

SCOTLAND | CARE INSPECTORATE

Care Inspectorate Registration Guide and Checklist 2026

For care at home, housing support, care homes and day care of children in Scotland. What the Care Inspectorate asks for, and the checks to run before you apply.

Inside this guide

- Which care service type you need, and which regulator
- The documents each type of service needs
- Tick-box checklists written for Scottish law
- The mistakes English providers make, and the steps in order

Updated September 2026. Free to download, print and share.

How to use this guide

In Scotland, care services register with the Care Inspectorate under the Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010. The law, the standards and the words are different from England. A CQC registration does not carry over, and English policies cannot be reused with the regulator's name changed.

Start by confirming your care service type on the next page. Then work through the checklists. Tick a box only when the item is finished. The Care Inspectorate publishes its guidance for applicants on its website: check it on the day you apply, because forms and fees change.

This guide is based on the Care Inspectorate's published guidance and on our own registration work up to September 2026.

At a glance

Regulator	Care Inspectorate. Scotland only. Private clinics and independent hospitals register with Healthcare Improvement Scotland instead.
Main law	Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010, and the Social Care and Social Work Improvement Scotland (Requirements for Care Services) Regulations 2011.
Standards	The Health and Social Care Standards, used through the Care Inspectorate's quality frameworks.
How to apply	Online through the Care Inspectorate's portal (called Manage my Service since 2026), with your supporting documents and the registration fee.
Cost	The registration fee depends on the type and size of service. Once registered, you pay an annual continuation fee.
Workforce	Managers and staff register with the Scottish Social Services Council (SSSC). Anyone in a regulated role must be a member of the Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme: working without it has been an offence since 1 July 2025.

Which documents does your service need?

Yes means the Care Inspectorate asks for it or expects it to be in place. Check means you need it only in some cases, explained in the row. No means it does not apply to this type of service.

Document	Care at home	Housing support	Care home	Day care of children
Application				
Online application and registration fee	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Written aims and objectives for the service	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Company documents: certificate of incorporation and articles, or partnership agreement, or constitution	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Two referees for the applicant, who are not relatives	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
People				
PVG scheme membership for the applicant and the manager	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Manager appointed before registration	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Manager registered with the SSSC or another professional body	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Staffing plan with whole time equivalent numbers for each role	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Policies				
Adult support and protection policy	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Child protection policy (Check: if you support children or young people)	Check	Check	Check	Yes
Complaints, medication, infection prevention and control, and records policies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Procedure for notifying the Care Inspectorate of events	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Premises and money				
Floor plans with room sizes (Check: if you use a building to deliver care)	No	Check	Yes	Yes
Written reports from planning, building control and environmental health (Check: as above)	No	Check	Yes	Yes
Fire safety risk assessment for your premises	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Business plan and financial information (Check: if the Care Inspectorate asks)	Check	Check	Check	Check
Public liability and employers' liability insurance	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

Care at home means a support service providing care at home. Many providers that support people in their own tenancies need two registrations: care at home and housing support.

Checklist 1: the right regulator and service type

- ☐ My service is a care service regulated by the Care Inspectorate, not independent healthcare regulated by Healthcare Improvement Scotland.
- ☐ I know which care service type or types I need. If I support people in their own tenancies, I have checked whether I need housing support as well as care at home.
- ☐ I have thought about using the Care Inspectorate's form to request advice before applying.
- ☐ My plan does not include starting the service before registration is granted. Running an unregistered care service is an offence.
- ☐ If I also plan to work in Wales, I know that Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW) is a separate regulator with its own law.

Checklist 2: the applicant and the manager

- ☐ Company documents are ready: certificate of incorporation and articles of association, a partnership agreement, or a constitution.
- ☐ I have two referees who are not relatives. Where possible one is an employer who employed me for at least three months in the last five years.
- ☐ The applicant and the manager are PVG scheme members, or have applied. Since 1 April 2026 PVG membership lasts five years and must be renewed. The Care Inspectorate checks PVG status and may charge for record checks.
- ☐ If a manager will run the service, they are appointed before registration. The Care Inspectorate cannot register the service without them.
- ☐ The manager is registered with the SSSC, or with another professional body such as the NMC, and holds the qualifications the SSSC requires for the role.

Checklist 3: aims and objectives

- ☐ A written statement describes the service, the people it is for, and how it will meet their needs.
- ☐ It matches the service type and the conditions you are asking for: numbers, ages and needs.
- ☐ It is written in plain language that the people using the service can understand.

Checklist 4: policies written for Scottish law

- ☐ Policies refer to the Health and Social Care Standards, not to CQC or to English regulations.
- ☐ Adult support and protection follows the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 and names the local council's adult protection contact.
- ☐ Capacity and consent follow the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000. The Mental Capacity Act 2005 does not apply in Scotland.
- ☐ Child protection follows the National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021 (updated 2023).
- ☐ Duty of candour follows the Health (Tobacco, Nicotine etc. and Care) (Scotland) Act 2016.
- ☐ A notifications procedure explains what the service must tell the Care Inspectorate, and how quickly. Since April 2025 a concern about harm is notified as a protection concern.
- ☐ The complaints procedure tells people they can complain to the Care Inspectorate directly.
- ☐ Recruitment checks PVG membership and SSSC registration for every worker, and follows the Scottish Government's Safer Recruitment Through Better Recruitment guidance.
- ☐ Infection prevention and control follows the National Infection Prevention and Control Manual for Scotland.
- ☐ Adult care homes: the visiting policy meets Anne's Law, in force from 31 March 2026. It names an Essential Care Supporter for each resident and says how the home tells the Care Inspectorate if visiting is ever suspended.

