

# Inspection Report

11 and 16 December 2025



## Foyle Hospice

Type of service: Independent Hospital (IH) – Adult Hospice

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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

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|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Organisation/Registered Provider:</b><br>Foyle Hospice                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <b>Registered Manager:</b><br>Miss Annmarie Casey |
| <b>Responsible Individual:</b><br>Mr Donall Henderson                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | <b>Date registered:</b><br>29 March 2024          |
| <b>Person in charge at the time of inspection:</b><br>Miss Annmarie Casey                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                   |
| <b>Categories of care:</b><br>Independent Hospital (IH)<br>Hospice Adult – H(A)<br>Private Doctor – PD                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                   |
| <b>Brief description of how the service operates:</b><br>Foyle Hospice is a registered independent hospital, providing in-patient hospice services for up to 12 adults with life-limiting, life-threatening illnesses and palliative care needs.<br><br>Foyle Hospice also operates an outpatient's facility, and a community specialist palliative care team to provide specialist palliative care to patients living in the community. |                                                   |

## 2.0 Inspection summary

Short notice inspections were undertaken to Foyle Hospice on 11 December 2025 from 10.00 am to 4.30 pm by five care inspectors, and on 16 December 2025 from 10.30 am to 3.30 pm by two pharmacist inspectors.

The electronic submission of additional documentation in relation to the premises aspect of the inspection was reviewed remotely by an RQIA estates inspector and feedback was provided to the hospice following the inspection.

The purpose of the inspection was to assess progress with areas for improvement identified during the last care inspection and to assess compliance with the legislation and minimum standards.

Examples of good practice were evidenced in respect of: staffing; staff training; recruitment and selection of staff; safeguarding; infection prevention and control (IPC); the provision of palliative care and the management of the patients' care pathway; clinical and organisation governance; engagement to enhance the patients' experience; the maintenance of the environment and the management of medicines.

The inspection team found the care provided and delivered in the hospice to be of an excellent standard. The provision of specialist palliative care was noted to be of an extremely high standard concerning the services offered and the support provided to patients and relatives. It was noted that the governance structures within the hospice continue to provide the required level of assurance to the senior management team and the Board of Trustees.

No immediate concerns were identified in relation to patient safety and the inspection team noted multiple areas of strength, particularly in relation to the delivery of front line care in the hospice.

No areas for improvement were identified in relation to the care and management of medicines components of the inspection.

### 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 establishment is operating in accordance with the relevant legislation and minimum standards. Examples of good practice are acknowledged and any areas for improvement are discussed with the person in charge and detailed in the quality improvement plan (QIP).

Prior to the inspection, we reviewed a range of information relevant to the hospice.

This included the following records:

- notifiable events since the previous care inspection
- the registration status of the hospice
- written and verbal communication received since the previous care inspection
- the previous care inspection report returned quality improvement plan (QIP)

One week prior to the onsite inspection the hospice was provided with a list of specific documents requesting items to be reviewed remotely in respect of the maintenance of the premises and grounds. These items were to be sent electronically to our estates inspector on or before 18 December 2025 for review.

During the onsite inspection, the team undertook a tour of the premises and met with various staff members, talked to one patient, observed care practices and reviewed relevant records and documentation.

### 4.0 What people told us about the service?

We had the opportunity to meet with a patient on the day of the inspection who confirmed that the staff provided a high standard of care. The patient told us that their needs had been met in a timely manner and they commented positively on the management of symptoms by staff.

The hospice staff provide satisfaction surveys to patients on a monthly basis and findings are shared through their governance structures. A review of recent patient satisfaction reports demonstrated that the hospice pro-actively seeks the views of patients and/or their representatives about the quality of care, treatment and other services provided. Patient feedback regarding the hospice services was found to be very positive in respect of all aspects of care received and reflected that staff deliver a very high standard of care.

RQIA invited staff to complete an electronic questionnaire. No completed staff questionnaires were submitted to RQIA following the inspection.

Staff spoken with during the inspection spoke about the hospice in very positive terms and indicated that they felt patient care was safe, effective and that patients were treated with compassion.

Staff spoke in a complimentary manner regarding the support they receive from the senior management team.

## 5.0 The inspection

### 5.1 What has this service done to meet any areas for improvement identified at or since last inspection?

| Areas for improvement from the last inspection on 20 February 2025                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                          |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Action required to ensure compliance with <a href="#">Minimum Care Standards for Independent Healthcare Establishments (July 2014)</a> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Validation of compliance |
| <b>Area for Improvement 1</b><br><br><b>Ref:</b> Standard 13.5<br><br><b>Stated:</b> First time                                        | The responsible individual shall ensure that a staff training policy is developed which outlines the organisations training requirements for individual staff groups and the frequency and methods of training. | <b>Met</b>               |
|                                                                                                                                        | <b>Action taken as confirmed during the inspection:</b><br>This area for improvement has been assessed as met, further detail is provided in section 5.2.1.                                                     |                          |

## 5.2 Inspection outcomes

### 5.2.1 How does the hospice ensure that safe staffing arrangements are in place to meet the needs of patients?

The staffing arrangements within the inpatient unit (IPU), the community specialist palliative care team and the day hospice were reviewed.

