

The Telegraph

Search - enhanced by Google

Monday 23 September 2013

Home News World Sport Finance Comment Blogs Culture Travel **Life** Women Fashion Tech Dating Offers Jobs
Women Men Motoring **Health** Property Gardening Food History Relationships Expat Puzzles Announcements Shop
Health News Health Advice Diet and Fitness Wellbeing Expat Health Pets Health

HOME » HEALTH » HEALTH NEWS

NHS regulator spends £800,000 on lavish hotels

More than £800,000 a year is being spent by the NHS regulator on hotel bills, with inspectors routinely undergoing training in four and five star establishments, an investigation has found.



The five star Montcalm at the Brewery, in the City of London, one of the venues Mrs Prideaux claims training sessions were held



By **Laura Donnelly**, Health Correspondent
8:15PM BST 20 Sep 2013

Follow

Comments

A former inspector at the Care Quality Commission alleged that she and 30 new recruits were sent to luxury hotels all around the country, with training days in banqueting halls and monthly team meetings in country houses.

Although CQC has major offices in London, Newcastle and Bristol, staff were sent to be trained in five-star hotels, where they were able to enjoy fine dining, while others swapped restaurant allowances for spa vouchers, claimed Rebecca Prideaux, a former inspector at the watchdog, who resigned in May.

Official disclosures show that more than £800,000 was spent by the Care Quality Commission on hotel bills in the last financial year.

During the two-month training, around six weeks were spent at hotels and conference centres, including the five star Montcalm at the Brewery, in the City, which describes itself as an "opulent hotel" offering exquisite service, Mrs Prideaux claimed.

She alleged that she and fellow inspectors, who were paid £37,000 to £40,000 a year, were amazed to be greeted by doormen in top hats, for training about regulating care for the most vulnerable.

Related Articles

Health News

News » [Laura Donnelly](#) »

In Health News



Measles Q&A



Telegraph Politics



Bupa Care Services »



Loading

Promotions »



Loading

Health Most Viewed

TODAY PAST WEEK PAST MONTH

1. Obese two-year-old has gastric bypass
2. The British babies made in India
3. Lose weight: eat chocolate cake
4. How many years of healthy life?
5. A volunteer's battle for justice

Featured Advertising

SHOPPING GARDENING PROPERTY



Keyword: The Montcalm

- **CQC inspector: how we fail elderly** 20 Sep 2013
- **Cover-up over hospital scandal at University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Trust** 18 Jun 2013
- **Baby Joshua: the death that led to police inquiry** 19 Jun 2013
- **Further evidence of NHS cover-up exposed** 02 Jul 2013

Staff were sent to stay at the award-winning four-star Sandman Signature Hotel in Newcastle, for several nights, so that they could see CQC's call centre in operation, she claimed. The hotel promises "boutique-style" accommodation which normally costs £135 a night.

Recruits were sent to stay several nights at the County Thistle Newcastle, the Thistle City Barbican and The Grand in Bristol, where they had the use of a spa, she alleged.

Mrs Prideaux claimed that when the training finished, the luxury continued.

Monthly team meetings for the North Surrey inspectors, which lasted most of the day, were held at Barnett Hill, a Queen Anne style four star country house in 26 acres of rolling grounds near Guildford. CQC said it has closed 15 offices since 2009 to save money and often did not have enough room to accommodate meetings.

A System Shaken by Scandal

The CQC's own chairman has described its system of regulation - now being replaced - as "totally flawed".

In June an investigation found that senior officials had ordered the cover-up of a crucial report which disclosed the regulators failures over University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay Foundation trust, which was at the centre of a scandal over baby deaths.

The officials, who have since left the CQC, denied the allegations, but the current management of the organisation has pledged to overhaul its inspection regime, and to send more highly-trained inspectors into hospitals, with the first visits beginning last week.

The system of regulation of care homes will not change until proposals are put forward next year.

Under the current system, "generic" inspectors without specialist expertise were expected to carry out visits. It meant firemen, and former policewomen like Mrs Prideaux were asked to inspect hospitals without knowledge of the field. Mrs Prideaux alleges she was asked to inspect the MRI department of an NHS hospital, Ashford and St Peter's Hospital, despite the fact she had never even "shadowed" a colleague carrying out such a task.

In April, David Behan, who became chief executive last summer, promised to build a better system of regulation.

But documents seen by this newspaper disclose that three weeks earlier, decisions were quietly taken to water down the inspection regime in the short-term, meaning that organisations can be authorised as "compliant" with standards, when few aspects of care have been examined.

All care providers are supposed to meet 16 "essential" standards of care - such as staffing, care and welfare of those using services and meeting their nutritional needs.

Although the CQC's website claims that inspectors are expected to inspect a minimum of five standards for most services, minutes of a meeting from 27 March show that in fact the decision was taken not to specify a minimum number of outcomes at all.

A spokesman for CQC said that in 80 per cent of inspections since April, more than five outcomes had been examined.

MMR vaccine 'only way to protect your child'



Nurses shouldn't carry the bedpan for NHS crisis



Win a Bupa complete health assessment

What is measles?
History of the disease





Loading





Keyword: The Montcalm

Please enable JavaScript to view the comments powered by Disqus. blog comments powered by Disqus

MORE FROM TELEGRAPH.CO.UK

<p>WHAT MATTERS IN LIFE</p>  <p>For What Matters In Life: Fraser Nelson on community</p> <p>View</p>	<p>TELEGRAPH COURSES</p>  <p>Start a new career as a project manager</p> <p>Free Prince2 and Agile Project Management Training</p> <p>View</p>	<p>TELEGRAPH COURSES</p>  <p>Apply now: Research Engineer at Dyson</p> <p>View</p>	<p>TELEGRAPH COURSES</p>  <p>Enrol now: Kingston University Distance Learning MBA</p> <p>View</p>
---	--	---	---

[Back to top](#)

 <p>HOME Motoring Motoring News Car Reviews</p> <p>Food and Drink Recipes Restaurants</p>	<p>Women Women's Life Sex Family and Parenting</p> <p>Gardening Gardening Advice Gardening Pictures</p>	<p>Health Health News Health Advice Children's Health</p> <p>History Expat</p>	<p>Property Property Pictures Property News Interiors and Shopping</p> <p>Crossword Blogs Dating</p>	<p>About us Privacy and Cookies Advertising Fantasy Football</p> <p>Tickets Announcements Reader Prints</p>	<p> Follow Us  Apps  Epaper Expat Promotions Subscriber Syndication</p>
--	---	--	--	---	--

© Copyright of Telegraph Media Group Limited 2013 | [Terms and Conditions](#) | [Today's News](#) | [Archive](#) | [Style Book](#) | [Weather Forecast](#)