

Assurance, Challenge and Improvement

In This Edition ...

Welcome to the latest edition of Assurance, Challenge and Improvement, the [Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority](#)'s (RQIA) electronic newsletter (e-zine). RQIA is Northern Ireland's regulator of health and social care (HSC) services.

In this edition you can read about our new Corporate Strategy, which we have just published following public consultation. You can also find out more about our inspection and enforcement activities in our Spotlight on Regulation. We have also provided updates on the work of our Reviews and Mental Health and Learning Disability directorates, and recent improvements to our website.

You can access further information by clicking on the blue hyperlinks throughout this newsletter/e-zine.

RQIA Corporate Strategy

To support the delivery of the Northern Ireland Executive's Draft Programme for Government Framework 2016–21, RQIA has developed a new [Corporate Strategy](#) for the period 2017-2021.



Participants at RQIA Corporate Strategy Consultation Events, March 2017

This strategy was developed in consultation with stakeholders, and takes account of the Minister of Health's vision - Health and Wellbeing 2026: Delivering Together (Department of Health, 2016). Following a period of public consultation, RQIA's Corporate Strategy 2017-21 was approved by RQIA's Board in March 2017.

Improving Quality and Safety – Together

In February 2017, RQIA's Mental Health and Learning Disability directorate and the Royal College of Psychiatrists held a joint annual workshop, attended by some 90 medical practitioners.



RQIA and the Royal College of Psychiatrists joint annual workshop

At the event, entitled Improving Quality and Safety – Together, learning was shared from: studies on suicide in Northern Ireland; RQIA's review of perinatal mental health services; approaches to the reduction of restrictive interventions and seclusion; and feedback on the consultation of the Mental Capacity Act 2016 Code of Practice. Speakers included academics, a consultant perinatal psychiatrist and the National Clinical Director for Mental Health NHS England.

In March 2017, RQIA hosted a knowledge exchange event to share best practice with regulators from across the United Kingdom and Republic of Ireland. Participants at this workshop included: the Care Quality Commission (CQC) in England; Care Inspectorate, Scotland; Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales (CSSIW); and the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA) in the Republic of Ireland.



Speakers and delegates at RQIA's Regulators Knowledge Exchange event in March

The event provided an excellent opportunity to hear about best practice in regulation and to learn from the experience of other regulators. There was a shared aim to drive improvement through compliance with regulations and standards. The importance of hearing the voice of service users was a recurring theme, which all regulators valued.

Spotlight on Regulation

Inspection

RQIA has a statutory duty to inspect every nursing, adult residential care and residential children's homes on a minimum of two occasions each year. All other regulated services (adult placement agency, boarding school; day care setting, domiciliary care agency (conventional and supported living services); independent clinics and hospitals; private dental treatments; cosmetic laser services; nursing agencies and independent medical agencies; residential family centres and young adult supported accommodation) are inspected at least once a year. Voluntary adoption agencies are inspected once every three years. We may conduct additional inspections to gather further information about a service, or in response to intelligence or concerns raised with us.

While RQIA's inspections may be announced or unannounced, the majority are unannounced, with over 95% of care inspections at nursing homes and adult and children's residential care homes taking place without notice. Our approach to inspection is underpinned by the principles of good regulation, which state that regulation should be: transparent; accountable; proportionate; consistent and targeted.

We examine compliance with regulations and the minimum standards in the areas of care, estates, medicines management or safeguarding service users' finances. Our inspections are conducted by RQIA's team of qualified and experienced nurses, social workers, pharmacists, estates and finance officers. During our inspections we consider: Is care safe? Is care effective? Is care compassionate? Is the service well led? We believe that the quality of leadership and management is crucial to the delivery of every aspect of high quality care.

We conducted 2,809 inspections at 1,428 services during 2016-17. This included 1,947 care inspections, 398 estates inspections, 65 finance inspections and 399 medicines management inspections. Following every inspection we publish a report of our findings, which can be accessed online at: www.rqia.org.uk.

Good Practice

During the year we are pleased to report that the majority of services inspected demonstrated compliance with relevant regulations and standards, and were providing good quality care, with a clear focus on the needs of their service users. Our inspectors also reported that our current approach to inspection also allows them more time to speak with service users and their relatives to take on board their views on the quality of the care they are receiving.

