



The Regulation and
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Authority

press release

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RQIA Calls for Specialist Perinatal Mental Health Services Across Northern Ireland

Today, RQIA has published the findings of its Review of Perinatal Mental Health Services in Northern Ireland, which examined the implementation of the Integrated Perinatal Mental Health Care Pathway, developed by the Public Health Agency in 2012.

During this review RQIA engaged with women from across Northern Ireland with mild, moderate and severe perinatal mental health 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.

Theresa Nixon, RQIA's Mental Health Director, said: **“RQIA’s review team found that all five HSC trusts had implemented and adapted the Integrated Perinatal Mental Health Care Pathway, providing guidance to their staff on local arrangements for responding to with mental health needs associated with pregnancy or the postnatal period.”**

Ms Nixon continued: **“While the Belfast Trust provides a small scale specialist perinatal mental health service, there is no regional Mother and Baby Unit inpatient provision in Northern Ireland, or indeed in the Republic of Ireland. RQIA recommends that specialist perinatal mental health services - with psychological input - should be developed in each trust, and a single regional Mother and Baby Unit should be established.”**

The team also considered that in the absence of such a unit, HSC trusts should provide facilities within general adult psychiatric inpatient units to meet the needs of a mother and her family.

RQIA's Mental Health Director concluded: **“We believe that the implementation of this report's recommendations can ensure the provision of services that addresses the needs of everyone in Northern Ireland with perinatal mental ill health.”**

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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 Review of Perinatal Mental Health Services in Northern Ireland

As part of its 2015-18 review programme, RQIA conducted an independent review of services for women who experience mental ill health during or after pregnancy in Northern Ireland (perinatal mental health). The review examined the implementation and effectiveness of the Integrated Perinatal Mental Health Care Pathway which was developed by the Public Health Agency (PHA) in December 2012. RQIA also interviewed a number of service users with mild, moderate and severe perinatal mental health illnesses about their care experience.

From Tuesday 17 January 2017, the report will be available at:
www.rqia.org.uk.