



The Regulation and
Quality Improvement
Authority

press release

9 December 2010

RQIA makes recommendations to improve child protection arrangements in Northern Ireland

Today, the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) published the report of stages 4 and 5 of its review of child protection services in Northern Ireland, carried out by an independent team of child protection experts from across the UK.

The five stage review that began in September 2008, focused on recommendations from the overview report *Our Children and Young People - Our Shared Responsibility* published by DHSSPS in January 2007. The review also took account of relevant child protection standards and recommendations from other recent child protection reports, including the O'Neill and Toner reports.

Glenn Houston, RQIA Chief Executive said: "**Robust systems and procedures to protect children from harm are essential. Today's report focuses on arrangements for managing staff performance, access to services and interagency communication at the point of referral to child protection services. RQIA has made focused trust-specific recommendations to support improvements in practice, and also a number of regional recommendations. The report also highlights examples of good practice in each trust, which we would encourage all trusts to replicate.**"

While performance management for fully qualified social worker staff was generally meeting the standard, in two trust areas RQIA noted the need for robust and improved support and supervision for newly qualified social workers.

The review also examined the physical environment of local children's services offices and the quality and availability of information available at the point of referral. Here, RQIA also made a number of specific recommendations for improvement.

Good interagency working is crucial to the provision of effective safeguarding of children. RQIA noted that this was generally working well, but recommended that trusts encourage the adoption of the Understanding the Needs of Children in Northern Ireland (UNOCINI) assessment framework across all agencies when child protection referrals are being made.

RQIA's Chief Executive concluded: "**During the course of this two year review RQIA has made a series of recommendations to drive improvements across this vital service. We believe that adoption of RQIA's recommendations by all those with responsibilities for child protection in Northern Ireland can ensure the delivery of a consistently high standard service for this vulnerable group.**

END

For further information, please contact:

Malachy Finnegan, RQIA Communications Manager,

Tel: 028 9051 7485,
email: malachy.finnegan@rqia.org.uk
website: www.rqia.org.uk

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.

About this Review

RQIA began its independent review of child protection throughout HSC trusts and HSS boards in Northern Ireland in 2008. This review aimed to:

- Evaluate the implementation of identified recommendations of the SSI Overview Report within HSC trusts.
- Inform on the actions being taken by HSC trusts to implement relevant Reform Implementation Team (RIT) policy directives and to apply the relevant RIT guidance documents (relevant to those recommendations of the SSI Overview Report under review).
- Evaluate the implementation of key recommendations (relevant to those recommendations of the SSI Overview Report under review) of the Report of the Independent Inquiry Panel into the deaths of Madeleine and Lauren O'Neill which relate to child protection (O'Neill Report), and Independent Review Report of Agency Involvement with Mr Arthur McElhill, Ms Lorraine McGovern and their Children - June 2008 (Toner Report).
- Inform on the actions being taken by HSS boards with regard to the transition arrangements in place to ensure continuity of child protection services.
- Highlight for review in the future and, as appropriate, any other relevant issues which may arise during the course of this review.

Stages 1, 2 and 3 of this review were published in November 2009 and are available at: http://www.rqia.org.uk/publications/rqia_review_reports.cfm

Our children and young people - our shared responsibility. Inspection of child protection services in Northern Ireland - SSI Overview Report, December 2006

This overview report presented the main findings of a multidisciplinary, interagency inspection of child protection services in Northern Ireland. The inspection was led by the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI) of the DHSSPS and undertaken in five health and social care trusts and their commissioning health and social services boards. This report, its 77 recommendations and the associated draft standards provide a clear and coherent framework for the future provision of robust, high quality child protection services. They also provide the basis for self-audit by providers of services. <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/oss-child-protection-overview.pdf>

O'Neill Report

Report of the Independent Inquiry Panel to the Western and Eastern Health and Social Services Boards - May 2007 - Madeleine and Lauren O'Neill. This report examined the circumstances contributing to the deaths of Madeleine and Lauren O'Neill on 12 July 2005, and made 36 recommendations across a number of areas. <http://www.whssb.n-i.nhs.uk/Inews/Executive%20Summary%20-%20of%20the%20Report%20of%20the%20Independent%20Inquiry%20Panel%20-%20PDF%20098Kb.pdf>

Toner Report

The Review Panel, chaired by Henry Toner QC, examined the quality of the professional work of the various agencies involved with Arthur McElhill, Lorraine McGovern and their children. 63 recommendations have been made in the report, which highlighted a number of deficits in key areas. <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/independentreview2008.pdf>