In our inspections we also identify examples of good practice. One service has introduced a monthly survey of a sample of its service users to learn their views on their care and how their finances are managed, allowing the manager to identify good practice and an opportunity to identify concerns at an early stage and to address them in a timely manner.

We also learned of a focus group in a day care setting which was established to advise the local HSC trust on its easy read materials. Moving forward, RQIA will also engage with this group as we review our own service user questionnaires.

Our pharmacists have also noted that examples of good practice they have identified in a number of homes have been adopted across the sector, becoming standard practice. RQIA welcomes this learning and sharing of best practice.

Enforcement and Prosecution

Where significant or repeated failings are identified, whether through our inspection activity or through intelligence such as concerns, complaints or whistleblowing, RQIA may take [enforcement action](#) against a regulated service. Our intervention aims to be proportionate to the identified and assessed risk.

Over the past year, we took enforcement action on 47 occasions in relation to 39 services. This included 16 private dental practices; nine nursing homes; eight children's homes; two residential care homes; two domiciliary care agencies; and a day care setting and an independent health care service.

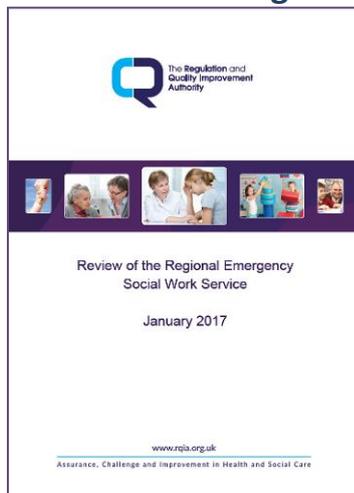
The nature of concerns varied by service type. For example, much of the enforcement at dental services related to the absence of AccessNI checks for staff; whilst in adult and children's care homes, concerns included staffing, care and record keeping. We also deregistered a provider of six dental practices as a result of their voluntary removal from the General Dental Council (GDC) register.

In Northern Ireland, beauty clinics providing services using certain classes of laser or intense pulsed light (IPL) treatments are required to register with RQIA. During 2016-17, six services have been [convicted of failing to register with RQIA](#), having treated clients with unregistered cosmetic laser and/or intense pulsed light (IPL) equipment. Each received a fine, ranging from £200 to £800 plus costs. The services prosecuted were: Indulgence by Susan, Lisburn; Ashburn Image, Londonderry; Antrim Beauty Clinic, Antrim; Allure House of Beauty, Lurgan; Papilio Beauty and Lazer Clinic, Armagh; and Trim Tone Tan, Magherafelt. Since these prosecutions Ashburn Image and Papilio Beauty and Lazer Clinic have registered with RQIA. At present, we are pursuing the prosecution of further unregistered services.

RQIA Reviews

This year, to date, RQIA has published the findings of our reviews of emergency social work, perinatal mental health; the implementation of Northern Ireland's maternity strategy; and governance arrangements to support professional regulation.

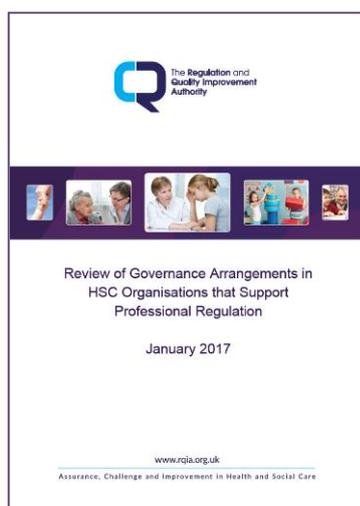
Review of the Regional Emergency Social Work Service



In January, RQIA published the findings of its [Review of the Emergency Social Work Service in Northern Ireland](#). Since 2013, emergency social work interventions have been provided by the Regional Emergency Social Work Service (RESWS), managed by the Belfast Trust. Stakeholders reported significant improvements in accessing these services since its establishment.

