



The **Regulation** and
Quality Improvement
Authority

RQIA Authority Meeting Held on Thursday 21 September 2023

Summary



Regulatory Activity

- The Authority recognised the acute service pressures across health and social care, as well as the significant financial challenges being faced by all health service organisations, including RQIA.
- The RQIA Inspection Teams continue to undertake regulatory work for registered services, including physical inspections, with 415 inspection reports published to the RQIA website during Q1 2023/2024.

RQIA Activity into Statutory Health and Social Care Services

Focus on HSC Services: The Chief Executive focused her briefing on work ongoing in the statutory services, that is services under Part IV of RQIA's founding legislation, the 2003 Order – these are services provided by the Health and Social Care Trusts. She referred to the following:

- **Neurology:** RQIA work relating to Neurology, following the Dr Watt Recall at the Belfast Trust - a review was published in February 2020 examining Outpatients Services in the Belfast Trust, and inspection work has been completed in the Western Trust (Altnagelvin; South West Acute and Omagh). RQIA had planned to review Outpatients services in the remaining Trusts this Winter and into Spring; however, this has been paused – as the launch of the Regional Encompass System (a new ICT System for all Trusts in NI) will 'go live' in the South Eastern HSC Trust on 9 November 2023, with impacts expected across the whole region. The Outpatient Reviews in the Northern and Southern Trusts will continue from Spring 2024.
- **Encompass:** The Chief Executive advised the Authority on the Encompass programme – this is a regional IT transformation programme. This system should also, in due course, provide information about safety and quality across the statutory HSC Trust services. An RQIA Information Analyst will attend training to enable consideration of RQIA's use of this system in order to provide inspection and assurance information.
- **Winter Pressures – System Inspection:** Authority Members were advised of RQIA's 'system inspection' in the Southern HSC Trust area, focused on Craigavon Area Hospital which will commence in late September. This inspection will focus on 'delayed discharges' from hospital, following the chain of patient experience and examine the effectiveness of collaborative working both within and across the health and social care system, including statutory Trust services and those provided by the independent sector, such as care homes and domiciliary care, in taking proactive and shared responsibility for patient safety. RQIA will publish the findings in November.
- **Deceased Patients Review: Learning Delivery Plan:** The Authority was provided with an overview of plans to deliver on the commitments the Authority made in respect of the learning and recommendations from RQIA's review of the records of deceased patients, published in November 2022, which examined the records of 44 deceased patients. These included:
 - the need to improve systems around culture of openness,
 - safety culture,
 - listening to families; and
 - patients to receive copy of their hospitals letters.

While actions in relation to individual cases have been addressed and RQIA has taken on board learning for future inspections, learning must be shared and actioned across the Health and Social Care system. RQIA's actions will include engagement with relevant stakeholders including the Medical Leaders Forum, and holding learning events for clinicians. This will be supported by the development of a range of multimedia materials applicable across HSC services – supported by relevant guidance. The Authority approved this approach, noting it was a welcome sign of the way forward and how RQIA can use its influence across the system to improve quality and safety through sharing good practice.

Equality

- **RQIA Equality, Good Relations and Disability Duties - Annual Progress Report 2022-23:** The Authority considered this report which highlighted RQIA's progress against targets included in the final year of the organisation's Equality and Disability Action Plans 2018-2023. The report was approved for submission to the Equality Commission.
- **RQIA Equality and Disability Action Plans 2023-28:** The draft Equality and Disability Action Plans which were subject to a 12-week public consultation were presented to Authority Members for their consideration. Following the consultation exercise, RQIA updated its action plans to address feedback from consultees. The plans were approved by the Authority for submission to the Equality Commission and for publication on RQIA's website by the end of September.

Emerging Concerns Protocol

- The Authority considered the proposed Emerging Concerns Protocol. Emerging Concerns Protocols operate between regulators elsewhere in the UK. RQIA is taking the lead and working with health and social care sector regulators here (including professional regulation bodies) to develop an Emerging Concerns Protocol for NI. The Protocol will enable organisations to come together to share information and intelligence in a meaningful way, about issues where they have concerns. This will support a wider and better informed discussion; and shared responsibility to take actions where appropriate. Protocol Members would have the ability to call an Emerging Concerns meeting, when necessary and it would also be planned to have 1 or 2 planned meetings per year. The Authority strongly endorsed this approach and a full briefing paper will be presented to the Authority meeting in December, with a plan to initiate the Protocol in January 2024.

Financial Performance

- Month 4 Report was reviewed. Members noted that the budget deficit has reduced, partially due to a review and cleansing of outstanding bills and also a re-distribution of fee income. Projections are currently indicating a deficit at year-end. The Executive Team is working to reduce this.

Governance and Policy

- The Authority approved the RQIA Governance and Assurance Framework, showing how the RQIA is led, directed and controlled to ensure that it achieves its intended outcomes and acts in the public interest at all times.
- Authority Members noted that the Accounting Officer's Mid-Year Assurance Statement is presently being prepared and will be considered by the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee in November, to be endorsed by the Authority at its meeting on 14 December 2023.

An update from the **Business, Appointments and Remuneration Committee** was provided. This included:

- o Draft DoH / RQIA Partnership Agreement - with the DoH for comment.
- o Workforce and Organisational Development Programme.
- o Public Inquiries: Muckamore Abbey Hospital, COVID-19 and Infected Blood - all requests for information are being actioned; the Authority noted the considerable pressure meeting the needs of the Inquiries imposed.
- o Quarter 1, 2023/2024 of the Activity, Performance and Outcomes Report – approved.
- o RQIA Working Groups focused on Equality and Communications and Involvement – noted.
- o Digital: iConnect Business Continuity Down-Time: Survey Report and Maintenance and Support Contract-noted.
- o Review of RQIA Policies – approved.

Authority Members were also provided with an update from the **Audit and Risk Assurance Committee** including:

- o The Risk Management Strategy, the Principal Risk Document (included risks relating to RQIA's capacity to deliver against current statutory requirements) and the Directorate of Adult Care Services Risk Register; the Authority approved these, noting the need for revision of the Principal Risk Document in light of the evolving situation across health and social care.
- o Internal and External Audit Updates – Approved.
- o Approval of Outstanding Debtors.
- o Standing Reports to the Committee – Noted.

An update from the **Legislative and Policy Committee** was noted. This included:

- o Considerations around the Regulation of Independent Clinics.
- o Consideration of RQIA's responsibilities and powers under the Mental Capacity Act, read with the 2003 Order.
- o The need for resources.
- o The impact on RQIA's functions of the move of former HSC Board functions into the Department of Health (SPPG).

An update in relation to the forthcoming planned industrial action and its likely impact on RQIA activity was also provided to the Authority.
