



## Regulation of Community Mental Health Services

### Background

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) is the independent regional regulator for health and social care services in Northern Ireland, covering statutory services provided by the Health and Social Care Trusts and also independent providers of services, including care homes, dental practices and private hospitals and clinics. Some of these independent sector services are required to register with RQIA, must pay an annual fee and are required to be inspected on a regular basis, with inspection reports published on our [website](#). RQIA can also remove the licence to operate for these services.

Statutory services provided by the HSC Trusts are not required to register with RQIA, do not pay a fee, and are not required to be inspected on a statutory timescale. However, under the legislation, RQIA does have the authority to inspect HSC Trust services, publish reports of its findings and keep the Department of Health informed of these, and make recommendations. These services include community mental health services and inpatient mental health and learning disability services, such as Muckamore Abbey Hospital.

### Statement from RQIA

“In a recent Judicial Review application, RQIA conceded that it had, in correspondence to an individual who contacted RQIA in 2017-18, stated at that time that it did not regulate community mental health services. RQIA has accepted this as a misdirection in law, and accepts that RQIA does have a regulatory role for community mental health services. The RQIA is now taking steps to exercise that role in respect of the individual’s care and treatment in the community. The RQIA cannot comment further on the particular case for reasons of patient confidentiality.

Whilst services provided by the HSC Trusts are not required to be inspected on a given frequency under the legislation, RQIA does carry out inspections and reviews of HSC Trust services, and publishes the findings on its website. Inspections and reviews are carried out on a risk-based and proportionate approach, assessed on the information received about services, and within the resources available to RQIA.

Since the recent Judicial Review outcome RQIA has been engaging with a number of organisations to clarify its role.

For the record, since 2009, RQIA has consistently inspected mental health services provided in hospital settings, including Muckamore Abbey Hospital. Reports of its findings are available on RQIA’s [website](#). Separately, RQIA has also conducted a range of reviews of mental health services, which are also published on the [website](#).

Should anyone have a concern about any health and social care service in Northern Ireland, they can contact RQIA on tel: (028) 9536 1990, or email: [info@rqia.org.uk](mailto:info@rqia.org.uk).”

**ENDS**