



The Regulation and  
Quality Improvement  
Authority

press release

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## **RQIA publishes GP Out of Hours Review findings**

Today, Northern Ireland's independent health and social care regulator, The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA), published a review of GP Out-of-Hours services across Northern Ireland.

The independent review team included health care professionals and managers from Northern Ireland and Scotland. The team visited each of the five out-of-hours services in Northern Ireland and examined the arrangements in place to deliver safe and effective treatment for patients. RQIA also worked in partnership with the Patient and Client Council, to ask the public about their experiences of these services.

Speaking at the launch of the report, Glenn Houston, RQIA Chief Executive said: **"RQIA's report provides assurance to the public that patient safety is a priority for the management and delivery of GP Out-of-Hours Services across Northern Ireland. The review team found that staff are committed to delivering high quality treatment for patients and highlighted examples of good practice in each service. The report identifies opportunities to share good practice across Northern Ireland and calls for closer collaboration with other out-of-hours services, including A&E, ambulance, community nursing, social care and mental health crisis services."**

Maeve Hully, Chief Executive of the Patient and Client Council said:

**"This report reflects the views and experiences of patients who access GP Out-of-Hours services. While patients value the high quality of care and responsiveness of their local services, they told us that there should be a single contact telephone number across Northern Ireland for Out-of-**

**Hours services. In addition, it is important to ensure that patients know how to make a complaint when a problem arises."**

Dr Ian Carson, RQIA Chairman added: **"RQIA's review makes a series of recommendations, including the need to clarify the future strategic direction for the service. Other key recommendations include the development of regional guidelines for out-of-hours providers on referral pathways for mental health patients; sharing best practice by rolling out the emergency care summary, which allows for the sharing of patient information among clinicians, throughout Northern Ireland; and measures to make sure that doctors are not working excessive shifts across the service."**

**ENDS**

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The full report can be accessed here:  
[http://www.rqia.org.uk/cms\\_resources/GP%20OOH%20Report%20Sept%2010.pdf](http://www.rqia.org.uk/cms_resources/GP%20OOH%20Report%20Sept%2010.pdf)

## **Editors' Notes**

### **The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA)**

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority, established in April 2005 under The Health and Personal Social Services (Quality, Improvement and Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 2003, is the independent health and social care regulatory body for Northern Ireland. In its work RQIA encourages continuous improvement in the quality and availability of health and social care services through a programme of inspections and reviews.

### **RQIA Review of GP Out-of-Hours Services**

The RQIA Review of GP Out-of-Hours Services examined the governance arrangements in place in each of the five out-of-hours provider in Northern Ireland that assure the quality and safety of the service provided.

### **The five GP Out of Hours providers are:**

- Western Urgent Care
- Dalriada Urgent Care
- Belfast Health and Social Care Trust
- South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust
- Southern Health and Social Care Trust

## **Terms of Reference for Review of GP Out-of-Hours Services**

The specific terms of reference for the review were to:

- profile the availability and provision of out-of-hours services across Northern Ireland
- profile the service standards being used across the five HSC trust areas and the associated performance arrangements
- evaluate the performance of the service against the standards applied
- evaluate the availability of information for patients on the service and the patient interaction with the service
- evaluate the patient pathway through the out-of-hours service
- report on the findings and make recommendations as appropriate