



25 September 2023

## Statement from RQIA

### RQIA to undertake 'System Inspection' in advance of winter months

RQIA, Northern Ireland's independent regulator of health and social care, is commencing an independent 'system inspection' to examine the effectiveness of collaborative working 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. This inspection will assess how services are co-operating and sharing the responsibility to minimise delay and reduce harm caused to patients. It will cover both those people delayed in leaving hospital care, and those delayed being admitted to the hospital wards, from the Emergency Department and Ambulance Services.

This first 'system inspection' will take place in Southern Health and Social Care Trust area, starting late September 2023.

RQIA recognises the severe pressures on acute hospitals across Northern Ireland, which are currently impacting on the delivery of safe care to patients. This is evidenced by delays in accessing emergency care and 'delayed discharges' where patients remain in hospital, beyond when their acute medical needs have been met. It is now well known that such delayed discharges, as well as delayed admissions, are not "neutral"- these delays cause harm to people, reducing their resilience and slowing recovery.

It is critically important that the whole local health and social care system – including HSC Trust hospitals, GPs, and services provided largely by the independent sector such as care homes and domiciliary care services, are working together effectively, to tackle the challenges and to improve patient care and safety.

This inspection will identify existing good practices; and the areas where there are difficulties. It will highlight opportunities for improved joined up working, in the shared objective of improving patient safety.

The overall findings of this 'system inspection' will be published on RQIA's website [www.rqia.org.uk](http://www.rqia.org.uk) later this autumn.

### ENDS

Should any family member, service user, or staff member have any concern about any care service in Northern Ireland, please contact RQIA at: telephone: (028) 9536 1990, or email: [info@rqia.org.uk](mailto:info@rqia.org.uk).



## **RQIA 'System Inspection' in Southern HSC Trust Area, 2023-24**

### **Terms of Reference**

This system inspection will:

- Assess the effectiveness of integrated working between the Trust and Service Providers registered with RQIA (including both independent and statutory) and between Acute and Community Services to address the issue of delayed discharges, within a local health system.
- Assess the level of shared responsibility and management of risk across a local provider system in respect of the issues of delayed discharges, with its known impact on patient outcomes
- Report on the perspectives of all relevant stakeholders including, General Practice, Service Providers registered with RQIA (including both independent and statutory), the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service, Commissioners (the SPPG), Trust Clinical Staff and Trust Management.
- Validate the number and category of available community beds, and other service capacity indicators, within the Service Providers registered with RQIA (including both independent and statutory), within this locality, and the reasons for any underutilisation of capacity.
- Report on the experience of those patients who are delayed in their discharge and/or their relatives and the extent to which patient choice plays a part in effective discharge
- Identify any opportunities for improvement/optimisation of discharges from hospital.
- Publish a report of the findings including issuing of a Quality Improvement Plan or escalation under RQIA's enforcement and escalation procedures as appropriate.

This inspection is to be conducted in line with RQIA's powers under Article 40 and 41 and Article 35 (d) of the Health and Personal Social Services (Quality, Improvement and Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 2003.

This exercise will seek evidence of HSC bodies compliance with minimum quality standards as follows.

- *Quality Standards Theme 3 (5.3.1(a): Has effective person-centred assessment, care planning and review systems in place, which include risk assessment and risk management processes and appropriate interagency approaches;*
- *Quality Standards Theme 1 (h): Ensures effective systems are in place to discharge, monitor and report on its responsibilities in relation to delegated statutory functions and in relation to inter-agency working*