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Proportion of those successfully claiming NHS CHC funding drops to record low of 20%, NHS figures show

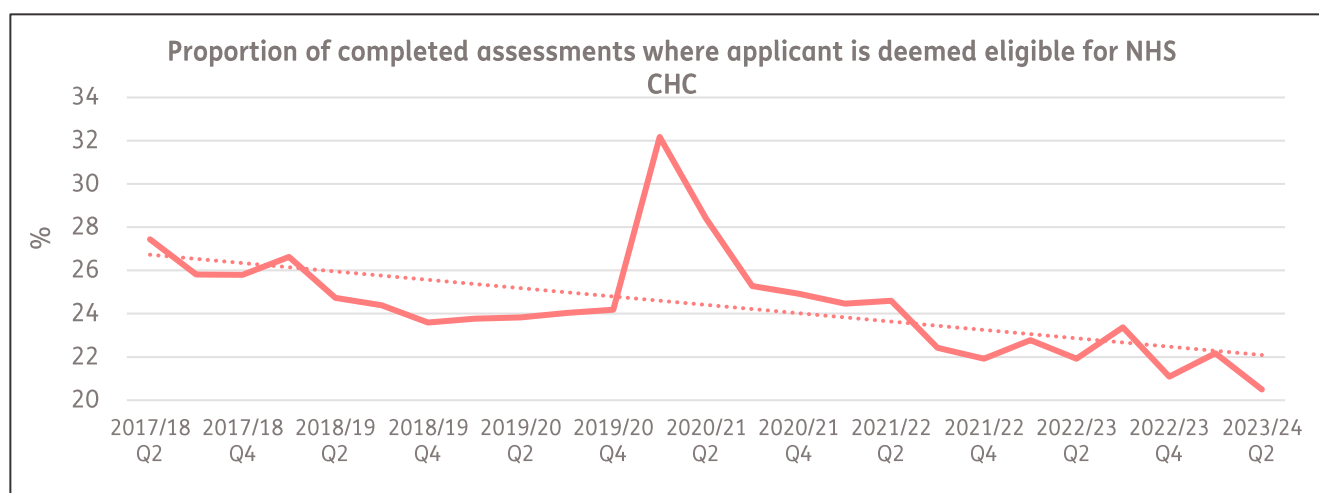
- Eligibility rate for latest period dropped to record low of 20%
- 39% drop in the number assessed as eligible from Q2 2018/19 (4,230) to Q2 2023/24 (2,568)
- More than three quarters of over 45s (77%) have never heard of CHC
- Low awareness and lower eligibility rates see many miss out on care package that covers full treatment and support costs for those suffering from severe illness

Latest NHS England figures¹ show that the number of adults requesting and being deemed eligible for NHS Continuing Healthcare (CHC) is languishing below pre-pandemic levels, according to analysis from **retirement specialist Just Group**.

CHC is an NHS-provided package that fully funds people's care where there is a 'primary health need'. This means that qualifying treatment or care is typically for serious, long-term or complex conditions which may have arisen from a disability, accident or illness which affects the individual's day-to-day care needs. NHS CHC is not means-tested and is available to people regardless of their wealth or assets.

The number of people deemed eligible for NHS CHC has fallen by 39% from 4,230 in Q2 2017/8 to 2,568 for the same quarter in 2023/24. And the percentage of completed assessments where the applicant is assessed as eligible for the same period this has dropped by a quarter, from 27% being assessed as eligible (Q2 2017/18) to 20% (Q2 2023/24) hitting a record low.

Comparing full year figures for the number of people being deemed eligible highlights this downward trend. The number of applications assessed as eligible in 2018/19 (the first full year's data available) was 15,963 and this has dropped by a third (32%) to 10,847 people in 2022/23 (the last full year's data available).



The number of CHC referrals – the notification from an NHS healthcare professional or social worker to the local care board to carry out a full consideration for NHS CHC – has also slowed, with the latest figures for Q2 2023/24 revealing that over the past six years, the number of referrals has dropped by nearly a fifth (18%), from 19,231 in Q2 2017/18 to 15,933 in Q2 2023/24.

