

Inspection Report

22 May and 23 July 2025



Fitzwilliam Clinic

Type of service: Independent Hospital – Acute Hospital (Day Surgery)
and Private Doctor

Address: 70-72 Lisburn Road, Belfast, BT9 6AF

Telephone No: 028 9032 3888

www.rqia.org.uk

Assurance, Challenge and Improvement in Health and Social Care

Information on legislation and standards underpinning inspections can be found on our website <https://www.rqia.org.uk/>, [The Independent Health Care Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2005](#) and the [Minimum Care Standards for Independent Healthcare Establishments \(July 2014\)](#)

1.0 Service information

<p>Organisation/Registered Provider: Fitzwilliam Clinic Belfast Limited</p> <p>Responsible Individual: Mr Michael McBride</p>	<p>Acting Registered Manager: Ms Denise Shields</p>
<p>Person in charge at the time of inspection: Ms Denise Shields</p>	
<p>Categories of care: Independent Hospital (IH) Acute Hospital (Day Surgery) - AH(DS) Private Doctor - PD</p>	
<p>Brief description of how the service operates: Fitzwilliam Clinic is registered with the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) as an independent hospital with acute hospital (day surgery only) AH (DS); and private doctor (PD) categories of care. Fitzwilliam Clinic provides a range of services and treatments to adults that includes outpatient clinics on all aspects of cosmetic, plastic and reconstructive surgery and some general surgical procedures. There are no overnight beds provided in this hospital.</p> <p>On 14 March 2025, RQIA received a variation to registration application to add Prescribed techniques or prescribed technology: establishments using Class 3B or Class 4 lasers PT(L) and prescribed techniques or prescribed technology: establishments using intense light sources PT(IL) categories of care.</p> <p>This inspection focused solely on the variation to registration application to provide laser and intense pulse light (IPL) treatments using a Class 3B or 4 laser and IPL machine.</p> <p>Equipment available in the service:</p> <p>Laser and IPL equipment: Manufacturer: Sciton Model: Joule and Joule BBL Serial Number: 18494-26018 Laser Class: 4 Wavelength: Laser 1064nm (Nd: YAG), 1470nm (Diode), 2940nm (Er:YAG) and IPL 300nm - 1400nm</p> <p>The above is a multi-platform machine capable of operating as a laser and IPL machine by changing the hand pieces.</p>	

Types of laser treatments provided:

- Hair removal
- Skin resurfacing
- Scar reduction
- Skin tightening and contouring

Types of IPL treatments provided:

- Acne
- Redness and pigmentation
- Age spots
- Dull skin
- Wrinkles
- Hair removal
- Broken facial veins

2.0 Inspection summary

This was an announced variation to registration inspection undertaken by a care inspector on 22 May 2025 from 10.00 am to 3.00 pm and on 23 July 2025 from 10.00 am to 1.40 pm. RQIA's laser protection advisor supported the inspection on both days and reviewed the laser/IPL equipment and the laser / IPL safety arrangements. Their findings are appended to this report.

A desktop review of the premises section of the variation to registration application was also undertaken by an estates inspector and they will inform Fitzwilliam Clinic of the outcome in due course.

The purpose of the inspection was to review the readiness of Fitzwilliam Clinic to provide a cosmetic laser service using Class 3B or Class 4 lasers PT(L) and intense light sources PT(IL).

During the inspection, a number of policies and procedures were reviewed relating to laser/IPL safety and the variation to registration application. The treatment room from which the laser/IPL procedures are proposed to be offered, was also reviewed.

As a result of the findings of this inspection the variation to registration application has not yet been approved from a care perspective. One area for improvement has been made against the regulations in relation to the provision of medical treatment protocols.

3.0 How we inspect

RQIA is required to inspect registered services in accordance with legislation. To do this, we gather and review the information we hold about the service, examine a variety of relevant records, meet and talk with staff and management and observe practices on the day of the inspection.

The information obtained is then considered before a determination is made on whether the practice is operating in accordance with the relevant legislation and minimum standards.

Before the inspection a range of information relevant to the variation to registration application was reviewed. This included the following records:

- the variation to registration application
- the statement of purpose
- the client/patient guide
- the previous inspection report and quality improvement plan (QIP)

During the inspection the inspector met with Ms Shields and one of the authorised operators.

Examples of good practice were acknowledged and any areas for improvement have been discussed with the person in charge and are detailed in the QIP.

