Allegations of abuse in care homes are being made at almost double the rate they were four years ago, with an average of 150 now being reported every day, according to figures from the Care Quality Commission.

In 2011, around 30,000 allegations were reported to the regulator by providers of adult social care. More than 27,000 of those came from care homes.

In the first six months of this year, just over 30,000 abuse allegations were already reported to the CQC. Nearly 24,000 occurred in care homes.

The data was released following a Freedom of Information request by The Observer newspaper, which also interviewed the CQC’s chief inspector of adult social care, Andrea Sutcliffe.

Ms Sutcliffe told the paper that the figures showing more allegations being reported were indicative of care providers and those using the services being increasingly aware of the need to notify authorities about potential abuse.
But she did say she was concerned by the “kind of increase there has been, the numbers of people directly affected”, and that 125 more CQC inspectors were now being recruited to help tackle the issue.

Cuts in funding and a lack of political leadership had helped to create a sector that was now under “stress and strain”, said Ms Sutcliffe.

She noted the poor pay and long hours often found in adult social care settings and warned of healthcare workers who felt undervalued and demoralised, which led to some providing sub-standard care.

Andrea Sutcliffe

“That potentially means that they may leave, and we do see turnover, but it also may mean that they end up being the sort of care worker that you wouldn’t want them to be, because the system around them isn’t supportive,” she said.

She pointed to the role that local authorities and clinical commissioning groups play in ensuring enough money is provided to organisations offering quality care.

“There is an important responsibility in the role of those funding care – local authorities or clinical commissioning groups – to really understand what the true cost of care is, what true quality looks like and to make sure they are commissioning services that meet those standards and providers are given the appropriate funding to enable then to do that,” she said.

In response, a Department of Health spokesman said: “Abuse and neglect are completely unacceptable at all times, and whatever the cause, we are determined to stamp them out.

“We need to understand what lies behind these figures – an increase in awareness and reporting of abuse is to be welcomed, so that proper action can be taken,” he told Nursing Times.

He added: “Treating someone with dignity and compassion doesn’t cost anything. We’re making sure we recruit people with the right values and skills by introducing a ‘fit and proper person’ test for directors and a care certificate for front-line staff.

“The CQC’s new tougher inspection regime will also help to make sure that if abuse does occur, it’s caught quickly and dealt with,” he said.