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Focus on Hospital Hygiene Continues as RQIA Publishes Inspection Reports

Today, the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) published a series of inspection reports highlighting the findings of its programme of infection prevention and hygiene inspections at acute, community, and mental health and learning disability hospitals across Northern Ireland.

Robust infection control and hygiene practices are key to reducing the risk of health care associated infection, and building public confidence in health and social care services. This year's inspections were conducted against new Regional Healthcare Hygiene and Cleanliness Standards. These examine both front-line practice at ward level, and the policies and procedures to support the effective delivery of good infection control and hygiene practice.

Glenn Houston, RQIA Chief Executive, said: **"Since we began our programme of infection prevention/hygiene inspection, RQIA has examined around 250 wards and clinical areas. During the latest round of inspection the majority of areas examined demonstrated compliance with the standards. It is encouraging to note that hygiene practice amongst staff is generally good. This is supported by evidence of appropriate hand hygiene practices and effective use of personal protective equipment. However, the ward environment, patient equipment and appropriate disposal of sharps presented the biggest challenge in a number of areas."**

Mr Houston continued: **“Where we identify issues of concern during our inspections we bring these to the immediate attention of the trust. In addition, following each inspection, trusts are asked to respond to our findings with a quality improvement plan. These detail the actions to be taken by trusts within clearly defined timescales, and we monitor progress through further inspection activity.”**

Glenn Houston concluded: **"We appreciate the commitment of trust staff working in busy hospitals. We would also encourage a continued focus on sustained improvement in this area to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all those using hospital services.”**

From 2012 onwards, RQIA will publish all infection prevention/hygiene inspection reports online at www.rqia.org.uk immediately after the service's quality improvement action plan has been completed.

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Editors' Notes

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA)

RQIA, established in April 2005, 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 its programmes of inspection and review.

RQIA Infection Control/Hygiene Inspections

RQIA's inspections are based on the Regional Healthcare and Cleanliness Standards and its associated toolkit.

The standards, toolkit and published reports are available at:

http://www.rqia.org.uk/publications/infection_control_and_hygiene_inspection_s.cfm

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