

Appointment of Chief Executive

April 2026
Ref: ACQD

Foreword from the Board

Thank you for your interest in the role of Chief Executive of the Care Quality Commission (CQC). We are delighted that you are considering joining us at such a pivotal time for our organisation, the health and social care system, and the people whose lives we touch.

The CQC occupies a unique and essential place in England's health and social care landscape. As the independent regulator, we are responsible for ensuring that services are safe, effective, caring, responsive, and well-led. Our work impacts millions of people, from patients in hospitals and GP practices to residents in care homes, and our judgements shape the standards of care across the country.

Like any organisation in a complex system, we face very real challenges. We operate under intense scrutiny, navigating public and political expectations, workforce pressures, and an increasingly complex system of care. In recent years, we have faced criticism, and rightly so in some areas. We have not always been able to meet expectations in the way we would wish. Over the past year, however, we have taken decisive steps forward: strengthening our inspection approach and regulatory frameworks, investing in data and technology, and building a more confident, professional and empowered workforce.

Our ambition for the future is clear. We want the CQC to be a consistently high-performing regulator, trusted for our independence, integrity, and insight. We want to be an organisation where staff feel valued, supported, and empowered to make a real difference, and a partner that can collaborate effectively across the system to improve outcomes for all.

The CQC's ratings will be based on comprehensive inspections of every health and social care provider by expert teams, supported by advanced data and analytics to ensure judgements reflect the best and most up-to-date evidence. This transformation aligns with the government's 10-year plan for health and care services and reflects the confidence placed in the CQC to strengthen quality and improvement across the system.

The next Chief Executive will inherit an organisation that has made real strides but is still navigating its way through a period of change and high expectation. This is a role that requires courage and clarity: the ability to balance reform and delivery, to strengthen operational grip and focus on core priorities for delivery, while nurturing innovation, and to lead the organisation with authority, empathy, and vision. We need a leader who can listen deeply, build trust, and inspire confidence across staff, the public, and the system we regulate.

As a Board, we are realistic about the challenges ahead, confident in our future direction, and collectively committed to delivering our new strategy. We are seeking a Chief Executive who shares our values, believes passionately in our mission, and is excited by the opportunity to shape the future of health and care regulation in England at a moment of real significance.

We hope this pack gives you a sense of who we are, the journey we are on, and the impact you could have. Thank you again for your interest. We look forward to learning more about you and your aspirations.

About the CQC

The CQC regulates and inspects health and social care services, including hospitals, GPs, dentists, ambulances, mental health services, care homes, and home care. We register providers, monitor performance, rate services, and take action to protect people who use them. Across all our work, we listen to experiences, involve the public, safeguard vulnerable people, including those under the Mental Health Act, and publish our independent views on quality. We also collaborate with other organisations and public bodies to improve care across the system.

The CQC is an Arm's-Length Body of the Department of Health and Social Care, operating independently to regulate and improve health and social care in England. Pending new legislation, we will also oversee Healthwatch, Health Services Safety Investigations Body, and the Maternity and Newborn Safety Investigations programme, which will sit within the CQC's remit. As candidates will be aware, Sir Mike Richards indicated in February 2026 his intention to step down as the CQC's Chair; the DHSC is leading the appointment of the new Chair.

Our commitments, values and behaviours

Our approach, developed with colleagues, providers, the public, and stakeholders, defines why we exist, what we aim to achieve, and how we lead, work, and behave. It underpins and supports all we do as an effective regulator. You can read more about our commitments, values and behaviours [here](#).

The CQC is committed to promoting a fair and inclusive workplace where all our people can flourish and reach their full potential. We know diverse teams allow for a more creative and productive environment and therefore encourage applications from everyone regardless of age, gender, gender identity or expression, religion or belief, disability, ethnicity or sexual orientation.

How we are run

The CQC's Board is its senior decision-making body, provides leadership and ensures we are successful and sustainable, and sets our [strategy, purpose and values](#). Our Board members' biographies can be found [here](#).

The Executive team is responsible for our day-to-day running, overseeing the delivery of our business plan objectives, and ensuring we use our resources properly and manage our performance well.

We have also re-introduced the Chief Inspectors and a restructured Board to provide stronger oversight and accountability. The four Chief Inspectors are dedicated to specific sectors: Hospitals (secondary and specialist); Primary Care and Community Services; Adult Social Care and Integrated Care; and Mental Health.