While RQIA found that the emergency social work team was delivering a good service, we identified a number of significant challenges that must be addressed. These include: access to IT systems to allow social workers to obtain an individual's information to inform their assessment; a continuation of the programme of training for approved social workers; and the development of an appropriate protocol for staff safety. We also considered that there was a need for strengthened information exchange between the emergency team and daytime social work services; with GP out-of-hours services; the Housing Executive; and the police. This report makes seven recommendations to support improvements in the service, and we would encourage further engagement to include the voices of service users in its development. Read our summary [here](#).

Review of Governance Arrangements in HSC Organisations that Support Professional Regulation



Also in January, we published our [Review of Governance Arrangements in Health and Social Care Organisations that Support Professional Regulation](#). This review examined arrangements in HSC organisations (HSC Board; trusts; Public Health Agency; NI Blood Transfusion Service). to support professional regulation by the General Dental Council; General Medical Council; NI Social Care Council; Nursing and Midwifery Council; and Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland. We found that the HSC organisations reviewed had robust arrangements to ensure essential requirements for adherence to professional registration and regulation.

This provides assurance to the Northern Ireland public that health professionals are registered and fit to practice. Read our summary [here](#).

Review of Perinatal Mental Health Services in Northern Ireland



In January we published the findings of our [Review of Perinatal Mental Health Services in Northern Ireland](#).

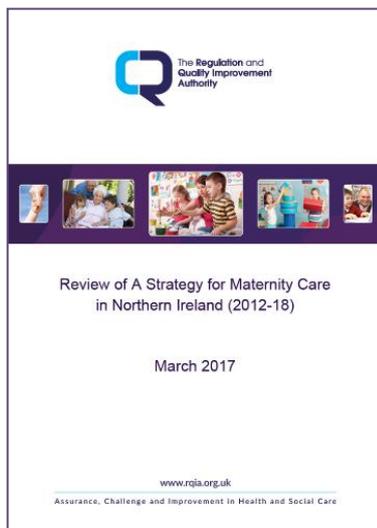
During this review RQIA engaged with women from across Northern Ireland who experienced mild, moderate and severe perinatal mental ill health, to hear first-hand about their care experiences. Many told us that they did not receive the right service, by the right professional, at the right time. Others highlighted that the significance of their symptoms and associated risks were not always recognised by their GP or other professionals.

We highlighted the absence of a regional Mother and Baby Unit inpatient provision in Northern Ireland, or indeed in the Republic of Ireland. We have called for specialist services with psychological input to be developed in each trust, and that a single, regional Mother and Baby Unit should be established. In the absence of such a unit, HSC trusts should ensure they provide facilities within general adult psychiatric inpatient units to meet the needs of a mother and her family. Read our summary [here](#).

In May 2017, Theresa Nixon, RQIA’s Director of Mental Health, Learning Disability and Social Work addressed delegates at the Perinatal Mental Health and Wellbeing event at Belfast City Hall on the key findings and recommendations from RQIA’s review.



Review of A Strategy for Maternity Care in Northern Ireland 2012-18



In March we published the findings of our [review of the implementation of The Department of Health’s Strategy for Maternity Care in Northern Ireland 2012-18](#). RQIA’s expert team engaged with staff responsible for commissioning and delivering maternity services, the Public Health Agency and the Safety Forum. We also held focus groups with GPs to hear their views on the implementation of the strategy.

We found that significant work has been undertaken and there is good support for the strategy’s implementation. However, further work is required, particularly the need for a more coordinated regional approach to pre-conceptual care for women. You can read our summary [here](#).

Hospital Inspections

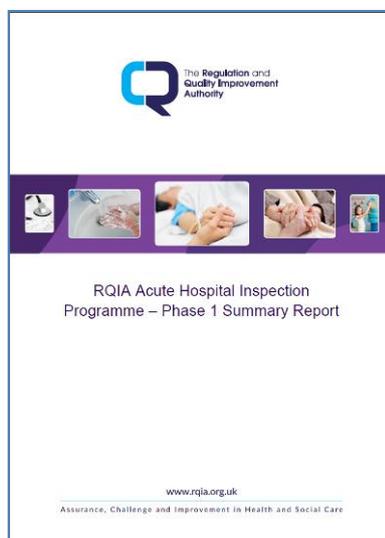
During the year, as part of our ongoing inspection programme, RQIA's healthcare team conducted 27 unannounced inspections at hospitals in Northern Ireland, examining practice in 44 clinical areas. These included: infection prevention and hygiene inspections; augmented care services inspections (including renal, haematology and oncology wards); and an acute hospital programme— where we inspect the hospital environment; observe practice; speak to patients, families and staff; and examine evidence including: patient records, policies and other relevant documentation.

