

# CQC does not publicise quarter of serious concerns

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Patients and the public have not been told about hundreds of serious concerns about health and social care services uncovered by the Care Quality Commission, *HSJ* has discovered.

Data obtained under the Freedom of Information Act revealed that almost a quarter of the 2,729 warning notices issued by the regulator in the past two and a half years have not been made public.

This includes 29 per cent of the 90 warning notices issued to NHS providers and 36 per cent of the 108 notices issued to independent healthcare providers.

The majority of the warning notice related to social care organisations.

The figures cover the period from 1 April 2011 – when the CQC started issuing warning notices – to 21 October this year.

Warning notices are the CQC's first step in taking enforcement action against providers. They are issued only when inspectors find moderate or major concerns.

The fact that a warning notice has been issued to a provider is always mentioned in the report into the CQC's inspection and commissioners will also be made aware of the concerns. However, it is for the CQC to decide whether to publicise the notice by telling the local media.

The policy also meant the CQC was unable to provide details of all the NHS locations that had been issued with a warning notice when this was requested by *HSJ*.

The regulator said it would be “impractical” to publicise every warning notice issued. However, *HSJ* understands they are often suppressed after representations from providers.

Paul Ridout, partner at Ridouts solicitors, which advises providers on their encounters with the CQC, told *HSJ* in some cases failings may have been rectified almost immediately, so publicising a warning notice could create unnecessary concern among the public.

<i>Location type</i>	Warnings issued	Warnings not publicised	% warnings not publicised
Independent ambulance services	11	4	36.4
Independent healthcare organisation	108	39	36.1
NHS healthcare organisation	90	26	28.9
Social care organisation	2,450	569	23.2
Primary dental care organisation	56	15	26.8
Primary medical services	12	7	