

RQIA Management Plan 2025-26



The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) is Northern Ireland's independent health and social care regulator.

RQIA's Core Purpose is to secure and to improve the safety and quality of health and social care services in Northern Ireland.

RQIA's relationships, with people in Northern Ireland, the Department of Health, Health and Social Care (HSC) bodies, independent health and social care providers and other Regulators are driven by **RQIA's Duties** to:

- Keep the Department of Health informed about the provision of health and social care services, in particular their availability and quality;
- Encourage improvement in the quality of those services;
- Protect the interests of those with mental health conditions and learning disabilities; and
- Register, inspect, and enforce adherence to regulations and standards for service providers that fall within the scope of RQIA's statutory powers.

RQIA Outturns: 2024-25

Services Registered with RQIA	Services Provided by HSC Trusts	Mental Health and Learning Disability	Reviews
Inspected 100% of all operational adult care homes at least once	Conducted 11 inspections at HSC Hospitals	Reviewed 11,301 assessment and detention forms in line with our responsibilities under the Mental Health (NI) Order 1986	Analysis of Serious Adverse Incidents Reported to RQIA Where the diagnosis is Addictions / Substance Misuse
Carried out 143 out-of-hours inspections at nursing, residential care and children's homes	HSCQI supported 66 improvement projects aligned to regional priorities	Carried out 26 inspections of Adult Mental Health and Learning Disability Wards	Review of the Pathways Associated with the Temporary Suspension of Emergency General Surgery at South West Acute Hospital (SWAH)
Inspected 63% of all Domiciliary Care, Nursing, and Adult Placement Agencies & Day Care Settings		Carried out 3 Prison Healthcare inspections in co-operation with Criminal Justice Inspection NI	RQIA Investigation into Commissioning Arrangements for Residential Learning Disability Services in the South Eastern HSC Trust and the Belfast HSC Trust
Carried out 92 inspections of Independent Hospitals			RQIA Review of Southern HSC Trust Urology Services and Lookback Review
178 inspections of Dental Services were carried out			

This work took:



An annual budget of £10.67m

- £9.45m from DOH
- £1.22m from registration and annual fees



A total of **141** staff
(133.3 whole time equivalent)

To view RQIA's Strategic Plan 2022-28, scan the QR code below:



How to Contact Us



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@RQIANews



www.rqia.org.uk



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Concerns

Do you, your family member or a friend use a health and social care service? Have you concerns about the care provided? We want to hear from you.

You can contact our Guidance Team, who will provide you with help and advice.



028 9536 1990

Whistleblowing

Do you work for a health and social care body? Do you have concerns about your workplace?



You may make a whistleblowing disclosure to RQIA. In doing so, you can be protected under The Public Interest Disclosure (NI) Order 1998.

Any information given to us is passed to the appropriate person in RQIA, who will decide what action to take next. Further guidance is available on our website: www.rqia.org.uk



028 9536 1990

RQIA Strategic Objectives and Actions 2025-26

What we will do during 2025 - 26 to achieve our core purpose

Strategic Objectives	Actions to Achieve Outcomes
SCRUTINY: Register, Inspect, Report and Enforce	<p>Provide independent oversight of the quality of health and social care services against regulations and standards, through robust assessment of those providers who are required to register with us; through inspection of services; meaningful reporting of our findings; and taking proportionate enforcement action.</p> <p>REGULATION AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT (Cross-cutting)</p> <p>Listening and Involving: We will expand Inspection Support Volunteers; refresh and promote our role for 'raising concerns' (whistle blow); expand and modernise the way we listen to and involve service users, families and registered service providers.</p> <p>Framework for Regulation: We will continue to combine a frequency of inspections for registered services alongside assessment of risk based assessment of intelligence we receive- develop it further, begin to engage with stakeholders.</p> <p>Full Cost Recovery: We will promote the need to adopt fees for registered services that cover the full costs of registration, reviewing intelligence, undertaking and reporting on inspection. Adopting this 'full cost recovery' approach will enable us to expand our capacity and stop using public money to cover the cost of regulation of independent services. This requires legislative change.</p> <p>National Preventive Mechanism (NPM): Commitment to fulfil RQIA's role under the NPM.</p> <p>REGISTERED SERVICES</p> <p>Registration and Reporting Changes: We will modernise our registration processes and upgrade the web portal for service providers to make applications and notify us of appropriate changes and incidents.</p> <p>Develop our Role/Scope in Independent Healthcare: Independent healthcare is growing – private hospitals, private clinics, private ambulances and others – some of these are already in our scope of legislation and some are not regulated at all. We will use our existing capacity effectively and will seek funding to expand our capacity given the growth in this sector.</p> <p>Publication of Information in Relation to Children's Services: We will develop our approach to the publication of reports so that we improve and streamline the process.</p> <p>Regulation of Fostering Agencies: Develop organisational readiness for the regulation of fostering agencies (services new to regulation).</p> <p>HSC STATUTORY SERVICES</p> <p>Integrate our internal facing HSC functions: We will co-join our hospital inspections function, our Reviews function and HSCQI functions to create a strong HSC facing RQIA role to engage more effectively with HSC services, under a single directorate.</p> <p>HSC Statutory Services: We will continue to provide a Hospital Inspection Programme that focusses on augmented care services (intensive care for example), as commissioned by the Department of Health, and complete the inspection of outpatient services in trusts, with a limited number of inspections based on our capacity and intelligence we receive. We will work to improve how we capture 'intelligence' about HSC services and how it informs regulatory activity.</p> <p>MENTAL HEALTH AND LEARNING DISABILITY</p> <p>Community Settings: We will develop how we use our role in inspecting in community based facilities and services, particularly as people formerly living in hospitals resettle into community settings.</p> <p>Make Inquiry: We will continue to develop how we undertake structured inquiries into individual cases that meet the threshold for potential detriment in care and treatment.</p>