Following each inspection, we publish a report of our findings, including a quality improvement action plan, detailing the actions being taken by the service provider in response to our inspection findings.

Infection Prevention/Hygiene Inspections

During our unannounced infection prevention, hygiene and cleanliness inspections, we noted, and welcomed, a significant increase in overall compliance with the standards across hospital wards and clinical areas inspected. All areas inspected achieved overall compliance with the infection prevention and hygiene standards, compared to compliance in 85% of areas inspected during the previous year.

Acute Hospital Inspection Programme

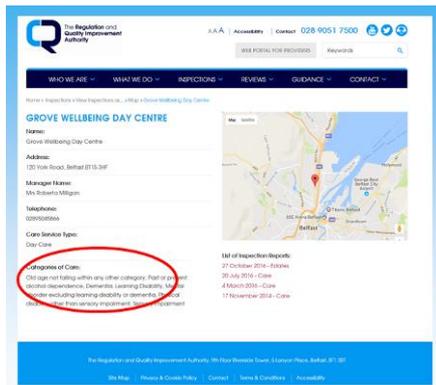


During the first phase of our acute hospital inspections, our teams included peer reviewers - doctors, nurses, pharmacists, ambulance staff, allied health professionals and support services staff - and lay assessors. The involvement of service users and members of the public, brings fresh insight and a public focus to our inspections. During each inspection, we considered:

- Is care safe?
- Is care effective?
- Is care compassionate?
- The quality of leadership and management.

In addition to individual inspection reports, we have also published an [overview report](#), detailing common themes that emerged through this inspection programme. These included staffing; communication; patient care; infection prevention; nutrition; and environment.

RQIA Online



For the latest information and guidance from RQIA, join the 130,000+ visitors to www.rqia.org.uk. The most frequently visited pages include inspection reports (- now 6,500 regulated service inspections and over 80 hospital inspections), current enforcement action and the service provider guidance section. Ongoing work on our website has also helped improve RQIA's search ranking, making it easier to find on Google, Bing and Yahoo.

Since the launch of our site we have added additional content to [individual service pages](#) which are accessible through our [inspection report map](#) or our list of health and social care services at the same link. Alongside contact details, inspection reports and enforcement status, you can also find information on the categories of care a regulated service is registered to provide.

Supporting Health Awareness for our Staff

In January, RQIA continued to support awareness of health issues through a Health Fair at Riverside Tower, in partnership with a range of organisations including: Cancer Focus, Diabetes UK, Royal National Institute for the Blind, Alzheimer's Society, Cruse Bereavement, Blood Transfusion Service, an eating disorders charity and the Public Health Agency.



Exhibitors at RQIA's Health Fair in January 2017

We also organised blood donation sessions in partnership with the Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service for employees of all organisations accommodated in offices at Riverside Tower, Belfast.

RQIA Appoints New Medical Director



Dr Lourda Geoghegan joined RQIA in January as Medical Director and Quality Improvement Lead. Dr Geoghegan leads, manages and will further develop our programmes of reviews, hospital inspections, and RQIA's independent healthcare team. In this role, and in partnership with HSC organisations and networks, she will work to enhance RQIA's role in supporting quality improvement across health and social care.

Dr Geoghegan will represent RQIA on a range of regional groups, contributing to the development of health and social care, and the education and training of medical practitioners.

RQIA Board Meetings

RQIA holds six public [Board Meetings](#) each year. The next meeting will take place on 6 July 2017. If you wish to attend a board meeting please email: info@rqia.org.uk, or telephone (028) 9051 7500. You can access our [board papers](#) one week in advance of meetings. [Previous board papers](#) and [minutes](#) are also available online.

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For further information, please visit our [website](#). If you wish to provide feedback, or need further information or wish to discuss any aspect of our work, please email: info@rqia.org.uk.

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