Our context

While our mission remains unchanged, the path to delivering it has undergone a significant and necessary reset. Following the rollout of our single assessment framework and new digital infrastructure, the CQC experienced operational pressures including reduced inspection numbers, delays in publishing inspection reports, and backlogs in provider registration processes. This led to a series of rigorous, independent examinations that now form the blueprint for our current trajectory.

The incoming Chief Executive will lead a programme of change informed by four pivotal reviews, each addressing a specific facet of our operational grip:

- [The Dash Review](#): Focused on our operational efficiency, highlighting the urgent need to address inspection backlogs and resolve the friction within our digital assessment tools.
- [The Richards Review](#): Provided a vital clinical and professional steer, recommending a return to sector-specific expertise. This includes re-establishing the role of Chief Inspectors and ensuring our assessments are led by specialists with deep knowledge of the specific services they are inspecting.
- [The Gill Review](#): Emphasised the 'human' element of regulation, rebuilding the weight of professional judgement and ensuring our prioritisation is clear, consistent, and transparent.
- [Care Provider Alliance \(CPA\) Review](#): Highlighted opportunities to strengthen the Single Assessment Framework by improving clarity and consistency in inspections, enhancing inspector expertise, and improving communication and reporting, particularly to ensure the approach is practical and supportive for smaller providers.

Improving How We Work

Work on our recovery is already underway. Throughout 2025, the [Improving How We Work](#) programme has been providing focus to our recovery. We have begun realigning our assessment teams into sector-led pods, investing in the specialist training of our inspectors, and refining the assessment framework to ensure it is both agile and evidence-based.

For the new Chief Executive, your task will be to ensure the CQC that emerges is not just functional, but exceptional. This involves:

- **Restoring credibility**: Ensuring the Richards Review recommendations are embedded so that providers once again see the CQC's judgements as expert-led and fair.
- **Digital optimisation**: Transforming our data systems from a source of friction into seamless support that enables inspectors to work more efficiently and effectively.
- **Public trust**: Closing the loop between inspection and impact, ensuring that the public can once again rely on a timely, accurate, and real-time view of care quality across England.

The role of Chief Executive

We now seek a Chief Executive who will lead with vision, integrity, and courage; who understands the complexity of the health and social care system yet is energised by innovation and improvement; who can inspire confidence, drive lasting change, and shape the future of regulation and quality improvement across the sector.

The next Chief Executive will be a proven leader with experience of operating at the most senior level in large, complex and high-profile organisations. First and foremost, this role requires the ability to set clear direction, lead through scrutiny and ambiguity, and translate strategy into consistent delivery at scale. Experience of health, social care or regulation is important, but secondary to the capacity to lead a national organisation with confidence, judgement and resilience in a highly visible public context.

This is a role grounded in recovery as much as in transformation. The next Chief Executive will lead the organisation through essential operational renewal, while also driving a bold strategic agenda: redefining how regulation promotes quality, improvement, and public trust in a changing health and care system. There is a genuine opportunity to shape the future of regulation in England, leaving a lasting legacy in how insight, data and professional judgement are brought together to drive better outcomes.

The role offers a significant platform for innovation and public leadership. The Chief Executive will operate with clear political licence, working constructively with government while safeguarding the CQC's independence, and will be a visible national leader, able to engage credibly with Ministers, Parliament, providers, partners and the public. For the right candidate, this is a rare opportunity to lead change at scale, to set a new direction for regulation, and to have a tangible, long-term impact on health and social care in England.



Role accountabilities

Reporting to the Board, the Chief Executive provides the ultimate leadership and operational grip required to deliver the CQC's mission. They hold the role of Accounting Officer and are responsible for ensuring financial accountability, compliance with regulations, and effective management and protection of funds.

- Provide the vision, leadership and drive to shape and deliver a more targeted, responsive and intelligence-led approach to regulation, anticipating changes in service models and assuring the public of the quality and safety of care.
- Advise the CQC's Unitary Board on the organisation's compliance with, and interpretation of, the Health and Social Care Act and the Mental Health Act, in support of the CQC's strategic objectives.
- Build and maintain influential relationships with Ministers, the Department of Health and Social Care, NHS England, providers, commissioners, the Local Government Association and other key stakeholders, while safeguarding the CQC's independence and maintaining a clear focus on patients and people who use services.
- Lead and develop a skilled and geographically dispersed regulatory workforce of around 3,300 people, the majority of whom are home-based, with accountability for a budget of approximately £300 million.
- Drive organisational development across the CQC, embedding a consistent and sustainable approach to quality improvement.
- Ensure that the CQC's judgements about providers are robust, timely and proportionate, triggering escalation, regulatory action and compliance activity where required, and working closely with other national regulators.
- Take decisions relating to the efficiency, capability and long-term development of the organisation, responding to innovation in service delivery and evolving the CQC's use of digital, data and analytics.
- Act as the public face of the organisation, engaging with people who use services and the wider public, building trust in the CQC's work, and ensuring that public insight and experience inform strategy, policy and regulatory decision-making.

