



How we find out if a service has a ‘closed culture’ and what we do about it

May 2021



Easy read version of CQC guidance for staff:
'How CQC identifies and responds to closed cultures'



About this booklet

We are the Care Quality Commission.
We check services like hospitals and care homes to make sure they give good health and social care to people.



We also check that health staff follow a law called the Mental Health Act. This law helps them decide if a person with a serious mental illness needs to be kept and treated in hospital.



As part of our checks, we look at how services are protecting people's 'human rights'.



Human rights make sure people are treated fairly, with respect and in a way that gives them choice and control.



Abuse, or not having your human rights met, may happen more in services that we say have a 'closed culture'.



A closed culture can lead to very bad abuse, like was seen at the Whorlton Hall hospital and Winterbourne View care home.



This booklet tells you how our staff find out if a service has a closed culture and what they do about it.



How can our staff find out if a service has a closed culture?



A closed culture can happen in any service. It is our job to find out if a service has one, or if there is a danger of it happening.



There are some warning signs that our staff can look out for. These are written below.



1. These are the signs that people could be getting bad care because of what they are telling us or we are seeing:



- People tell us they are getting bad care, or even being punished.



- Health and care staff do not understand the people they are caring for. Or they speak badly about them.



- People's care plans are not personal or do not seem to show their choices or decisions.



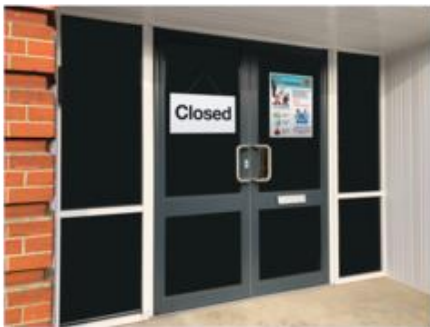
- The service does not make changes to support disabled people, or does not use communications plans for people with a learning disability, autistic people and others who may need support.



- We are told, or we see, that people using services are uncomfortable or quiet around staff.



- The service has rules for everyone that stops them doing something, without looking at what is best for each person.



- People are asked to go to their rooms or are stopped from leaving.



- Staff are using 'physical restraint', which means they are holding people down, without looking at what is best for them.



- People are being kept in a hospital for a long time, or being locked in their flat or bedroom, without looking at what is best for them.



- The service has been changed, which could have an effect on people, like giving them less choice.



- People's rights set out in the Mental Health Act and other laws and rules are not being met.



- There are worries about the medicines that people are being given.



- There is an increase in the number of incidents or complaints.

2. These are the signs that people could be getting bad care because of poor managers:



- Staff are not given the support they need from their managers.

- Staff are afraid to speak out about things they think the service does badly.



- Managers do not deal well with worries from staff, people who use services and their families, or other organisations. Or they may try to hide them.



- Staff say they are bullied.



- Staff work very long hours.



3. These are the signs that people could be getting bad care because of staff:



- Staff do not have the right training they need to care for people – for example for autistic people or people who have a learning disability or dementia.



- The way that staff are chosen to work at the service is poor.



- Staff are not given time to talk about how to give the best care with managers and other staff.



4. These are the signs that people could be getting bad care because the service is not being checked enough by people from outside:



- Not many people, like families, visit the service and they are not helped to stay in touch with their relatives living there by phone or video call.



- Organisations, like CQC, do not check or visit the service enough because they are not told what is going on there.



- The service does not respond well to CQC or other organisations that ask it for information.



- Families do not know how their loved one is being cared for, because the service does not keep them updated well.



What we will do to find out if a service has a closed culture?



We will check that a service will protect people from abuse and protect their human rights:



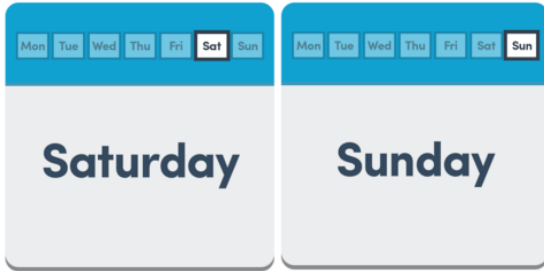
- When a person or organisation applies to us to run a service or to change their service.



- When we check what we hear about a service from people using the service and from staff. We do this all the time.



When we carry out an inspection, we will:



- Carry out our inspections in the evening or at weekends, as well as during the day. And we may not tell the service we are coming.



- Make sure we always speak with people using the service in a way they can understand and in a way that makes them feel comfortable.



- Use 'Experts by Experience'. These are people who have used services who may find it easier to speak with people.



If we think that people may be being harmed or abused, we will always take action to look into it and stop it if it is happening.



This will mean talking with the service and possibly the police.



Find out more

Look on our website at:



www.cqc.org.uk

If you want to give feedback on your care – it can be good or bad – fill out our form at:



www.cqc.org.uk/givefeedback

Or you can call us on:

03000 61 61 61