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What we will do during 2025 - 26 to achieve our core purpose

Strategic Objectives	Actions to Achieve Outcomes
IMPROVE: Safety and quality of services	<p>Improve safety and quality through effective information gathering and assessment; through supporting the HSCQI Alliance and Network to work together to make system wide improvements; involving and listening to people who use or are impacted by services and those who work there; learning from Public Inquiries and other Reports; and use existing networks and create new ones to share learning from our regulatory and enabling work, evidence the impact of poor practice, showcasing good practice and encourage its adoption.</p> <p>Public Inquiries: We will reflect on the findings and anticipated findings from Public Inquiries to improve our approach to patient safety, regulation and quality improvement. Progress any relevant findings from the Inquiry into Hyponatraemia-related Deaths to strengthen the system for reporting, investigation and applied learning from adverse and serious adverse incidents, so that system-wide learning is embedded and can be evidenced.</p> <p>QI Collaboration: Work with the HSCQI Alliance and Network in delivering the annual workplan of programmes to enable system-wide improvements, build improvement capability and support improvement networks.</p> <p>Support a review of the HSCQI Alliance, Network and QI approach, to assure and strengthen how it enables the HSC as a system to build improvement capability and capacity, to lead, adopt and to spread evidence-based improvements that enhance patient experience, safety and outcomes. We will publish and promote the findings and recommendations from our Reviews, System Inspections and Investigations to promote and encourage wide adoption across HSC services to encourage improvement across the whole system and develop an evaluation framework to assess impact.</p> <p>Culture: We will lead on a co-produced HSC Patient Safety Culture Assessment Framework that will be used to encourage and assess the culture of HSC organisations, working collectively and deliberately to foster arrangements, mind sets and behaviours that create a safe environment for patients and for staff.</p> <p>Safeguarding: We will publish, promote and encourage adoption/use of the Adult Safeguarding Protocol Audit Tool (developed and tested by RQIA in 2024-25) across HSC Trusts; and other RQIA tools/ guidance - to enable service providers to self-assess compliance with adult safeguarding policy to drive improvement, secure consistency and effective engagement with services users and families.</p>
BUILD: Partnerships to strengthen safety	<p>Build effective relationships and partnerships that expand our knowledge and bring additional expertise, and work together to protect the safety of service users and the public, sharing and connecting information to help identify emerging issues and risks and take effective action.</p> <p>People: Adopt a collaborative approach to engage with all stakeholders to provide insights that can better inform our work. Trial the use of a Family Liaison Officer to expand our capacity to engage with people with lived experience.</p> <p>Professional Regulators: We will continue to develop the use of the Shared Intelligence Framework, and the Emerging Concerns Protocol to work together with professional regulators in issues that cross the boundaries of professional and service regulation. We will evaluate the benefit of this by end of the year and work to improve on issues that add further value to this approach.</p> <p>Work with the UK, Ireland and European service Regulators Fora to share practice, knowledge and emerging themes to promote a system wide approach to regulation supporting patient safety.</p> <p>Science and Education: Maximise opportunities to promote and showcase Northern Ireland's HSC as a learning health system. Develop our work with Queen's University Belfast (QUB) and Care Opinion to develop the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in seeking patient safety early warning information from patient experience and feedback recorded on Care Opinion.</p> <p>Work with the wider HSC in partnerships to develop the testing of AI more broadly.</p>