4.0 The inspection

4.1 What action has been taken to meet any areas for improvement identified at or since last inspection?

Areas for improvement from the last inspection on 3 October 2024		
Action required to ensure compliance with The Independent Health Care Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005		Validation of compliance
Area for Improvement 1 Ref: Regulation 18 Stated: First time	The responsible individual shall ensure that all staff working within Fitzwilliam Clinic, either employed or under practising privileges, have completed training in accordance with their role and in keeping with RQIA training guidance and continuing professional development. A record of the training should be maintained.	Met
	Action taken as confirmed during the inspection: A review of the training matrix and discussion with Ms Shields confirmed that all staff working within Fitzwilliam Clinic have completed training in accordance with their role and in keeping with RQIA training guidance. Therefore, this area for improvement has been met.	

4.2 Inspection findings

4.2.1 Has the statement of purpose been developed in keeping with Regulation 7 Schedule 1 of the regulations?

A review of the statement of purpose identified that it fully reflected the key areas and themes specified in Regulation 7, Schedule 1 of The Independent Health Care Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005. Ms Shields is aware that the statement of purpose should be reviewed and updated as and when necessary.

4.2.2 Has the patient/client guide been developed in keeping with Regulation 8, of the regulations?

A review of the patient/client guide identified that it fully reflected the key areas and themes specified in Regulation 8 of The Independent Health Care Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005. Ms Shields is aware that the patient/client guide should be reviewed and updated as and when necessary.

4.2.3 How does this service ensure that staffing levels are safe and that staff are appropriately trained to meet the needs of clients?

Ms Shields told us there are sufficient staff in the various roles to fulfil the needs of the laser service and clients.

Ms Shields confirmed that laser/IPL treatments will only be carried out by authorised operators. A register of authorised operators for the laser/IPL equipment was maintained and kept up to date. Ms Shields advised that there are currently two authorised operators and the clinic are intending to increase this number in the future.

A review of training records evidenced that both of the authorised operators have up to date training in core of knowledge, application training for the equipment in use, basic life support, infection prevention and control (IPC), fire safety awareness and safeguarding adults at risk of harm in keeping with the RQIA training guidance.

All other staff employed at the establishment, but not directly involved in the use of the laser/IPL equipment, had received laser/IPL safety awareness training.

It was determined that appropriate staffing levels were in place to meet the needs of clients of the laser/IPL service and that staff are suitably trained.

4.2.4 How does the service ensure that recruitment and selection procedures are safe?

Fitzwilliam Clinic had a recruitment and selection policy and procedure in place.

A review of two personnel files of the newly recruited authorised operators and discussion with Ms Shields confirmed that staff have been recruited as outlined in Schedule 2 of The Independent Health Care Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005 and that the required recruitment documentation has been sought and retained for inspection.

Evidence of job descriptions and induction checklists were available for review during the inspection.

It was determined the recruitment of authorised operators complies with the legislation and best practice guidance.

4.2.5 How does the service ensure that it is equipped to manage a safeguarding issue should it arise?

Ms Shields stated that laser/IPL treatments are not provided to persons under the age of 18 years.

It was confirmed that a policy and procedure was in place for the safeguarding and protection of adults.

Discussion with one of the authorised operators confirmed that she had completed training in safeguarding adults at risk of harm and was aware of the types and indicators of abuse and the actions to be taken in the event of a safeguarding issue being identified.

It was confirmed that a copy of the regional guidance document entitled Adult Safeguarding Prevention and Protection in Partnership (July 2015) was available for reference.

It was determined that the service had appropriate arrangements in place to manage a safeguarding issue should it arise.

4.2.6 How does the service ensure that medical emergency procedures are safe?

Both of the authorised operators had up to date training in basic life support and Ms Shields confirmed authorised operators were aware of what action to take in the event of a medical emergency.

There was a written protocol in place for dealing with recognised medical emergencies.

It was determined that the service had appropriate arrangements in place to manage a medical emergency.

4.2.7 How does the service ensure that it adheres to infection prevention and control and decontamination procedures in keeping with best practice guidance?

The IPC arrangements were reviewed in relation to the laser/IPL service to evidence that the risk of infection transmission to clients, visitors and staff was minimised.

There was an overarching IPC policy and associated procedures in place.

The laser/IPL treatment room was clean and clutter free. Discussion with one of the authorised operators evidenced that appropriate procedures were in place for the decontamination of equipment between use. Hand washing facilities were available and adequate supplies of personal protective equipment (PPE) were provided. Cleaning schedules for the laser/IPL service were in place. As discussed previously, both of the authorised operators had up to date training in IPC.

It was determined that the service had appropriate arrangements in place in relation to IPC and decontamination.

4.2.8 How does the service ensure the environment is safe?

The laser/IPL treatment room was maintained to a good standard of maintenance and décor.