Checklist 5: staffing

- ☐ A staffing plan gives whole time equivalent numbers for each role, and explains how you worked them out.
- ☐ There is a plan for every worker to register with the SSSC within the required time and to meet its qualification conditions.
- ☐ Induction and training cover the SSSC Codes of Practice for Social Service Workers and Employers.
- ☐ Check whether the Scottish Government's PVG fee waiver applies to your staff. It covers new social care roles in commissioned private, voluntary and independent services, for applications received between 1 August 2026 and 31 July 2027. Early learning and childcare roles are not included.

Checklist 6: premises, money and interview

The premises items apply if you use a building to deliver care, such as a care home, a nursery or a day service.

- ☐ Floor plans with room sizes, inside and outside as needed.
- ☐ Written reports from planning, building control and environmental health, showing the premises are fit for use.
- ☐ A fire safety risk assessment for the premises, including an office used only for staff.
- ☐ Care homes: the design has been checked against the Care Inspectorate's design guide for care homes.
- ☐ The registration fee is paid, and the annual continuation fee is in the budget.
- ☐ A business plan and financial information are ready in case the Care Inspectorate asks for them.
- ☐ Public liability and employers' liability insurance are in place.
- ☐ The applicant and the manager are ready to talk through the service model, the Health and Social Care Standards, adult support and protection, and how the service will evaluate itself. Day care of children services use the Quality Improvement Framework for early learning and childcare, in use since 22 September 2025.

Eight mistakes providers make in Scotland

- 1 English policies with the regulator's name changed.**
Inspectors notice immediately. The law, the standards and the safeguarding system are different.
- 2 The Mental Capacity Act instead of the Adults with Incapacity Act.**
The Mental Capacity Act 2005 does not apply in Scotland.
- 3 One registration where two are needed.**
Care at home and housing support are separate service types.
- 4 No manager in post.**
If a manager will run the service, the Care Inspectorate cannot register it until the manager is appointed.
- 5 No plan for SSSC registration.**
Every worker must register within set timescales. This affects recruitment and cost from the first hire.
- 6 Vague aims and objectives.**
They decide your service type and your conditions of registration, so they must be specific.
- 7 Premises reports missing.**
Planning, building control and environmental health reports are your responsibility to obtain.
- 8 A clinic sent to the wrong regulator.**
Private clinics and independent hospitals register with Healthcare Improvement Scotland.

The registration process, step by step

- 1 Confirm regulator and service type**
Care Inspectorate or Healthcare Improvement Scotland, and which care service type or types.
- 2 Ask for advice if you need it**
The Care Inspectorate has a form for requesting advice before you apply.
- 3 Set up the basics**
Company, office or premises, insurance and a budget that covers the fees.
- 4 Appoint your manager**
Check PVG membership and SSSC registration before you apply.
- 5 Write aims and objectives first**
Then write the policies and the staffing plan to match them.
- 6 Apply online**
Complete the application in the Care Inspectorate's portal, upload the documents and pay the fee.
- 7 Assessment**
A registration inspector reviews the application, asks questions, interviews the applicant and manager, and visits premises where there are any.
- 8 Decision**
If the Care Inspectorate is satisfied, it registers the service with conditions. After that, inspections grade the service on a six-point scale from unsatisfactory to excellent.

Registering in Wales?

Wales has its own regulator, Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW), and its own law, the Regulation and Inspection of Social Care (Wales) Act 2016. This guide does not cover it. Our free CIW Registration Guide and Checklist 2026 does: download it from curacompliance.co.uk.

Want a second pair of eyes on your application?

Cura Compliance UK has helped more than 100 care providers register and pass inspection, in England and in Scotland. We confirm your service type, write aims and objectives and policies for Scottish law, and prepare you and your manager for the registration interview.

Book a free 30-minute consultation: curacompliance.co.uk/cqc-registration-free-consultation

Care Inspectorate registration support: curacompliance.co.uk/care-inspectorate-registration-support

CuraFlow Registration: your whole application in one place: curaflow.net/registration

Sources

Care Inspectorate: Register a care service, and Registration guidance (careinspectorate.scot), checked September 2026

Care Inspectorate: Guidance for providers and applicants on aims and objectives

Care Inspectorate: Membership of the PVG scheme and criminal records checks

Scottish Government: Social care PVG scheme applications, fee waiver (gov.scot)

Public Services Reform (Scotland) Act 2010, and Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000 (legislation.gov.uk)

Health and Social Care Standards (gov.scot)

This guide is general information based on published guidance as at September 2026. It is not legal advice. Requirements depend on your service, and the Care Inspectorate can change them. Always check the current requirements with the Care Inspectorate before you apply. Copyright 2026 Cura Compliance UK. You may share this guide as long as you do not change it.