



The Regulation and
Quality Improvement
Authority

press release

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RQIA Publishes Findings of Unannounced Inspection at Altnagelvin Area Hospital

Today, RQIA has published the findings of its unannounced inspection at Altnagelvin Area Hospital, as part of RQIA's ongoing programme to provide public assurance on hospital quality, and to drive and support improvements in the delivery of care. During the inspection, which took place in early July, RQIA spoke to patients, relatives and staff; observed how care was being delivered; and examined care records.

RQIA's healthcare inspectors visited the Emergency Department, and medical and surgical wards, and were joined by doctors, nurses, pharmacists and allied health professional peer reviewers and members of the public. The team assessed whether the care was safe, effective and compassionate, and considered how each area was being led and managed.

Olive Macleod, RQIA's Chief Executive, said: **“At Altnagelvin Hospital's medical and surgical wards inspected we identified good adherence to best practice in the delivery of patient care, with some areas noted for improvement. However, our inspection of the ED identified a range of areas that required improvement.”**

Mrs Macleod continued: **“In each area inspected we observed caring and committed staff, showing empathy to their patients. While patients told us they were satisfied with the standard of care they received, in some cases relatives highlighted the need for up-to-date information on their family member.”**

“In the medical ward we observed good clinical leadership from the ward sister. While staff told us that morale was good, we were advised that this was affected by increasing work as a result of staffing shortages. Our inspection team observed good compliance with hand hygiene and patient early warning scores were well completed. We also noted good medicines management, with a pharmacist involved from admission to discharge.”

“In the surgical ward there was also strong leadership, and morale was good. The ward was operating with a full complement of staff and we were told that staff retention was good. However, we were advised that there was no integrated medicines management service on the ward and delays in access to pharmacy services could impact on discharge. We also advised the trust that the system for delivery and service of patients’ meals requires immediate review and improvement, to ensure patients nutrition and hydration needs are met.”

“In the Emergency Department while leadership was good, staffing levels were concerning, there were delays in recruitment and bank or agency staff could not always be secured. Staff told us they were feeling tired, ‘burnt out’ and stressed as a result of low staffing levels. RQIA’s inspectors considered that at busy times the Emergency Department was not adequately staffed to ensure appropriate patient care.”

At the end of the inspection, RQIA provided feedback to the management of the Western Health and Social Care Trust, highlighting the areas of good practice and concerns requiring its attention.

RQIA’s Chief Executive concluded: **“Today, we have asked the trust - - to detail how it is addressing RQIA’s recommendations, which we believe can support further improvements in the quality of care for all those attending Altnagelvin Hospital.”**

ENDS

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Editors' Notes

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority

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.

Background to RQIA's Programme of Acute Hospital Inspections

In April 2014, the RQIA was asked by the Health Minister to put in place appropriate arrangements to deliver a rolling programme of unannounced inspections in acute hospitals in Northern Ireland to commence during 2015-16.

The aim of the Acute Hospital Inspection Programme is to provide public assurance; and to promote public trust and confidence in the delivery of acute hospital services. It is designed to support HSC Trusts to understand how they deliver care, identify what works well and where further improvements are needed. The framework is in line with Quality 2020 focusing on increasing the quality of care and reducing patient harm.

The inspection framework has been designed to support the Core Programme of Acute Hospital Inspections and to assess leadership and management of the clinical area, and three key stakeholder outcomes:

- **Is care safe?** Avoiding and preventing harm to patients and clients from the care, treatment and support that is intended to help them.
- **Is care effective?** The right care, at the right time in the right place with the best outcome.
- **Is care compassionate?** Patients and clients are treated with dignity and respect and should be fully involved in decisions affecting their treatment, care and support.

Further details, including the inspection documentation, are available on RQIA's website. (See: www.rqia.org.uk/guidance/guidance-for-service-providers/hospitals/)