Observations made evidenced that a carbon dioxide (CO₂) fire extinguisher was available which had been serviced within the last year.

As discussed in section 2.0 a desktop review of the premises section of the variation to registration application was undertaken by an estates inspector and they will inform Fitzwilliam Clinic of outcome in due course.

4.2.9 How does the service ensure that laser and IPL procedures are safe?

A laser safety file was in place which contained the relevant information in relation to laser/IPL equipment. There was written confirmation of the appointment and duties of a certified laser protection advisor (LPA), dated 16 September 2024, which will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Up to date, local rules were in place which have been developed by the LPA. The local rules contained the relevant information about the laser/IPL equipment being used. Advice was given to include in the incident section of the local rules, reference to the Northern Ireland Adverse Incident Centre (NIAIC) and the Health and Safety Executive Northern Ireland (HSENI). Ms Shields confirmed that this would be actioned accordingly.

The establishment's LPA completed a risk assessment of the premises during December 2024 and all recommendations made by the LPA have been addressed.

One of the authorised operators confirmed that laser/IPL procedures will be carried out following medical treatment protocols. The medical treatment protocols for the IPL treatments had been produced by a named registered medical practitioner and contained the relevant information about the IPL treatments being provided. However, medical treatment protocols had not been developed in respect of laser treatments. This was discussed and advice and guidance was given to ensure that medical treatment protocols are produced for laser treatments by a registered medical or dental practitioner who is trained and experienced in the relevant discipline the treatment is provided for. Once produced the authorised operators should sign to indicate they accept and understand the medical treatment protocols and these should be submitted to RQIA for review. An area for improvement against the regulations has been made in this regard.

It was confirmed that both of the authorised operators are named as laser protection supervisors (LPS). The LPS's have overall responsibility for safety during laser/IPL treatments and a list of authorised operators was maintained.

Both authorised operators had signed to state that they had read and understood the local rules and as discussed above this should also include all of the medical treatment protocols.

When the laser/IPL equipment is in use, the safety of all persons in the controlled area is the responsibility of the LPS.

The treatment room in which the laser/IPL equipment will be used was found to be safe and controlled to protect other persons while treatment is in progress. The controlled area is clearly defined and will not be used for other purposes, or as access to areas, when treatment is being carried out.

It was confirmed that the door to the treatment room will be locked when the laser/IPL equipment is in use but can be opened from the outside in the event of an emergency. Discussion with one of the authorised operators confirmed that the laser safety warning sign should only be displayed when the laser/IPL equipment is in use and removed when not in use.

The laser/IPL equipment is operated using a keypad code. Arrangements were in place for the safe custody of the keypad code when not in use. Protective eyewear was available for the client and operator as outlined in the local rules.

Fitzwilliam Clinic had developed a laser register. The register reviewed included sections to record the following:

- the name of the person treated
- the date
- the operator
- the treatment given
- any accident or adverse incident

Advice was given to ensure that two separate registers are in place to differentiate between laser and IPL treatments and to include a record of the precise exposure and wavelength of each treatment. This was actioned during the inspection.

It was confirmed that the authorised operators will complete the relevant section of the register every time the equipment is operated.

There were arrangements in place to service and maintain the laser/IPL equipment in line with the manufacturer's guidance. The most recent service report for the laser/IPL machine was reviewed.

Addressing the area for improvement will ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place to operate the laser/IPL equipment.

4.2.10 How does the service ensure that clients have a planned programme of care and have sufficient information to consent to treatment?

Discussion with one of the authorised operators confirmed that clients will be provided with an initial consultation to discuss their treatment and any concerns they may have. There is written information for clients that provides a clear explanation of any treatment and includes pre and post treatment information.

The service has a list of fees available for each laser IPL procedure. Fees for treatments will be agreed during the initial consultation and may vary depending on the type of treatment provided and the individual requirements of the client.

During the initial consultation each client's personal information will be recorded including their general practitioner (GP) details in keeping with legislative requirements and clients will be asked to complete a health questionnaire.

A treatment record template has been developed and was reviewed during the inspection. Discussion with one of the authorised operators confirmed that an accurate and up to date treatment record for every client will be maintained and will include:

- client details
- medical history
- signed consent form
- skin assessment (where appropriate)
- patch test (where appropriate)
- record of treatment delivered including number of shots and fluence settings (where appropriate)

It was confirmed that client records will be securely stored.

It was determined that appropriate arrangements were in place to ensure that clients have a planned programme of care and have sufficient information to consent to treatment.

4.2.11 How does the service ensure that clients are treated with dignity, respect and are involved in the decision making process?

