

Statement: RQIA Publishes Findings of Care Home Census

In late September 2023, RQIA undertook a census of bed availability in Northern Ireland's registered Care Homes, in parallel with an independent 'system inspection' to examine the effectiveness of collaborative working across the health and social care, including statutory and registered services, the findings of which will be available in the New Year.

The purpose of RQIA's Care Home Census was:

- to inform key stakeholders about the availability of beds in care homes across Northern Ireland; the reasons for unavailable beds; and to evaluate the efficiency of the current system of admission to care homes.
- to inform stakeholders about the types of care available in nursing and residential care homes, taking into consideration the categories of care they are registered for; and
- to validate the information on RQIA's statutory register of Nursing and Residential Care Homes, to ensure bed numbers are accurately recorded.

Key findings include:

- There are 468 registered Care Homes in Northern Ireland, providing 15,836 beds.
- Independent sector Care Homes account for 93% of the total Care Home beds
- Nursing Homes account for approximately two-thirds of these beds, with one-third within residential care homes.
- 1,246 Care Home beds were reported as available for admission across Northern Ireland on the date of the Census, accounting for 8% of the total registered beds.
- 1,100 (7%) of total registered Care Home beds were reported as unavailable to new admissions.
- When responding to the question on barriers to considering new admissions to the Care Home, the most common response referred to communication between Trusts and the Care Homes, and staffing levels in the Care Home.
- Another common reason was the care home environment such as beds in a double or triple room, or the room was subject to refurbishment.
- When asked about ideas for improving planning of admissions, Care Homes proposed an IT/ Online system, and a centralised or regional approach.

In response to the findings of this Care Home Census, RQIA is taking the following actions:

- Follow up with individual Care Homes who have indicated their physical bed availability does not match with the number of beds on their Registration Certificate.
- Submit the findings of the Census to the Department of Health to consider establishing a regional communication system to improve communication arrangements between Care Homes and Health and Social Care Trusts regarding the location and type of available beds
- Recommend to the Department of Health the need to develop the Social Care Workforce plan (including the independent sector) at pace, as workforce availability is a significant factor contributing to care home bed availability.

You can read the full report on our website [here](#)

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