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INFORM: Service Transformation	<p>Our inspections, reviews and reports influence service transformation by informing policy decisions, raising standards and shaping future services that “build in” improved safety, promote adoption of effective practices and service models, and drive out poor practice and performance.</p> <p>Political Engagement: Develop opportunities to engage with elected representatives to describe the role of service regulation, to listen to issues that are important and to secure commitment to modernise regulation of health and social care in Northern Ireland, supporting a modern, transforming health and social care system.</p> <p>Legislative Reform: Produce papers for the Department of Health and Northern Ireland Assembly Health Committee, to secure commitment to regulatory reform: fees uplift for registered providers, for capacity to register and regulate independent clinics (eg private doctors); to extend the legislation to include services not currently subject to regulation.</p> <p>Influence Policy: Ensure that recommendations made by RQIA are adopted into regional service redesign and policy-making recommendations specifically to do so, where appropriate. Collaborate with the relevant system partners on taking forward the reform of adult and children’s health and social care in Northern Ireland.</p> <p>Convene to Collaborate: Use our role as regional regulator to share information, share ideas, create shared dialogue and encourage shared responsibility to take forward planned change, both in the short and longer term, extending collaboration beyond the HSC system.</p> <p>Reviews: We will deliver an annual Review programme and report on our findings, with a focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deceased Patient Review: Phase III;• HSC Patient Safety Culture Assessment Framework;• Hospital Passport for People with a Learning Disability; and• Review of the Resettlement of Patients from Muckamore Abbey Hospital;• Consider regional acute services (with potential vulnerabilities, serving the region).

Key Enablers Workforce: RQIA's key resource is its people

Develop an action and impact orientated Implementation Plan for the RQIA Culture Assessment, integrating actions from Investors in People, under the following Workstreams:

- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI), including Values;
- Internal Communications and Involvement;
- External Communications and Involvement;
- Policy and Procedures;
- Leadership and Workforce (including Training and Development).

Establish a new Staff Involvement Forum.

Finance/ Resources:

Achieve financial break-even by year-end.

Ensure financial management is understood across the organisation (raise awareness).

Seek support and allocation of resources for business cases submitted for service development.

Digital and Intelligence:

Submit Business Case for replacement of iConnect and move toward organisational readiness for this replacement.

Complete a Web Portal upgrade.

Re-express the website.

Continue to strengthen our Governance arrangements:

Policies – manage Policy Library and embed the process for adoption, review and implementation of policies across the organisation.

Operationalise the Partnership Agreement with the Department of Health.

Develop the Mental Health Committee and extend reporting to the Committee.

Progress the implementation of Internal Audit recommendations.

About RQIA



RQIA role relating to Registered Services The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) is the Northern Ireland regional regulator for health and social care services, RQIA was established under legislation in 2003, referred to as the 2003 Order, and began operating in 2005. The legislation required 'Registered and Regulated' services, listed in the 2003 Order, to register with RQIA, pay a registration fee and an annual fee. Those fees were set in legislation in 2005 and have not changed. RQIA then inspects those services, and publishes our Inspection Reports on our website. The Inspection Reports set out our findings against the relevant Regulations and Standards, and where improvements are required, these are included. RQIA can take Enforcement Action relating to Registered Services, including cancelling their Registration.

RQIA's role relating to HSC Trust Services (that are not Registered) RQIA also has powers to Review, Investigate and Inspect services provided by the HSC Trusts in Northern Ireland. These are services that are not required to register with RQIA and are not subject to a routine, frequency based inspection programme. RQIA publishes reports of those Reviews and Inspections we do carry out, though any actions to address improvements needed is part of the relationship between the HSC Trust and the Department of Health, through the Accountability arrangements.

Mental Health Services

In 2009, the responsibilities of the Mental Health Commission were transferred to RQIA. The legislation underpinning this is the Mental Health Order 1986, and it more recently has begun to be updated through the Mental Capacity Act, some parts of which have been implemented. Under our Mental Health role, RQIA is required to visit people who are detained in Mental Health Hospitals and to keep under review the care and treatment of all patients, both hospital and those living in the community, in their own home or with family, and inquire into situations where there may be detriment in care or treatment provided.

Whistleblowing to RQIA Staff who work for a health and social care service in Northern Ireland and wish to make a disclosure about a concern or wrongdoing within that service, can contact RQIA to whistleblow, or make a disclosure, under The Public Interest Disclosure (Northern Ireland) Order 1998. This Order protects workers who wish to bring wrongdoing within their workplace to the attention of an appropriate authority. Details how to contact RQIA are in this document, and on our website www.rqia.org.uk

National Preventive Mechanism

RQIA is one of 21 organisations that make up the UK National Preventive Mechanism (NPM). NPM is the national preventive system established under The Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (OPCAT). The organisations within NPM are mandated to conduct regular monitoring visits to all types of places (where their remit allows) where persons are deprived of liberty. Through these visits, NPMs are able to identify concerns and take steps to prevent abuse.



How to Contact Us



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