

**PROPOSED PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT BETWEEN
THE REGULATION and QUALITY IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY
AND
THE SOCIAL CARE INSTITUTE FOR EXCELLENCE**

1. PURPOSE OF THE AGREEMENT

- 1.1 The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) and the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) are key players in the drive to improve quality in social care using the best available knowledge and evidence.
- 1.2 The purpose of this agreement is to set out how RQIA and SCIE will work together, where our work is complementary, and how this relationship will be managed.
- 1.3 This agreement provides a basis for working relationships in the current and in any future structure.

2. PURPOSE AND FUNCTIONS OF SCIE AND RQIA

2.1 The Social Care Institute for Excellence

- 2.1.1 SCIE is an independent company and registered charity.
- 2.1.2 SCIE was established to:

- Review knowledge about social care
- Develop practice guides based on that knowledge
- Promote the use of practice guides in policy and practice
- Improve access to knowledge and information in social care

2.1.3 Reviewing Knowledge

SCIE draws together and reviews a wide range of knowledge from diverse sources including the expertise of people who use services and their carers, formal research and practice knowledge built up by staff. SCIE's knowledge reviews and reports are available in print and on the web.

2.1.4 Practice Guides

SCIE's role is to produce accessible, comprehensible, practical guides, in a variety of forms, for people working in and using social care. These guides which are free, online resources, are "road tested" by groups of real practitioners to ensure they are relevant and user-friendly.

2.1.5 Promoting best practice

To ensure that its knowledge about what works in social care is widely used, SCIE:

- Feeds into the work of the RQIA who inspect and evaluate social care services
- Works closely with education and training organisations
- Establishes partnerships with user controlled organisations and with agencies in other sectors

2.1.6 Improving access to knowledge

SCIE uses a very wide variety of different methods of both sending out and receiving information. SCIE has developed and extended its electronic library, Social Care Online. Accessible directly or via SCIE's website, this gives direct access to the UK's most complete range of knowledge and information on all aspects of social care.

2.2 The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority is an independent non-departmental public body, established under the HPSS (Quality, Improvement and Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 (hereafter referred to as the Order). The Authority is charged with overall responsibility for regulating, inspecting and monitoring the standard and quality of a range of health and personal social services in Northern Ireland.

RQIA reports annually to the Department and public on the state of social services, the performance of social services and the use to which social services resources have been put.

The HPSS (Quality, Improvement and Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 2003, Part II, Article 4, (2)(a)&(b) states:

The Authority " ...shall have the general duties of

- a) keeping the Department informed about the provision of services and in particular about their availability and their; quality; and
- b) encouraging improvement in the quality of services".

RQIA has been created to strengthen the system for inspecting health and social care, ensuring clearer public accountability.

The main duties of RQIA are to:

- carry out inspections of all social care organisations - public, private, and voluntary - against minimum standards and publish reports
- register services that meet national minimum standards
- carry out inspections of the clinical and social care governance arrangements operated by local health and social service Boards and Trusts
- publish an annual report on progress in health and social care and other reports on matters of interest.

3.0 SHARED AIMS AND INTERESTS

3.1 Improving the quality of social care services

Both organisations share a primary aim of improving the outcomes and experience of people who use services and their families and supporters - SCIE through the development and dissemination of knowledge about good practice; RQIA through the performance assessment, inspection and regulation of services. Both organisations are keen to ensure a coherent approach which ensures that:

- RQIA and SCIE promote consistent messages about what constitutes good practice to people who use services and staff
- There is a good flow of knowledge and information between the 2 organisations to inform each other's work programmes
- Maximum use is made of the potential for joint work - for example joint commissioning of systematic knowledge reviews, development of self assessment tools

3.2 Using SCIE's work to underpin RQIA's activities

3.2.1 RQIA is committed to using and integrating knowledge and evidence into the organisation's key activities and processes. SCIE has a key role in producing and disseminating knowledge for social care practice. RQIA is a natural constituency for SCIE's work and can act as a lever for the implementation of good practice. RQIA and SCIE will ensure that the optimum use is made of SCIE's work by:

- identifying how SCIE's practice and resource guides, which are based on best available knowledge, can be incorporated into the various activities carried out by RQIA
- identifying via the DHSS&PS the most effective ways of disseminating SCIE's work through the RQIA
- SCIE involvement in RQIA pilots to help staff translate knowledge into practice e.g. in child care

- joint work on the methodology for particular inspections e.g. fostering and other areas requiring regulation

3.2.2 RQIA and SCIE will also ensure that RQIA's knowledge contributes to SCIE's work through involvement in proposing projects and through participation in specific project work.

3.3 Methodology

SCIE and RQIA are developing methodologies to improve quality in social care - for example the use of self-assessment tools. RQIA will share with SCIE our emerging thinking and seek to learn from each other's experience.

3.4 Dissemination and changing practice

Both organisations will look for opportunities to disseminate and promote each other's work.

3.5 Service user and carer involvement

Both RQIA and the SCIE are committed to placing people who use services at the heart of their work and involve people who use services, carers and their supporters in their work and are continually developing the mechanisms they use. In working together we will draw on each other's experience as we each develop strategies for user and for carer participation we will make use of established forums to exchange and develop methods of working. When undertaking joint work we will, where appropriate, use existing mechanisms within both organisations. In other circumstances we will negotiate how we might use the other organisation's processes to avoid duplication.

4.0 SHARING KNOWLEDGE AND INFORMATION

As new and developing organisations, SCIE and RQIA are developing internal and external knowledge management systems. There is an opportunity to create some synergy between them so that the two organisations use every opportunity to share appropriate knowledge and information for the benefit of people who use services, their carers and staff.

5.0 WORKING WITH OTHER AGENCIES

5.1 This agreement will underpin our work with other national bodies where our interests overlap.

6.0 DELIVERING THE AGREEMENT

6.1 RQIA and SCIE will incorporate the principles of this agreement into our overall corporate objectives to support its delivery. We are committed to ensuring that there is good communication between our organisations. Formal

meetings will be held twice per year to share work programmes and to learn from each other's work.

6.2 The following practical arrangements will be agreed with SCIE:

- Shared work programmes
- The frequency of regular meetings between relevant senior managers to discuss issues as they emerge and to resolve any specific issues
- Organisational lead contacts to be Bill Kilgallon and Theresa Nixon
- Bill Kilgallon and Theresa Nixon will convene a joint SCIE/RQIA working group to take forward proposals in 3.2.1 to incorporate SCIE's work into RQIA's practice
- Reflecting the outcome of our joint working in our annual reports
- Attending and presenting at each other's conferences, where appropriate
- The agreement will be reviewed annually against previously agreed success criteria
- RQIA representation on SCIE's Partners' Council, quality assurance group (practice guides) and reference groups
- RQIA and SCIE will use the agreement and the above practical arrangements as a basis for the monitoring and the development of future working relationships

6.3 The financial implications of joint work or jointly commissioned work will be assessed and agreed prior to work commencing.



W Kilgallon
Chief Executive
SCIE



Stella Burnside
Chief Executive
RQIA

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