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Scandal of the care homes that do not meet quality standards



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29 Apr 2016



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FOUR out of every 10 care homes across Sussex have been found to be inadequate or in need of improvement.

Inspectors have checked 529 homes in the county over the past 18 months and of these, 223 did not come up to standard.

The revelation has sparked reminders of the Orchid View scandal near Crawley, where neglect contributed to five deaths at the former home between 2009 and 2011.

A further 14 people who died were found to have received “sub-optimal” care.

The checks were part of a new style of inspection brought in by the Care Quality Commission, (CQC) which focuses on effectiveness, safety, caring and management.



The figures also showed almost 60 per cent of homes in East Sussex were inadequate or needed to make improvements.

Among the findings by inspectors at the county’s homes were a case of a person going a month without a bath or strip wash, a strong smell of urine, no toilet paper and a patient’s underwear being left in a communal bathroom.

The CQC said the number of homes needing to improve was too high and all people had a right to expect good care.

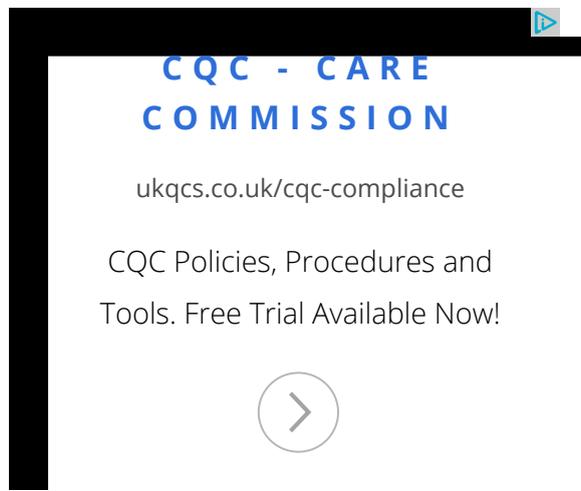
An East Sussex County Council spokesman said: “We do not make placements in homes where serious concerns about quality have been identified and if issues arise in a care home where we have placements, we work with the provider, the CQC and care association to improve standards and maintain the safety and welfare of residents.”

Ernie Graham runs the Graham Care Group, which runs homes in Sussex and the South East, said homes welcomed the new inspections being carried out by the CQC.

He said: “It is not just they have set the bar higher, they have changed it to a different bar.

“Previously they used to focus efforts on legalities like bedroom sizes and borders whereas now things are much more rigorous and focused on outcomes for residents.

“That is a good and it is a way of showing homes where they need to improve and make changes and this focuses the mind.”



Lesley Lincoln, whose mother died in Orchid View, said she was not surprised by the findings at all.

She said in an interview: “What alarms me is they are saying they are walking in and there is a smell of urine, so strong it brings tears to their eyes. You think, well why has that only been discovered now?”

“So the new inspections are picking things up but why so long? Where were the regulators before then?”

CQC head of inspection for the South East said: “Everyone has the right to consistent high quality care and a provider has a responsibility to ensure that people are protected from the risk of harm at all times.”

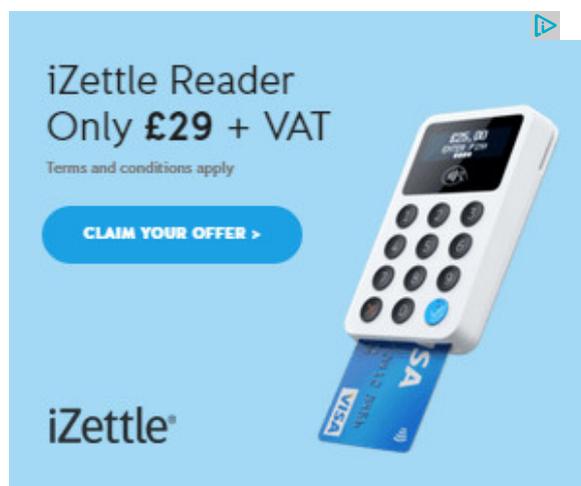
WE’LL NOT HESITATE TO TAKE ACTION TO ENSURE SAFETY THE news that more than 200 care homes across Sussex are either inadequate or need improving must bring back bad memories for the families of the elderly residents of the former Orchid View near Crawley.

Neglect contributed to five deaths at the privately run home in Copthorne between 2009 and 2011, while a further 14 people who died were found to have received "sub-optimal" care.

