

Getting your health or social care service registered with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) is both a legal requirement **and** a powerful signal of quality to clients, commissioners and families.

Whether you're setting up a domiciliary care agency, a residential home, or a nursing service, this comprehensive guide, will walk you through every detail, from initial checks to post-registration growth.

Ready? **Let's jump in!**

1. Confirm You Need to Register



What is CQC registration?

It's your formal notification to CQC of:

1. **Who** you are (legal entity or individual).
2. **What** regulated activities you'll deliver (e.g., personal care, nursing, diagnostic procedures).
3. **Where** you'll provide them (your exact service locations).

Why it matters: Operating without registration risks fines up to £2,500, plus reputational damage.

Pro Tip: Start by using CQC's **Scope of Registration** wizard online to tick off the 14 activity categories—this simple step can save hours of guesswork.

2. Choose the Right Application Route



A. New Provider Application

- **When to use:** Launching a brand-new organisation or service line.
- **How:** Download and complete the CQC Word form (portal submissions for new providers closed November 2024).
- **Key sections:** Applicant details; service locations; regulated activities; nominated individual information.

B. New Registered Manager Application

- **When to use:** Appointing a **new** registered manager for an existing or new service.
- **How:** Complete the dedicated **CQC Registered Manager** form, providing detailed evidence of experience, qualifications and DBS checks.

C. Continuing Registered Manager Application

- **When to use:** Taking over an existing, already-registered service **and** keeping its manager.
- **How:** Same Word form as New Provider, linking to the manager's existing fit-and-proper documentation.

Checklist before sending:

- Registered address and company name **exactly** match Companies House.
- Nominated individual's full name aligns with their DBS record.

3. Meet 'Fit and Proper Person' Requirements (Regulation 5)



For Registered Manager Only

Requirement	Details
Experience	≥1 year in a supervisory role tied to your service (e.g., care coordinator in domiciliary).
Qualification	NVQ Level 5 in Health & Social Care (or equivalent) or actively working towards one.
Mandatory Training	Up-to-date Care Certificate , Level 3 Safeguarding (DSL), plus any specialist training (e.g., dementia advanced, reminiscence, life history).
DBS Checks	Enhanced DBS with relevant adult/child filter. - Children's services → children's barred list.
Professional Status	Active NMC or HCPC registration (for nurses, therapists). No CQC countersignature needed.
References	Two professional references from past 2 years, covering character & competence.
Job History	Complete from age 16; justify gaps >28 days (e.g., travel, study).

For Directors and Nominated Individual (NI)

- **Directors:** Enhanced DBS only.
- **Nominated Individual:** Enhanced DBS **and** Level 3 Safeguarding (adults & children) up to date.

4. Pre-Application Engagement for Specialist Services



Learning Disability & Autism Services:

- **Book a planning call** with CQC at your earliest: they often take 4–8 weeks to respond.
- **Prepare:** Study the **Right Care, Right Support, Right Culture** framework and, for supported living, the **REACH Standards**.
- Discuss your staffing model, environmental adaptations and person-centred frameworks.

Local Authority–Funded Clients:

- Email your local social work team or commissioners requesting a **letter of need**.
- Attach this evidence to your application to demonstrate genuine demand.

Why early engagement matters: CQC feedback may force significant plan changes—better now than mid-application!

5. Prepare Core Documents & Policies



Aim to have these finalised—and **signed**—**28 days** before submission:

1. **Statement of Purpose:** Service aims, regulated activities, service model, population served.
2. **Training Matrix:** Overview of all staff training, dates and refreshers.
3. **Seven Mandatory Policies:**
 - Safeguarding (adults & children)
 - Consent & mental capacity
 - Complaints handling
 - Infection prevention & control
 - Medicines management
 - Governance
 - Equality, Diversity and Human Rights

4. **Financial Viability Statement:** 12–24 month projections; break-even analysis; CQC fee reserves.
5. **Insurance Quote:** One quote covering public liability, employer’s liability and professional indemnity.
6. **ICO Registration Certificate:** Proof of GDPR compliance.
7. **Business Plan (for internal use):**
 - 2-year P&L forecast (monthly granularity)
 - CQC fee budget
 - Organogram and staffing plan
 - Market and competitor analysis
 - Evidence of local need (commissioner emails)

Additional Documents (to have on-hand, not submitted):

- Contingency plan for supported living services.
- Full list of risk assessments (e.g., independent clinics, specialist activities).

