

NEWS RELEASE FROM THE
REGISTERED NURSING HOME ASSOCIATION

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CARE STANDARDS WATCHDOG UNDER SCRUTINY
FOR 'NEGATIVE MIND-SET'

The national body responsible for policing care standards has found itself under caution for what its accusers call 'a negative, self-righteous mind-set that gives little credit to those who work with vulnerable people and a great deal of ill-founded, demotivating criticism.

The Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) has been rapped today by the UK's nursing home leaders of going out of its way to find fault rather than working in true partnership with the providers and users of services to improve standards.

The Registered Nursing Home Association (RNHA), which represents over 1,200 nursing homes in all regions of the country, claims that a CSCI report issued yesterday (15th June) on alleged failures in staff recruitment and vetting procedures in the care sector is yet a further example of an organisation that is quick to carp and slow to understand the realities on the ground.

Commented RNHA chief executive Frank Ursell: "We know that RNHA member nursing homes go out of their way to ensure that new staff are properly vetted. So far our association has processed at least 60,000 Criminal Records Bureau checks on their behalf, a clear demonstration of the industry's commitment to protect the public."

In its report entitled *Safe and Sound: Checking the suitability of New Care Staff*, CSCI acknowledge that care homes are often not able to recruit sufficient staff. But, as the RNHA points out, not once in the entire report does CSCI ask why there are shortages.

"How can CSCI be taken seriously by the care sector when it ignores the practical problems under which nursing homes and other providers are facing?" asked Mr Ursell.

"The level of public funding for services provided to older people is so inadequate that many staff are paid at or just slightly above the national minimum wage. How many CSCI administrators and inspectors would be prepared personally to look after vulnerable people for that kind of money? So isn't there an element of 'holier than thou' finger pointing coming out of CSCI's comfortable ivory tower?"

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The CSCI report is based on the fact that, according to its own figures, only 59% of care homes for older people met national minimum standards on recruitment and vetting procedures. In addition, CSCI has analysed just 150 inspection reports out of many thousands compiled each year, focusing on what it admits were those in the worst one per cent of performers among care providers.

Said Mr Ursell: “There are many assumptions made by CSCI in its report which are not necessarily borne out in the real world. Many of the so-called employment standards it is measuring relate to administrative matters and paperwork. Secondly, many of them are so vaguely worded that it would be easy for a pernickety inspector to say something was not up to scratch. Thirdly, to meet the standards, nursing homes have to comply with every single one of a long list of administrative tests. I wonder whether CSCI itself would be able to withstand such detailed scrutiny of its own employment records.”

The RNHA fears that what many care providers perceive to be CSCI’s increasingly negative approach to its relationship with the care sector will prove counter-productive.

Said Mr Ursell: “ This glossily produced, expensive report purports to be a document designed to assist managers of care services to improve their recruitment policies and procedures. Yet it starts off with an essentially negative analysis of the care sector generally that, as we have said, is based on debatable interpretation of data. I don’t think that people doing a challenging and demanding job generally respond well to being told in so many words that they are rubbish, that they are putting people at risk and that CSCI knows best.”

He concluded: “ When CSCI was formed, its leaders told us that they wanted a new and more mature relationship with care providers than its predecessor organisation used to have. We were very encouraged by this. We thought there would be opportunities for helpful dialogue about how we can all work together to improve standards for the benefit of patients. On this evidence, I am not sure that CSCI is delivering on its promise. For whatever reason, it seems to want to be seen as an organisation in muscle-flexing mode.”

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Notes to editors:

1. On 15th June 2006, the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) has published a report entitled *Safe and Sound? Checking the Suitability of New Care Staff in Regulated Social Care Services*.
2. The Registered Nursing Home Association (RNHA) is the only national body that exclusively represents registered nursing homes throughout the UK. Over 1,200 nursing homes are RNHA members.

For further information and comment please contact:
Frank Ursell, Chief Executive Officer, Registered Nursing Home
Association
(Tel: 07785 227000 or 0121 454 2511)