



Understanding ratings

A guide for commissioners



Introduction

The introduction of care ratings in Wales marks an important step forward in how we understand and commission care services. This guide explains how you can use ratings to enhance your commissioning practices.

All care homes and domiciliary support services in Wales inspected from 1 April 2025 will receive ratings.

Most services will be legally required to display their ratings.


The following services are not required to display their ratings:

- Services for people under 18.
- Small services with 4 or fewer residents.
- Domiciliary support services where:
 - The service location is not accessible to the public.
 - The service is provided from someone's private home.

Why ratings matter

Think of ratings as a window into service quality. They provide:

- Clear evidence of service performance.
- Comparable data across providers.
- Early warning of potential issues.
- Recognition of excellence.
- Tools for improvement.



It will take approximately two years (from 1 April 2025) for all services in Wales to receive a published rating.



Understanding the four themes

Services will receive one of the following ratings:

Excellent

Good

Requires improvement

Requires significant improvement

These will be applied to four themes:

This theme looks at how services support people to live their best lives. Are people happy? Do they have control over their daily lives? Are they connected to their communities? This theme helps you understand the real impact of care on people's lives.

This theme examines the nuts and bolts of service delivery. It shows whether care is person-centred, safe, and effective. This theme is crucial for understanding if services can meet complex needs and maintain consistent quality.

Well-being

Care & support

Environment

Leadership & management

This theme tells you about the physical setting where care happens. Beyond basic safety and maintenance, it shows if the space supports independence and dignity. This helps inform decisions about placement suitability. This theme is only applied to care homes.

This theme tells you about the fundamental governance and oversight required to support good care.

Using ratings in practice

✓ For strategic planning:

Think of ratings as contributing to your market intelligence. They help you:

- Target improvement support.
- Plan market development.
- Manage risks proactively.
- Track quality trends.
- Identify systemic issues.
- Target intervention effectively.
- Support market stability.

✓ For contract management:

You can use ratings to:

- Monitor provider performance.
- Guide improvement conversations.
- Support placement decisions.

✓ Making good decisions:

Remember:

- Ratings provide a snapshot in time.
- Context matters - look beyond the numbers.
- Consider all four themes together.
- Use ratings alongside other intelligence.

You can read more
about ratings on the [CIW
website](#)

