RQIA WINTER & SERVICE PRESSURES PLAN 2026/2027

Objective:
To support the safe delivery of RQIA's regulation and improvement functions, scheduled programme of inspections and reviews, during the winter period of predicted increased demand across health and social care services.

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority

Staff Wellbeing:
To look after all who work in RQIA so that we can effectively do our work and support the safety of service users and patients

Support Providers:
To provide accessible guidance and support to service providers to help them maintain quality and safety for everyone

Deliver a Planned Programme of Registered and HSC Service Inspections using safe, robust approaches that adapt to service pressures and user needs.

Ensure Effective Communications and Partnership:
Optimise opportunities for working together to improve services and patient safety

1.Promote Vaccination Uptake
Actively encourage all staff to receive the flu vaccination through internal communications and signposting to available clinics within James House and across community sector.

2.Support Staff Winter Wellness
Share resources to support staff health and wellbeing this winter.

3.Ensure PPE Availability
Confirm sources of PPE and maintain an adequate stock level to meet operational needs.

4.Plan Annual Leave and Cover
Require all Teams to schedule annual leave and to take adequate breaks in advance of and during winter to ensure appropriate cover during peak winter periods.

5.Secure Additional Staffing Capacity
Confirm availability of bank staff to provide additional capacity during periods of high demand or staff absence.

6.Prepare for Travel Disruptions
Issue communications regarding staff travel to support staff safety.

1.Update and Share Business Continuity Guidance
Refresh and circulate business continuity planning guidance to care home providers.

2.Promote Timely Statutory Notifications
Remind and support providers to submit statutory notifications promptly where there are service disruptions.

3.Ensure Staff Training Compliance
Encourage providers to review and complete essential staff training, including manual handling, infection prevention and control, and business continuity.

4.Facilitate Shared Winter Planning
Contribute to and offer to co-host winter planning events and online opportunities with health and social care bodies.

1.RQIA Business Continuity
Ensure RQIA's Business Continuity Plan is up to date and available to support the organisations activities during times of disruption.

2.Inspections
Develop Business Continuity for the sustained delivery of RQIA scheduled Inspections to registered services during times of disruption, with physical/in-person inspection being retained as far as possible, with remote and hybrid approaches possible where necessary and not as a replacement for a physical inspection.

1.Share Winter Plan with Stakeholders
Distribute this RQIA Winter Plan to key stakeholders and ensure connectivity during periods of pressure or business continuity

2.Communication and Engagement
Maintain clear, consistent communication with providers and stakeholders through multiple channels, ensuring timely updates through the winter period.

3.Promote the RQIA Guidance Team
RQIA will continue to promote its Guidance Team to ensure the public, whistleblowers and providers know how to contact us.