



Health and Social Care Committee

House of Commons London SW1A 0AA

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From Rt Hon. Jeremy Hunt MP

11 November 2020

Rt Hon Matt Hancock
Secretary of State for Health and Social Care

Letter by Email

Dear Matt,

Re: Regular testing of Care Quality Commission inspectors

I am writing to you about the urgent need to test Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspectors during the Covid-19 pandemic. Throughout the outbreak, the Health and Social Care Committee has been consistent on the need for widespread, regular testing of all health and care staff to prevent and better manage the spread of Covid-19 through the health and care systems.

I am very pleased that the Government has implemented regular testing for staff in care homes and has now agreed to roll out regular asymptomatic testing for all patient-facing NHS staff. However, I am concerned that CQC inspectors are not included in that testing regime. CQC inspectors are required to go into a number of care settings over short periods of time, and often come into close contact with residents, care staff and in particular home managers. In that respect, they must be protected in the same way as patient-facing NHS staff.

The CQC employs around 1,300 inspectors and recent press reports in The Independent highlighted that over 100 inspectors have had to self-isolate with Covid-19 symptoms since March 2020. We know that individuals can be infected with Covid-19 for days before displaying symptoms, raising the possibility that Inspectors may be going into care homes while they are infectious. At a time when family members and friends are not being allowed to visit care home residents because of a lack of testing, it is deeply concerning that CQC Inspectors have access to the care system without prior and regular testing.

We know from previous experience the devastating impact Covid-19 can have if it is allowed to spread across care homes. I therefore urge you to consider including CQC Inspectors in the asymptomatic testing regime for patient-facing staff and would be grateful if you could let me know when this will be possible.

Best wishes,

Rt Hon Jeremy Hunt MP
Chair, Health and Social Care Committee