



The Regulation and  
Quality Improvement  
Authority

press release

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### **RQIA highlights marked improvements in hospital hygiene**

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA), the independent health and social care regulator, today published overview reports highlighting the findings of its infection prevention and hygiene inspections at acute hospitals, maternity delivery suites and acute psychiatric wards across Northern Ireland.

Glenn Houston, RQIA Chief Executive, said: "**Good infection control and hygiene practices are key to reducing the risk of health care associated infection, and building public confidence in our health and social care services. In 2009, RQIA carried out inspections at hospitals across Northern Ireland, making recommendations for learning and improvement. This year we followed up on these inspections, and RQIA has noted significant improvements across all services. In the areas inspected, of particular note are improvements in acute hospitals, with compliance rates rising from 10% of areas inspected in 2009 to almost 90% in 2010. Indeed, similar levels of compliance have also been recorded in maternity delivery suites and acute psychiatric admission wards inspected.**"

A key priority for RQIA is improving care and encouraging improvements in the safety and quality of health and social care services through its inspection and review activities. RQIA commends health and social care staff from across Northern Ireland for progress made on delivering on quality improvement plans submitted to RQIA following initial inspections.

Whilst this is welcome, there is still scope for further improvement, and RQIA urges a continued focus on sustained performance in the areas of hygiene and infection prevention and control.

Glenn Houston concluded: **"In recent months RQIA has been working closely with DHSSPS and the Health and Social Care Board in the development of new regional health care and cleanliness standards. To ensure a continued focus on improvement, in the new year, RQIA will begin a new programme of announced and unannounced inspections against these standards."**

**END**

**For further information:**

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### **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 Infection Control/Hygiene Inspections**

In January 2008, a package of initiatives aimed at tackling healthcare associated infections was introduced to Northern Ireland, which included a rolling programme of unannounced hygiene inspections by RQIA. These inspections were conducted against the Infection Control Nurse Association Audit tool for monitoring infection control standards. In January 2010 this programme was reaffirmed in the launch of the updated version of *Changing the Culture: Strategic regional action plan for the prevention and control of healthcare associated infections in Northern Ireland*. The focus of RQIA's infection prevention/hygiene team is:

- to provide public assurance and to restore public trust and confidence
- to contribute to the prevention and control of health care associated infection
- to contribute to improvement in hygiene, cleanliness and infection prevention and control within RQIA's agenda of improvement across health and social care in Northern Ireland

For future inspections, RQIA has revised its inspection processes to support the publication of the DHSSPS Regional Healthcare and Cleanliness standards.