Discussion with one of the authorised operators regarding the consultation and treatment process confirmed that clients will be treated with dignity and respect. The consultation and treatment will be provided in a private room with the client and authorised operator present. Information will be provided to the client in verbal and written form at the initial consultation and subsequent treatment sessions to allow the client to make choices about their care and treatment and provide informed consent.

It was determined that appropriate arrangements were in place to ensure that clients are treated with dignity, respect and are involved in decisions regarding their choice of treatment.

6.0 Quality Improvement Plan/Areas for Improvement

One area for improvement has been identified where action is required to ensure compliance with [The Independent Health Care Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2005](#)

	Regulations	Standards
Total number of Areas for Improvement	1	0

The area for improvement and details of the QIP were discussed with Ms Shields, Acting Registered Manager and one of the authorised operators as part of the inspection process. The timescale for completion commences from the date of inspection.

Quality Improvement Plan	
Action required to ensure compliance with The Independent Health Care Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005	
<p>Area for improvement 1</p> <p>Ref: Regulation 39 (1)</p> <p>Stated: First time</p> <p>To be completed by: 20 August 2025</p>	<p>The responsible individual shall ensure that medical treatment protocols are produced for all laser treatments by a named registered medical or dental practitioner who is trained and experienced in the relevant discipline within which treatment is provided in keeping with legislation and minimum standards.</p> <p>Submit a copy of the medical treatment protocols to RQIA on return of this QIP.</p> <p>Ref: 4.2.9</p>
	<p>Response by registered person detailing the actions taken:</p> <p>The medical treatments protocols have been produced for all laser treatments by the named registered medical practitioner who is both trained and experienced in the relevant discipline within which treatment is provided, in keeping with legislation and minimum standards.</p> <p>The medical treatment protocols and supporting information have been emailed today (13.08.25) to RQIA Inspector Norma Munn.</p>

Please ensure this document is completed in full and returned via Web Portal

Laser Protection Report

Site Details:

Fitzwilliam Clinic
70 – 72 Lisburn Road
Belfast
BT9 6AF

Laser Protection Adviser appointed by site:

Dr Josette Galligan, Laser Protection Adviser Ltd

Laser Equipment:

Make	Model	Class	Serial Number	Wavelength
Sciton, Inc.	Joule	4 (Laser)	18494-26018	1064nm (Nd:YAG) 1470nm (Diode) 2940nm (Er:YAG)
Joule (BBL)		Risk Group 3 (IPL)		300-1400nm Filters: 420, 515, 560, 590ST, 640,

Introduction

A Laser Protection Adviser inspection of Fitzwilliam Clinic was performed on 22nd May 2025, with a follow-up visit on the 23 July 2025. This report summarises the main aspects of the inspection and document review where improvements may be required. The findings are based on the requirements of the Minimum Care Standards for Independent Healthcare Establishments published July 2014 by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPSNI), and other relevant legislation, guidance notes and European Standards.

The LPA inspection included a review of:

- Protective eyewear
- Environment/signage
- Training records and user authorisation
- Laser device markings
- Maintenance records
- Treatment protocols
- Risk assessments
- Local rules
- Appointment of duty holders (LPS/LPA)

Comments / Recommendations:

1. Medical Treatment Protocols:

The clinic has medical treatment protocols in place for the Joule BBL IPL procedures including Hair Reduction, Skin Rejuvenation (vascular blemishes and pigmented blemishes), and acne.

They are still in the process of putting in place the laser treatment protocols for the proposed laser treatments. In accordance with the Minimum Care Standards for Independent Healthcare Establishments, the clinic should ensure the treatment protocols are produced by a registered medical or dental practitioner who is trained and experienced in the relevant discipline the treatment is provided and follow the relevant headings in standard 48.3. Once finalised the authorised users should sign to indicate they accept and understand the medical treatment protocols.

2. Local Rules:

The reporting procedures detailed in point 120 of the local rules should be updated with specific information for Northern Ireland, including reference to NIAIC and HSENI. The clinic has contacted their LPA to request this update.

3. Treatment Register:

A draft treatment register was available. The draft register was discussed with the LPS and advice provided to have separate registers for IPL and Laser procedures, and include a column for wavelength in each register. The LPS actioned this on the day of the inspection visit.

The clinic should inform RQIA when the above points have been addressed.



Mrs Jane Brown
Laser Protection Adviser to RQIA



The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority
James House
2-4 Cromac Avenue
Gasworks
Belfast
BT7 2JA

Tel 028 9536 1111
Email info@rqia.org.uk
Web www.rqia.org.uk
 [@RQIANews](https://twitter.com/RQIANews)