careleadersclub

Care Leadership Framework

10 disciplines of high-performing care groups

01 Know which homes need your attention before they become a problem

Senior leaders cannot personally oversee everything. But they should know where risk is building. The strongest groups create visibility across their portfolio so leadership attention goes where it will have the greatest impact.



Your checklist:

- [ ] Maintain a simple group-level view of quality, workforce, occupancy and financial performance by home.
- [ ] Agree the handful of indicators that should trigger executive attention.
- [ ] Look for combinations of warning signs - such as falling occupancy alongside manager turnover and rising agency.
- [ ] Give every red-rated issue a named owner, action and review date.
- [ ] Ask: Which three homes concern us most today, and why?

02 Treat the home manager as your most important leadership role

A strategy is only as strong as the manager translating it into everyday practice.

For a multi-site provider, variation in performance often comes down to variation in local leadership. That makes home-manager capability one of the highest-leverage investments a group can make.



Your checklist:

- ☐ Define what a great home manager looks like in your organisation.
- ☐ Assess managers against quality leadership, people leadership, commercial awareness and operational control.
- ☐ Identify your strongest managers, and what they do differently.
- ☐ Put structured support around managers who are struggling before performance deteriorates.
- ☐ Have succession plans for homes where losing the manager would create significant risk.

03 Stop head office becoming an obstacle to good care

One of the most practical ideas shared at the Roadshows this year was to think of its central team as a Central Support Office rather than a headquarters issuing instructions. The purpose of central functions should be to make it easier for homes to succeed.



Your checklist:

- [ ] Ask managers which central processes consume the most time without improving care.
- [ ] Review every recurring report: who uses it and what decision does it inform?
- [ ] Give homes clarity on what must be standardised and where managers have autonomy.
- [ ] Make Finance, HR, Quality and Operations accountable for the experience of the homes they support.
- [ ] Remove one unnecessary process every quarter.

04 Give home managers autonomy, with clear guardrails

One of the key insights heard across the programmes this year was that businesses cannot scale effectively without meaningful delegation. For care groups, that means creating a model where managers can genuinely run their homes while senior leadership retains appropriate oversight.



Your checklist:

- ☐ Define which decisions sit with the home, regional team and executive team.
- ☐ Give managers clear parameters for recruitment, rostering, local purchasing and resident experience decisions.
- ☐ Challenge approval processes that exist because “we've always done it that way”.
- ☐ Hold managers accountable for outcomes rather than controlling every input.
- ☐ When someone escalates a decision, ask: Could they reasonably have made this themselves?

05 Manage workforce stability as a quality metric

Turnover, vacancies, sickness and agency are not simply HR numbers. They affect continuity, culture, management capacity and ultimately residents' experience. Strong senior teams therefore look at workforce data alongside quality and commercial performance, not in a separate People report.



Your checklist:

- ☐ Review turnover, vacancy, sickness and agency by home, not just at group level.
- ☐ Identify managers consistently outperforming the group on retention.
- ☐ Conduct structured analysis of why people leave within their first 90 and 180 days.
- ☐ Track whether agency reduction is creating unsafe pressure elsewhere.
- ☐ Put an executive action plan behind homes with persistent workforce instability.

06 Give your managers permission to solve the retention problem locally

A group-wide employee proposition matters. But the reasons someone stays in one home may be very different from another. Renaissance Care described using flexibility around people's circumstances, including school drop-offs and caring responsibilities, rather than expecting every employee to fit a rigid model.



Your checklist:

- [ ] Give managers reasonable flexibility over shift patterns.
- [ ] Ask leavers what would genuinely have made them stay.
- [ ] Identify the biggest retention issue in each home rather than assuming one group-wide cause.
- [ ] Test flexible working solutions before assuming they are operationally impossible.
- [ ] Measure whether retention initiatives actually reduce turnover.

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07 Don't confuse having values with having a culture

Most care groups have values on walls, websites and recruitment materials. The real test is whether those values change behavior when the pressure is on. Culture is visible in who gets promoted, what managers tolerate, how concerns are handled and what happens when commercial pressure conflicts with the right thing for residents or colleagues.



Your checklist:

- [ ] Ask colleagues to describe the culture without showing them your values.
- [ ] Include values-based behaviour in manager performance reviews.
- [ ] Challenge high performers who deliver results in the wrong way.
- [ ] Review whether incentives inadvertently reward behaviour you don't want.
- [ ] Ask during executive decisions: “Is this efficient, and is it right for our people?”

08 Build a leadership pipeline before you need it

One unexpected manager resignation should not destabilise an entire home. Yet too many providers start succession planning only when a vacancy appears. Leadership resilience means knowing who could step up before the gap exists.



Your checklist:

- [ ] Identify potential future deputies, home managers and regional leaders.
- [ ] Give emerging leaders exposure beyond their current role.
- [ ] Track internal promotion as a leadership KPI.
- [ ] Pair high-potential managers with experienced operators.
- [ ] For every critical role, ask: Who could take over tomorrow?

09 Make executive visits diagnostic, not ceremonial

Senior leadership visibility matters. CQC's current framework explicitly associates effective leadership with leaders being visible, approachable and connected with frontline teams. But visiting a home only has value if leaders learn something.



Your checklist:

- [ ] Spend time with carers, nurses, housekeeping, kitchen and maintenance, not just the manager.
- [ ] Speak to residents and relatives without a scripted agenda.
- [ ] Ask colleagues: “What makes your job harder than it needs to be?”
- [ ] Look at the lived experience, not just the compliance dashboard.
- [ ] Track recurring themes from executive visits and act on them centrally.

10 Turn quality assurance into early warning, not retrospective reporting

If senior leadership first discovers a problem through a serious incident, complaint or regulatory intervention, governance has arrived too late. Strong governance should tell leaders where standards are beginning to drift. CQC's Well-led assessments increasingly emphasise clear accountability, reliable performance information and governance systems that identify risk and drive improvement.



Your checklist:

- ☐ Triangulate audits with incidents, complaints, safeguarding, staffing and resident feedback.
- ☐ Track repeat findings, not just audit scores.
- ☐ Escalate homes where actions repeatedly miss deadlines.
- ☐ Check whether “green” homes genuinely feel green when leaders visit them.
- ☐ Ask Quality teams to identify emerging risks, not simply report historic performance.