

21 August 2023

## Statement from RQIA

### RQIA Inspection of Royal Victoria Hospital Emergency Department

RQIA conducted its unannounced inspection of RVH ED in response to the acute concerns expressed by a variety of sources. Throughout the RQIA's inspection at the RVH Emergency Department (ED), from November 2022 to February 2023, the very serious nature of the issues inspectors observed was apparent.

This inspection (like other RQIA inspections in Trust services) examined compliance with The Quality Standards for Health and Social Care (DoH, 2006). These Quality Standards do not provide criteria to allow for grading an entire service as 'safe' or 'unsafe'. However, during the inspection RQIA found that each of these five standards were breached in relation to: Fire Safety; Workforce; Environment; Infection Prevention and Control; Medicines Management; and Escalation (due to Service pressures regionally).

This is a very significant and serious outcome. Services operating below the minimum Quality Standards are less able to prevent risks translating into actual events or incidents and resulting in harm. That is what RQIA inspectors observed during this inspection, and this is clearly recorded and reflected in the Report.

RQIA considers the Inspection Report of the RVH ED articulates the patient safety impact of patient crowding, and reflects concerns of staff, who were clearly doing their best to provide safe care within the service. The Inspection Report provides evidence of specific safety issues, including increases in reported incidents of patient falls, pressures sores and medication incidents; challenges in managing patients presenting with mental health crisis; and impact on patient's privacy and dignity.

RQIA will follow up with the Belfast Trust to seek evidence of progress on the actions the Trust has committed to take, which address the issues identified in the Inspection Report.

RQIA is committed to publication of Inspection Reports in a timely way, as it is important to inform the public of findings. It is also important that inspection reports are subject to a robust peer review and accuracy checking process, and contain the commitments being made by the Service Provider to address the issues identified. However, this does add to the time taken for publication.

Although the inspection commenced in November 2022, there was a significant volume of material to be reviewed. The inspection was therefore concluded in

February 2023, with feedback to the Clinical Team. Time was then provided to the Belfast Trust to draw up its response to the Quality Improvement Plan, and detail its actions to address the concerns identified by RQIA. This Quality Improvement Plan is included in the published report.

The RQIA Chair and Chief Executive have met with staff representative organisations, and with the Chair and Chief Executive of the Belfast Trust, to discuss the challenges faced and how these can be addressed, and will continue to engage over coming months.

You can access the Inspection Report at: [RQIA Inspection Report - Royal Victoria Hospital Emergency Department, Winter 2022-23](#)

RQIA would encourage anyone with concerns about any health and social care service to contact RQIA at: telephone: (028) 9536 1990, or email: [info@rqia.org.uk](mailto:info@rqia.org.uk).

**ENDS**