Note: CQC’s **Complete List of Application Documents** is available on [cqc.org.uk](https://www.cqc.org.uk)—check for any service-specific requirements.

Insurance Hack: Insurers often won’t quote non-operational entities. Use a consultancy like PolicyBee and secure quotes only for the first-year premium to avoid wasted cost.

6. Submit Your Application



1. **Compile & name your files:** e.g., Smith_NI_DBS.pdf, SoP_AlphaCare.docx.
2. **Email** your full application package to the regional CQC inbox (per guidance).

Last-minute checks:

- Signatures dated ≥ 28 days pre-submission.
- DBS names & addresses match SoP.
- Business name consistency across all docs.

7. Navigating CQC's Two-Stage Review Process



Stage 1: Rapid Assessment Team (12-week target)

- **Focus:** Completeness & consistency (addresses, PIN, name declarations, grammar).
- **Outcome:** You'll be advised within 12 weeks whether your application is complete and **assigned to a Registration Inspector** (often within 10 weeks of this stage).
- **Common snag:** Unjustified job gaps or mismatched names trigger queries and pause the clock.

Stage 2: In-Depth Review & Inspection Planning

- **May include:** Further evidence requests, telephone interviews or a site visit.
- **Possible outcomes:**
 - **Registration granted** (with or without conditions).
 - **Conditions imposed** (e.g., implement policy X by date Y).
 - **Notice of Proposal** (refusal) with right to representation.

Reality check: Current average end-to-end can stretch to **6 months**—factor this into your launch plan.

8. Interview Prep: Nominated Individual (NI) & Registered Manager (RM)



Nominated Individual

- Must **know every policy** and the rationale behind it.
- Explain the **notification process** (e.g., how you'll report manager resignations, incidents).
- Demonstrate understanding of **your SoP & Training Matrix** details.
- Pitch your **company vision & values**—CQC looks for genuine quality-driven culture.

Registered Manager

- Be fluent in the **CQC Fundamental Standards** and how you uphold them.
- Walk through your **day-to-day operations**: training, supervisions, staff feedback loops.
- Show how you'll **monitor & improve** quality: audits, KPI tracking (e.g., care plan reviews, incident rates).
- Illustrate your approach to **person-centred care** with real-life examples.

Practice makes perfect: Hold mock interviews with peers and use CQC's sample questions from their website.

9. Post-Registration Success: Marketing, Contracts & Growth



Your CQC certificate unlocks new opportunities—but winning tenders and building referrals is the next big hurdle:

- **Brand your quality:** Add “CQC Registered” logos to your website and pitch decks.
- **Tender writing:** Showcase your compliance journey, values and testimonials—curaCompliance offers bespoke bid support.
- **Digital presence:** Leverage LinkedIn and Google Ads to target local authority commissioners.
- **Referral partnerships:** Connect with GPs, hospitals and voluntary sector organisations.

Ongoing compliance: Schedule annual policy reviews and refresher training to stay inspection-ready.

10. Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)



Q1: How long does the CQC registration take?

A: Aim for 12–16 weeks for the Rapid Assessment, then **registration inspector assignment** within 10 weeks, but factor in up to **6 months** total under current pressures.

Q2: Can I start trading while my application is pending?

A: No—providing regulated activities without registration is illegal. Plan your launch timeline accordingly.

Q3: Do I need to submit my business plan?

A: No, it's for your internal strategy. But you **do** need financials for viability statements and insurance quotes.

Q4: What fees will I pay?

A: Annual fees vary by service type, size and charitable status (e.g., domiciliary care ~£1,867; small care home ~£816). These are invoiced after registration.

Q5: What if I change my service scope later?

A: Notify CQC via their portal within 28 days of any material change (e.g., new location or activity).

Q6: How do I demonstrate local demand?

A: Obtain a commissioner or social work team email/letter confirming need; include this in your application.

Q7: Are there common pitfalls to avoid?

A: Mismatched addresses/names, unjustified job gaps, late signatures (<28 days before submission), missing specialist DBS filters, or unavailable service-specific docs.

Q8: What support can curaCompliance offer?

A: End-to-end application management, policy drafting, interview coaching, tender writing and ongoing compliance audits.

Ready for a smooth CQC journey? **Contact [cura-compliance.co.uk](https://www.cura-compliance.co.uk)** today and let's make your registration stress-free and successful!