Person specification

We are seeking a Chief Executive with the confidence and judgement to lead the CQC through change, strengthen delivery, and inspire trust across the system.

Knowledge and experience

- Substantial experience as a senior leader in an organisation of similar size and complexity gained in health, social care, local government, wider public sector, a regulator or regulated environment.
- Proven track record of driving operational excellence by focusing on core priorities to deliver tangible improvements and organisational stability.
- A track record of building credibility and relationships with a range of stakeholders at all levels and in a complex sector.
- A track record of driving forward a clear strategic vision for an organisation; motivating and inspiring predominantly home-based staff through transformational change and improvement.
- Experience of working within a governance framework and building effective and collaborative relationships with a Board to deliver successful outcomes whilst acting in the public interest.
- Experience of systems thinking and embedding quality improvement across an organisation.
- Demonstrable record of establishing and maintaining a high-performing culture.
- A deep understanding of how to drive cultural change, and of the importance of culture in organisations that regulate.

- A track record of leading innovation at organisational or system level, with an understanding of how the strategic use of data, digital capability and AI can transform regulatory practice.
- Extensive record of successful workforce, financial and resource management as a Board leader.

Skills, abilities and personal qualities

- An inspiring, empowering and resilient leader, with the ability to lead an organisation with high levels of complexity, risk and public visibility.
- Politically astute with excellent communication and influencing skills, strategic thinking and sound judgement.
- Resilience to thrive when operating in complexity and uncertainty, whilst under significant pressure.
- A demonstrable commitment to ensuring equality, diversity and promoting inclusion within an organisation.
- Passion for protecting patients and service users, and for driving improvement.
- A leader with the strategic vision to deliver the commitment to the CQC becoming the best health and care regulator in the world, as outlined in the 10 Year Plan.

Terms of appointment

Salary

£220,000.

Pension

We want to help you plan for your future. When you start in your new role with us, you will join the NHS pension scheme. Or, where appropriate, NEST, the government-backed workplace pension scheme.

Home, office and hybrid working

This role is offered on a hybrid working basis as a minimum requirement, with flexibility to agree a contractual base location, which may be home-based or linked to the nearest CQC office. Reasonable adjustments will be considered in line with individual needs.

Given the seniority and public-facing nature of the role, there will be an expectation of significant in-person working. This will include regular attendance in London, time spent across the CQC's offices (including Leeds, London and Newcastle), and visits to provider premises as required to support effective leadership, engagement and delivery.

Fleet scheme

When you join us, you can access a salary sacrifice car leasing scheme run by NHS Fleet Solutions. You can use it to lease a car for up to three years. This benefit is only available to permanent employees.

► [Find a comprehensive list of our benefits here](#)



How to apply

Saxton Bampfylde Ltd is acting as an employment agency advisor to the CQC on this appointment.

Candidates should apply for this role through our website at roles.saxbam.com using code **ACQD**.

Click on the 'apply' button and follow the instructions to upload a CV and cover letter and complete the online equal opportunities monitoring* form.

The closing date for applications is **midday on Friday 15 May**.

The equal opportunities monitoring online form will not be shared with anyone involved in assessing your application. Please complete this as part of the application process.

Due diligence

Due diligence will be carried out as part of the application process, which may include searches carried out via internet search engines and any public social media accounts.

GDPR personal data notice

According to GDPR guidelines, we are only able to process your sensitive personal data (racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious or philosophical beliefs, trade union membership, genetic data, biometric data, health, sex life, or sexual orientation) with your express consent. You will be asked to complete a consent form when you apply and please do not include any Sensitive Personal Data within your CV (although this can be included in your covering letter if you wish to do so), remembering also not to include contact details for referees without their prior agreement.

More information

If you'd like to know more about the role or selection process, and to arrange a conversation with our advisors, Saxton Bampfylde, please contact Alex Richmond by emailing: alex.richmond@saxbam.com.

