



The difference between quality and safeguarding learning briefing

Background

Our [Kingswood Organisational Learning Review \(2021\)](#) and our [Safeguarding Adults Review in respect of DJT \(2023\)](#) told us that learning across agencies is needed regarding the difference between quality and safeguarding concerns.

Interface between quality and safeguarding

The aim of professionals, service providers, and commissioners should be to provide high-quality care. However, there are times when this falls short of expected standards. Identifying issues early is key to reduce the risk of escalation and to reduce the risk of abuse and neglect requiring safeguarding interventions.

Partnership working and understanding the roles and responsibilities of all those involved with an adult is essential.

Professional curiosity

Professional curiosity is necessary to fully understand a situation and the risks to an adult. These risks are not always immediately obvious and can include quality concerns. Please see our [professional curiosity learning briefing and podcast \(2024\)](#).

What you should do if you have a concern

If you are in doubt as to whether an issue is safeguarding or quality, the most important thing to do is share that information in a timely way. We have provided three examples of quality issues and safeguarding concerns, and how these differ:

Quality issue 1: Adult does not receive necessary help to eat or drink on one occasion, or the food offered is poor quality/unappetising or culturally unacceptable.

Safeguarding concern 1: Continue to offer poor quality/unappetising, nutritionally inadequate, or culturally

unacceptable food, or recurring events where an adult(s) does not receive the necessary help to eat or drink.

Quality issue 2: Assessed need not documented in care plan e.g., liquid diet due to swallowing difficulties. Provider identifies this and addresses it before any harm occurs.

Safeguarding concern 2: Failure to specify in care plan how an assessed need must be met and inappropriate action, or inaction which results in, for example, the adult choking.

Quality issue 3: Adult falls causing minor injury. Appropriate medical intervention sought and given, and existing falls risk assessment/care plan reviewed

Safeguarding concern 3: An adult falls and injury occurs. No specific assessment of falls risk in place, no appropriate medical intervention sought or given, and no plan made to review the care plan.

Please see the [Sussex Safeguarding Adults Policy and Procedures \(2024\)](#) for further examples.

What good care looks like

Through inspections, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) consider if a service is safe, effective, caring, responsive and well-led. CQC have useful advice and guidance about what good care looks and examples of this are below.

Care homes: Refer to the [Care Quality Commission \(2023\(a\)\)](#) for more information.

- The home is clean/hygienic
- Adults get the right food and drink
- Staff treat adults with dignity and respect
- Adults have a written and personalised care plan
- Staff have confidence to report concerns and are supported to do so

Care agencies: Refer to the [Care Quality Commission \(2024\(a\)\)](#) for more information.

- Adults are told if the person caring for them changes
- Adults are introduced to staff providing them care
- Adults are encouraged to express views of their care
- Adults have a written plan to receive personalised care
- Staff know what is expected of them

West Sussex Hospitals: Refer to the [Care Quality Commission \(2023\(b\)\)](#) for more information.

- Enough staff on duty with skills, knowledge, and experience
- Make sure adults have enough to eat and drink
- Adults are involved in decisions about their care
- Avoid long waiting times, delays, and cancellations

GP practices: Refer to the [Care Quality Commission \(2023\(c\)\)](#) for more information.

- Adult's records are complete, accurate and securely kept
- Work together with other local services to meet needs
- Have staff who are compassionate and respect privacy
- Make adjustments where possible to meet the needs of adults

Dental practices: Refer to the [Care Quality Commission \(2023\(d\)\)](#) for more information.

- Staff explain options for treatment and costs involved
- Staff treat adults with dignity and respect
- Appointments are scheduled at times that suit the adult as much as possible
- The practice values and uses feedback to improve services

The role of the Care Quality Commission

The Care Quality Commission (CQC) can use a range of enforcement powers where registration requirements are not met in services, with poor or inadequate standards of care.

CQC have both civil powers, to keep adults safe, and criminal powers, to hold providers to account. CQC work with partner agencies to consider the use of these powers. In the most urgent and high-risk cases, CQC can use urgent enforcement powers, to close services.

Further information is available on the [CQC website](#).

In the case of our [Kingswood Organisational Learning Review \(2021\)](#), CQC enforcement powers were required for closure of the care home.

How to raise a quality issue

West Sussex County Council are piloting a new pathway for care providers and care professionals external to WSCC to report quality issues. Visit their ['Raise an issue about the quality of a care service' page \(2024\)](#) for more information.

When there are high levels of quality concerns

If quality issues become persistent or high risk, this may require a safeguarding concern or, a discussion at our Quality Assurance and Safeguarding Information subgroup, which seeks to:

- Improve the safety of services through early information sharing and intervention
- Play a key role in prevention and escalation of risks
- Ensure clarity on the leadership/management of concerns raised
- Act as an interface between individual/organisational safeguarding and quality practice
- Develop/maintain a picture of the quality and safety of the care market

References

- Care Quality Commission (2023(a)) [*What can you expect from a good care home?*](#)
- Care Quality Commission (2024(a)) [*What can you expect from a good home-care agency?*](#)
- Care Quality Commission (2023(b)) [*What can you expect from a good hospital?*](#)
- Care Quality Commission (2023(c)) [*What can you expect from a good GP practice?*](#)
- Care Quality Commission (2023(d)) [*What can you expect from a good dental practice?*](#)
- Sussex Safeguarding Adults Boards (2024) [*Sussex Safeguarding Adults Policy and Procedures*](#)
- West Sussex County Council (2024) [*Raise an issue about the quality of a care service*](#)
- West Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board (2021) [*Kingswood Organisational Learning Review*](#)
- West Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board (2024) [*Professional curiosity learning resources*](#)
- West Sussex Safeguarding Adults Board (2023) [*Safeguarding Adults Review in respect of DJT*](#)