



The Regulation and
Quality Improvement
Authority

press release

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RQIA publishes review of Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Trust

Today, the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) published its governance review of the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Health and Social Care Trust (NIAS). This was carried out by an independent review team, which included expert members from the Scottish Ambulance Service. The team visited NIAS facilities across Northern Ireland, examining performance against DHSSPS's Quality Standards for Health and Social Care.

Glenn Houston, RQIA Chief Executive said: **"Within the report RQIA highlights examples of good practice across the five quality standards. We found strong evidence of clear lines of accountability for governance to the NIAS Board, and we commend the commitment and enthusiasm shown by NIAS staff during this review."**

Mr Houston continued: **"The review team found that the views of service users were considered by NIAS in the design of its services. We also found that the ambulance service works collaboratively with other health and social care organisations. RQIA believes that there is the potential to consider how out-of-hours and emergency care can be further integrated to ensure users experience a seamless service."**

In addition to the emergency response service, NIAS also provides a non-emergency patient care service for hospital appointments and discharges. RQIA recommends that the provision of patient care services is reviewed to make sure it is being used appropriately.

The review team recognised a particular challenge facing ambulance services in determining policies to enable trained paramedics to assess and treat patients at home rather than transporting them to hospital. In this context the report recommends that NIAS considers the introduction of 'stay at home' protocols for specific clinical conditions, which may assist in reducing pressure on services by avoiding the need to transfer patients to hospital.

RQIA's Chief Executive concluded: "**Within the report our review team has made 14 recommendations to drive further improvements across Northern Ireland's ambulance service.**"

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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 the Clinical and Social Care Governance Review of the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Trust

RQIA's clinical and social care governance reviews assess the arrangements in health and social care (HSC) organisations to deliver on the agreed standards for Northern Ireland; The Quality Standards for Health and Social Care, published in March 2006. The standards have five quality themes:

- Corporate leadership and accountability of organisations
- Safe and effective care
- Accessible, flexible and responsive services
- Promoting, protecting and improving health and social well-being
- Effective communication and information

This review has been carried out as part of the planned RQIA's Three Year Review Programme 2009-12 (see http://www.rqia.org.uk/cms_resources/RQIA%20Three%20Year%20Review%20Programme%202009-12.pdf).

The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Trust

The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Trust (NIAS) was established in 1995 and is one of six health and social care (HSC) trust. It operates a single Northern Ireland wide ambulance trust, with operational divisions reflecting the areas covered by the four legacy health and social services boards.

NIAS has a single Regional Emergency Medical Dispatch Centre (REMDC), responsible for prioritising and dispatching responses to emergency 999 calls. This is based at ambulance headquarters in Knockbracken Healthcare Park, Belfast. Its Regional Non-emergency Medical Dispatch Centre (RNEMDC) is based in Altnagelvin, Londonderry, and controls NIAS's non-emergency Patient Care Service (PCS).