regulates and inspects care services against various standards, such as the [Health and Social Care Standards: My Support, my life](#). It also carries out [joint inspections with other bodies](#), such as NHS Healthcare Improvement Scotland, and collaborates with other scrutiny partners such as Education Scotland and the Mental Welfare Commission to check how well local partnerships are working to support adults and children. It seeks to ensure social work, including criminal justice social work, meets high standards. [Inspection and quality assurance of services take different forms](#). To operate, all care and support services must register with the Care Inspectorate. Some of the CI's income is made up from registration fees.
3. The CI is an executive non-departmental public body. This means it operates independently from Scottish Ministers but is accountable to them and is publicly funded. Its functions, duties and powers are set out in the [Public Services Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2010](#) and associated regulations. See [Part 5](#) of the Act.
4. The CI Board sets the strategic direction and oversees governance, while taking account of legislation and Scottish Government policy guidance. The CI regulates around 11,000 services. These include daycare of children services, childminders, care homes, care at home and support services, including housing support. It also regulates adoption and fostering services, secure care, school care accommodation, nurse agencies and offender accommodation services.
5. The Care Inspectorate publishes [a range of statistics](#) quarterly on services and their performance along with reports and resources on inspections, guidance, and tools

Governance and the Corporate Plan 2022 – 2025

6. The scope of the work of the Care Inspectorate has grown since its inception and it has embedded a new model of operation, with a revised directorate structure. Its current [Corporate Plan 2022 - 2025](#) includes a number of key priorities, listed under four themes:

- High-quality care for all
- Improving outcomes for all
- Everyone's rights are respected and realised
- Our people are skilled, confident and well supported to carry out their roles

Inspections

7. As the regulator for all care services in Scotland, the CI is responsible for [inspecting them](#), including social work services provided by local authorities and partnerships. They sometimes conduct inspections with other public bodies. They [publish reports of their inspections](#), but also promote a supported self-evaluation model, supporting local authorities and partnerships in improving social work and social care in their areas. They have established an [online 'Hub'](#) to support quality improvement. There is also [information on how to access improvement support](#).
8. [Regulations](#) issued in 2011, associated with powers conferred by section 78 of the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010 set out the requirements for care services.
9. Care services should provide good quality care and support, which promotes quality and safety. A personal plan should be drawn up for each service user, setting out how their health, welfare and safety needs are to be met, to be reviewed every six months. Services must also ensure there are sufficient numbers of suitably qualified and competent people staffing services at all times.
10. As well as the Health and Social Care Standards, [Quality Frameworks are used for assessing services](#) including [to support self-evaluation](#). Self-evaluation is based around four key questions:
 1. How well do we support people's wellbeing?
 2. How good is our leadership?
 3. How good is our staff team?
 4. How well is our care planned?
11. The [most recent statistical report](#) (as at 31 March 2025) provides data on these questions for all services.
12. The table below shows a summary of all services by sector and the percentage of services with each grade. Connected to this, the CI provides some [explanation for the gradings used in their reporting](#).

Care Service	Unsatisfactory	Weak	Adequate	Good, Good or Excellent	Very or
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Health Board	0.0%	1.9%	28.8%	69.2%
Local Authority	0.1	1.1	9.3	89.5
Private	0.1	1.5	12.4	85.9
Voluntary or not for profit	0.2	0.9	12.4	86.4
All service sectors	0.1	1.3	11.7	86.9

Note that this includes secure accommodation services, childminding and adoption services for example which are outwith the remit of the Health, Social Care and Committee.

Complaints and data collected

13. [The 2011 Regulations](#) also set out the requirement for services to establish a complaints procedure. Complaints must be investigated, and the complainant advised what action has been taken. This is to ensure that families, carers and those using services can raise concerns directly with service providers.
14. The [Care Inspectorate provides comprehensive information on how it deals with complaints](#), aimed at the public. This makes clear what the CI can and can't investigate.
15. [The statistics published show a summary \(number\) of complaints received about registered services. The data also provides the numbers of investigations and investigations completed.](#)
16. The [data goes back to 2017 on the website](#). It does not appear that there has been much significant change in the numbers of complaints made against services over the intervening 8 years.
17. The table below shows **complaints** made against a number of services, by the type of service and the sector. The figures in brackets are the total number of services in each category:

Care service	Health board	Local authority	Private	Voluntary or not for profit	total
Care home: older people	9(16)	90(90)	1783(592)	87(67)	1969(765)
Learning disabilities	0(0)	5(14)	33(40)	30(84)	68(138)
Physical and sensory impairment	0(0)	0(0)	14(6)	25(19)	39(25)
Respite care and short breaks	0(0)	0(5)	0(1)	1(4)	1(9)
Support	2(15)	116(171)	381(586)	68(484)	567(1256)

service: care at home	
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Social Care quality improvement

18. According to its current [Corporate Plan 2022 - 2025](#), the Care Inspectorate's Vision is:

“for world-class social care and social work in Scotland, where everyone, in every community, experiences high-quality care, support and learning, tailored to their rights, needs and wishes.”

19. A [quality improvement framework](#) was published in November 2023, followed by a [Quality Improvement Plan for 2025 – 26](#). This is linked to their [Quality Improvement and Involvement 3-year strategy 2022 - 25](#).

Digital transformation

20. In its written submission to the Committee, the CI outlines work it is currently doing in the area of digital transformation. This includes introducing a new digital solution, replacing outdated platforms, which is intended to help to “capture and consolidate data, focus on areas of highest risk, and respond more flexibly to changing demands”.

Learning from Covid-19, Anne's Law and the Care Reform (Scotland) Bill

21. [Information on the CI website](#) is a reminder that the Care Inspectorate was central to monitoring care during the time of the Covid-19 pandemic.

22. On its website, the Care Inspectorate also presents background to Anne's Law and has a [page dedicated to Meaningful Connection and Visiting](#).

23. The [Care Reform \(Scotland\) Bill](#) as amended at Stage 2 has incorporated sections to support care home visiting when a health or other emergency might entail the suspension of normal visiting. The Bill now proposes allowing the identification of an Essential Care Supporter (ECS), and for a duty to be placed on care home providers to facilitate visits to and from care homes except in the most extreme circumstances. The provider must do all it can to mitigate any such risk arising from these circumstances to allow visits; the Scottish Ministers must also produce a code of practice to support the visiting provisions.

Today's meeting

24. In advance of today's meeting, the Care Inspectorate was invited to make a written submission about its work which can be accessed [here](#).

25. At today's meeting, Members will have the opportunity to put questions to a panel of witnesses representing the Care Inspectorate.

**Clerks to Committee and SPICe
June 2025**