



The Regulation and
Quality Improvement
Authority

press release

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RQIA publishes Review of Northern Ireland's Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services

Today, the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) published its review of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), carried out by an independent team, which included expert reviewers from across the UK.

Using a framework of standards developed from recommendations from the Bamford and McCartan reviews, national guidance and DHSSPS guidance and circulars, RQIA examined the quality, availability and safety of CAMHS across Northern Ireland.

Glenn Houston, RQIA Chief Executive said: **"In our review we note progress made in developing a range of mental health services for children and young people since the publication of the Bamford Review in 2006. These specialist mental health services provide an essential support to young people and their families and carers. We pay tribute to the commitment of staff working in this area."**

RQIA's Chief Executive continued: **"The review team state that a key issue is to ensure that children and young people with mental health needs are seen by the right person, at the right time and in the right place. Whilst we welcome the provision of a new purpose-built child and adolescent inpatient facility in Belfast, the report also highlights the need to ensure that young people from across Northern Ireland can access this service. From 2007 to 2009 there were around 200 admissions of young people to adult mental health wards. RQIA calls for the HSC Board and all trusts to work towards the further development of community-based alternatives to hospital admission."**

In mental health provision, the views of service users and their families are of particular importance. RQIA worked with the Voice of Young People in Care (VOYPIC) a voluntary organisation to gather the views of over 100 young people and carers.

Karen McAlister, VOYPIC's Assistant Director said: **"The overwhelming majority of the people we talked to felt that their involvement with CAMHS was beneficial and were happy with the time they had to wait to access services. Many parents commended CAMHS staff on the difference they made to their lives. One parent stated: *"Input from CAMHS was a real lifeline for us when our daughter was at her lowest point."* This message was echoed by young people who commented that CAMHS had improved their confidence and helped them to overcome their problems, with one young person saying: *"it has kept me safe!"***

Ms McAlister continued: **"CAMHS must meet the needs of young people and ensure that they are actively involved in decisions made about them. VOYPIC endorses the recommendation that children and young people should have access to advocacy services, and that trusts should provide this vital support."**

Mr Houston concluded: **"The report contains recommendations for the DHSSPS, HSC Board and the five HSC trusts. A key recommendation is that the DHSSPS should confirm, through policy guidance, a model for CAMHS provision across Northern Ireland. We believe that the implementation of these recommendations can drive further improvements for all those accessing child and adolescent mental health services in Northern Ireland."**

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Editors' notes

About RQIA

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) is the independent body responsible for monitoring and inspecting the availability and quality of health and social care services in Northern Ireland, and encouraging improvements in the quality of those services.

RQIA's Independent Review of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in Northern Ireland, February 2011

This independent review of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) in Northern Ireland was conducted by RQIA during 2010. The review examined the quality and availability of a range of services and professional groups involved in the delivery of specialist mental health care for children and young people in hospital and community settings. The terms of reference for the review examined the availability of services for children and young people in Northern Ireland, the safeguards in place when a child is placed on an adult psychiatric ward and the transitional arrangements between CAMHS and adult mental health services.

As a key part of this review, the Voice of Young People in Care (VOYPIC) gathered the views and experiences of children, young people and their parents or carers.

This review was carried out as part of RQIA's three year review programme 2009-12. The review programme is available on RQIA's website at http://www.rqia.org.uk/cms_resources/RQIA%20Three%20Year%20Review%20Programme%202009-12.pdf.

RQIA's Independent Review of CAMHS in Northern Ireland will be available at http://www.rqia.org.uk/publications/rqia_review_reports.cfm from 23 February 2011.