The numbers exclude ‘fast track’ assessments used for individuals with a rapidly deteriorating condition that may be entering a terminal phase which means the individual requires NHS funding for a care and support package as soon as possible. Fast track assessment numbers rose by 10,568 from 91,418 in 2018/19 to 101,986 in 2022/23, and the proportion of those being deemed eligible has remained at 100% for more than 5 years.

Stephen Lowe, group communications director at retirement specialist Just Group, commented: “NHS Continuing Healthcare is a package of ongoing care arranged and funded entirely by the NHS where an individual has been found to have a primary health or social care need due to disability, accident or illness.

“For those living at home, CHC covers the cost of any care and support needed including personal care such as help with washing and dressing. In a care home, CHC would cover the care home fees. It is not means-tested so all those eligible can benefit from thousands of pounds a year.

“The CHC system, however, is not well-known - research undertaken for the 2023 Just Group Care Report² shows that nearly eight-in-10 over 45s (77%) have never heard of NHS CHC, while a further 13% have heard of CHC but don’t know any of the details. Assessments can be inconsistent across regions and it’s also a complex process so patients and their families can find it difficult to navigate.

“With no data to suggest that the population is generally healthier and therefore has less need of CHC funding, the fall in standard referrals numbers and eligibility rates suggest CHC is not reaching the people who could benefit and that eligibility criteria are being tightened. This may save the NHS money, but it shifts the cost on to individuals and families who find themselves paying for care themselves instead of receiving the help and funding they need.

“We would urge those who think that either a loved-one or themselves may be eligible for CHC funding to speak to a qualified healthcare professional, like a GP, care home or district nurse or a social worker. They can help explain each step of the application journey, discuss the likelihood of receiving the funding, and begin the process by going through a checklist.”

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Notes to Editors:

About the research

1 – NHS - Continuing Healthcare survey Q2 2023/24: [Statistics » Continuing Healthcare and NHS-funded Nursing Care \(england.nhs.uk\)](https://statistics.nhs.uk/continuing-healthcare-and-nhs-funded-nursing-care)

2 –Just Group - Polling conducted by Opinium between 31 July and 9 August 2023 with a nationally representative sample of 2,500 UK adults aged 45+, in England and Northern Ireland

	Number of new standard NHS CHC referrals	Number of standard NHS CHC assessments completed	Completed assessment rate	Number assessed as eligible	Eligibility rate
Period	Total	Total	%	Total	%
2023/24 Q2	15,933	12,529	79	2,568	20
2023/24 Q1	16,483	12,906	78	2,862	22
2022/23 Q4	16,578	12,269	74	2,587	21
2022/23 Q3	15,383	12,494	81	2,920	23
2022/23 Q2	15,062	11,909	79	2,611	22
2022/23 Q1	15,498	11,980	77	2,729	23
2021/22 Q4	14,653	11,163	76	2,447	22
2021/22 Q3	14,636	12,542	86	2,813	22
2021/22 Q2	15,178	12,916	85	3,178	25
2021/22 Q1	16,001	13,989	87	3,422	24
2020/21 Q4	17,215	15,135	88	3,772	25
2020/21 Q3	15,612	13,091	84	3,309	25
2020/21 Q2	8,608	2,375	28	675	28
2020/21 Q1	6,870	920	13	296	32
2019/20 Q4	16,538	12,658	77	3,061	24
2019/20 Q3	17,985	14,594	81	3,508	24
2019/20 Q2	18,198	15,048	83	3,586	24
2019/20 Q1	17,889	15,361	86	3,652	24
2018/19 Q4	18,140	15,252	84	3,598	24
2018/19 Q3	17,726	15,803	89	3,855	24
2018/19 Q2	18,763	16,356	87	4,045	25
2018/19 Q1	18,846	16,770	89	4,465	27
2017/18 Q4	18,831	15,567	83	4,015	26
2017/18 Q3	18,210	15,781	87	4,074	26
2017/18 Q2	19,231	15,417	80	4,230	27

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