

The Brolly Briefing

Your monthly care sector intelligence report

March 2026 Edition

Hello,

Welcome to The Brolly Briefing's March edition. This month, we're bringing you some genuinely positive news about CQC progress, alongside important updates on funding changes and workforce development that will directly affect how you operate. Whether you're managing compliance, budgets or staffing challenges, there's plenty here to help you plan ahead.

CQC Shows Real Progress with Regulatory Overhaul

Here's something worth celebrating: the CQC has made dramatic improvements in clearing its backlog. They've reduced assessment report backlogs from 500 at the start of 2025 down to just four reports. They've also published 4,308 assessments against a goal of 9,000 by September 2026, and November 2025 saw a 50% increase in completed assessments compared to the same month in 2024.

What does this mean for you? Faster regulatory decisions and less time spent waiting for assessments to be published. The CQC has also restructured into four operational inspectorates based on sector expertise, with experienced Chief Inspectors like Chris Badger leading the Adult Social Care and Integrated Care team. This means the inspectors assessing your service will have deeper, sector-specific knowledge — they'll understand the pressures you face and the context you're working in.

[Read the full article →](#)

CQC Provider Portal and Assessment Framework Updates

The CQC's Single Assessment Framework continues to evolve with sector-specific frameworks and simplified methodologies. More importantly, the CQC provider portal is getting a significant rebuild with better digital guidance, easier evidence submission, and streamlined registration processes. The goal is a more consistent, transparent and sector-relevant regulatory model.

What you need to know: New quality statements are being refined through the “Better Regulation, Better Care” consultation and are expected to roll out from late 2026. The good news is that for the next couple of years, the Single Assessment Framework will continue as the current inspection standard, so you have time to prepare. The CQC is also planning clearer inspection cycles with each provider receiving an inspection every 3–5 years, which will help you plan ahead and ensure ratings remain current.

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Significant Funding Increases for Adult Social Care 2026–2027

The government is making around £4.6 billion in additional funding available for adult social care in 2028–2029 compared with 2025–2026. More immediately, the NHS minimum contribution to adult social care through the Better Care Fund has been uplifted by 4.4% for 2026–2027, with £5,791 million ring-fenced to form this minimum contribution.

What this means in practice: These are major funding increases, and local government funding is being simplified from next year. The government is consolidating existing grants (including the Market Sustainability and Improvement Fund and Social Care Grant) into local authorities' Fair Funding Allocation. Local authorities and integrated care boards (ICBs) will need to develop collaborative plans for integrated health and social care services. If you work closely with local commissioners, now is the time to get involved in these conversations and make sure the needs of your service are reflected in local planning.

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Workforce Development: New Learning Schemes and Career Pathways

Two important workforce initiatives are gaining traction. The Learning and Development Support Scheme (LDSS) launched in September 2024 and supports the non-regulated adult social care workforce to advance careers and gain recognition for expertise. Eligible employers can claim towards course costs for staff attending certain qualifications, with funding available for courses paid for between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026.

Additionally, the Care Workforce Pathway launched in January 2024 covering four direct care role categories, with four more role categories added in April 2025. This comprehensive career structure, developed by the Department of Health and Social Care in partnership with Skills for Care, is building a universal pathway for staff progression in adult social care.

Why this matters: Staff development and clear career pathways are proven retention tools. With these schemes in place, you have government backing to invest in your workforce. Make sure you're taking advantage of the LDSS funding and using the Care Workforce Pathway to help your staff understand their progression options.

[Read more about LDSS →](#)

Homecare Funding Gap Widens as Employment Costs Rise

The Homecare Association has published its updated Minimum Price for Homecare in England, following the National Living Wage increase to £12.71 and changes to Statutory Sick Pay coming into effect from April 2026. The warning is stark: whilst Parliament has strengthened employment rights for careworkers, most councils and NHS bodies still pay well below the Minimum Price.

The financial reality is serious. Homecare average profit margins have fallen from 10.8% to 7.6% in 2024, with recent data showing margins at just 6.3% in October 2025. If you're running homecare services, you're facing a real profitability squeeze. Now is the time to review your pricing with commissioners, understand your actual cost of delivery, and prepare conversations about sustainability. The employment law changes coming in April will directly impact your wage bills.

[Read the full article →](#)

Public Understanding of Social Care Remains a Challenge

The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) has responded to The King's Fund's report on how the public sees social care. The findings are sobering: many people don't understand the basics of social care, who provides it, how it's funded or what it does. Social care ranks far down the list of public policy priorities, and public satisfaction with social care is very low.

What this means: These perception challenges affect political prioritisation and ultimately funding decisions. It's worth thinking about how your organisation can help build public understanding of the work you do. This might be through staff stories, community engagement, or working with local commissioners to raise the profile of social care locally.

[Read the full article →](#)

What This Means For You

- **Regulatory confidence:** CQC improvements mean faster assessments and more knowledgeable inspectors. Use this period of stability to prepare for new quality statements rolling out from late 2026.
- **Financial planning:** With funding increases confirmed for 2026–2027 and clearer commissioning structures coming, engage early with your local authority and ICB partners to understand how this will translate to your contracts and fees.
- **Workforce investment:** Access the Learning and Development Support Scheme now and use the Care Workforce Pathway to build staff retention and progression. These tools exist to help you, so make full use of them.
- **Homecare sustainability:** If you deliver homecare, begin reviewing your pricing and cost models now, well ahead of April 2026 employment law changes. Have early conversations with commissioners about the real cost of care.

That's all for this month. We hope you've found these updates helpful. If there are topics you'd like us to cover in future editions, please do get in touch.

Best regards,
The Brolly Briefing Team

We'd love to hear from you

Have feedback on this newsletter? Spotted something we should cover next month? Want to share a success story from your service?

Just reply to this email or drop us a line at hello@brolly.care. We read every message.

Warm regards,
The Brolly Team

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