The home, run by Southern Cross, was closed down in 2011 after a whistleblower phoned police.

Prosecutors decided there was not enough evidence to bring charges against those involved.

A serious case review into the deaths published in 2014 made 34 recommendations to try to prevent further tragedies, although the families of those affected believe more still needs to be done.



Following this, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) introduced a new, more rigorous way of inspecting homes, focusing on care, safety, effectiveness, responsiveness and whether it was well led.

Each home was then given a rating ranging from outstanding to inadequate with inspectors coming back at a later date to make sure improvements have been made.

Some of the reports made by inspectors for Sussex homes since the new checks were brought in can make difficult reading.

In one case an inspector reported a strong smell of urine while another revealed how a resident had not had a bath or a strip wash for a month.

Others were not given enough help to eat and drink properly and in another case a patient's underwear had been left in a communal bathroom.

Lesley Lincoln, whose mother died in Orchid View said she was not surprised by the findings of the inspections made over the last 18 months, although she believed the new style of checks was beginning to make a difference.

She said in an interview: "I am not surprised at all. What alarms me the most with what they are finding is that they are saying they are walking in and there is a smell of urine so strong it brings tears to their eyes. You think, well why has that only been discovered now?"

"So the new inspections are picking things up but why so long? Where were the regulators before then?"

Care homes themselves also agree inspections are necessary but the changes brought in have reset the bar and organisations still need time to adjust to that.



Those changes, which are welcome, are focusing much more on how the patient is affected and their experiences instead of room sizes and borders.

While these are still looked at, there is also a closer inspection of management and paperwork as well.

Chairwoman of the National Care Association Nadra Ahmed said she was disappointed at the figures.

She said: "Given the amount of checks and stringent contract controls and inspection, it is a shame we are not driving improvements forward faster.

"I think part of that is there has not been enough investment in the sector.

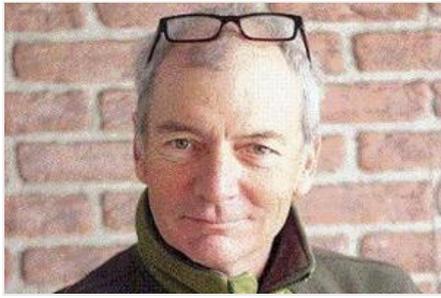
"If an NHS hospital is struggling it has a lot of money thrown at it but the same is not applied in adult social care.

"The pressures are put on providers without any support mechanism."

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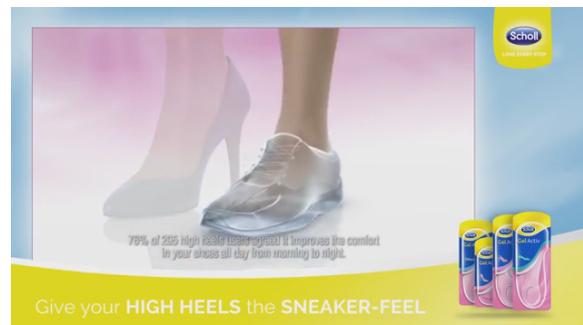
Ms Ahmed said she believed there should be some changes in the way reports are put out by the CQC.

She said: "It may be better to make more of a distinction. For example a care home could be given an inadequate rating because its paperwork is very poor but at the same time its care could be excellent."

"There is also the flipside to that argument in that you may have a home that has an outstanding rating because of its paperwork and management but its care could be not so good."

Sometimes the problems homes have are rectified very quickly but the home keeps whatever rating it has until inspectors return.

The CQC says it needs to leave all organisations plenty of time to make any necessary improvements before it returns.



There is little doubt there is a mixed performance across Sussex, with about two thirds of homes in Brighton and Hove and West Sussex being given a good or excellent rating.

However in East Sussex, up to 60 per cent of homes are either inadequate or requiring improvement.

It is difficult to pinpoint the exact reasons why this is the case but the mixed picture is reflected across the South East.

Gale Stirling, CQC head of inspection for the South East, said there were too many lower ratings and this needs to improve.

She said: "Everyone has the right to consistent high-quality care and a provider has a responsibility to ensure that people are protected from the risk of harm at all times.

"When we are faced with a provider that is failing to deliver quality care for people using their services, we will work with them and local authorities to ensure that the service improves.

“If sufficient improvements have not been made, we will not hesitate to take action to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the people living in that service.”



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