The community specialist palliative care team operates within the Western Health and Social Care Trust (WHSCT) and consists of a team of nurses who provide specialist palliative care and support to patients and families in their own home. The service is available seven days a week. Referrals are triaged on a daily basis and the community specialist palliative care team meet weekly to review the current caseload, and will prioritise and plan patient contact depending on the assessed needs of patients.

Representatives from the team also attend a weekly multi-disciplinary team (MDT) meeting at Altnagelvin Area Hospital to discuss and plan the care for patients who are to be discharged from hospital. The team liaises closely with general practitioners (GPs), district nurses, hospital palliative care teams and other professionals such as counsellors, social workers, physiotherapists, occupational therapists and dieticians.

A palliative care pharmacist works between the WHSCT and the hospice. In addition, a non-medical prescribing pathfinder programme was piloted by the hospice between September 2024 and March 2025 to test new models of prescribing and supply. This has enabled two specialist palliative care doctors and a nurse to directly prescribe medicines to palliative patients living in their own homes.

The employment of speciality GPs continues to be funded to work in the team on a Monday and Thursday, providing medical support for patients with more complex symptoms and nurse led clinics are held face to face in the hospice.

The hospice also provides a 24-hour telephone advice line available from the nursing and medical team for patients, their families and carers.

Service evaluation and redesign has resulted in a new model for a community outpatient service, which is hoped to be introduced in January 2026. This service aims to address physical, psychological, social and spiritual needs for patients and their families. The consultant led service will be multi-disciplinary with patient review, assessment and management of pain and other symptoms which impact on the daily life of patients with life limiting diseases. Day therapy sessions consisting of complimentary therapy based programmes will continue to be offered by nursing assistants and a team of volunteers. There will be on-going evaluation to demonstrate how this model can be developed moving forward to ensure continued access to hospice care for those who need it.

In response to the strategic development plan and sustainability challenges faced by the sector, new appointments have been made, namely a new finance manager and a public affairs and communication lead. The latter's aim is to increase community and local organisational awareness of the hospice, the services it offers and expand support to plan and maintain the vital work of the hospice.

Discussion with community specialist nursing staff demonstrated a passion to ensure those living at home in need of specialist palliative care would receive this in a timely manner. The team also expressed insight into and understanding of the needs of families and carers of those with life limiting or a palliative diagnosis.

The MDT in the IPU comprises of doctors; registered nurses; healthcare assistants; occupational therapists; physiotherapists and social workers with specialist palliative care expertise. In addition, there is a chaplaincy team who support the staff in providing holistic care and volunteers who provide a variety of services.

The IPU can accommodate 10 patients, each within their own room. Patients are referred for complex pain and symptom management, specialised palliative care in the final stages of a person's illness and/or respite care for the patient/family/carer. Discussions with IPU staff and a review of the duty rotas confirmed that there was sufficient staff in various roles to meet the assessed needs of patients. Staff morale was good with evidence of effective multi-disciplinary working arrangements and communication between staff. Staff told us they were happy, felt supported and there were good working relationships throughout the hospice services.

Staff in the community specialist palliative care team and IPU discussed the benefits of effective communication within the hospice and confirmed that they have the opportunity to attend daily handover meetings, MDT meetings, safety huddles, team specific meetings and felt supported by management. Staff have the opportunity to be included in decision-making and are involved in quality improvement initiatives such as reviewing the outcome and learning from quality assurance audits. Staff confirmed that they could raise concerns openly and honestly with management.

A staff training policy was in place therefore, the area for improvement identified during the last care inspection stated in section 5.1 has been met. A review of staff training documentation and discussions with staff confirmed that effective systems are in place to support governance arrangements for staff training and development. The hospice utilises an online training log, which is overseen by managers and the human resources (HR) department, to monitor training completion. A training matrix was in place and clearly identified any gaps in training. It was advised that ongoing governance and management oversight is required to ensure that any training deficits identified within the matrix are addressed within appropriate timescales.

A review of a sample of records and discussions with staff confirmed that supervision was carried out regularly and appraisals were completed annually. The hospice also provides staff opportunities for development to pursue specialist qualifications in palliative care, advanced care planning, dignity in care and advanced communication skills. Staff reported feeling well supported and fully involved in conversations about their personal and professional development.

It was determined that there were safe staffing arrangements in various roles to meet the assessed needs of patients throughout the hospice services.

### **5.2.2 How does the hospice ensure that recruitment and selection procedures are safe?**

The arrangements in respect of the recruitment and selection of staff were reviewed. A review of the policy and procedure for the recruitment and selection of staff found that the policy was in accordance with legislation and best practice guidance.

A staff register was available to review which included all relevant information as specified within Schedule 3 Part II of the Independent Health Care Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005.

A review of recruitment records of newly recruited staff confirmed that all the relevant information as listed in Regulation 19, Schedule 2 of the Independent Health Care Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005, as amended had been sought and retained. Foyle Hospice has a HR department which is responsible for gathering and collating the required recruitment documents as outlined in the legislation.

When a new member of staff is recruited, they take part in an induction and undertake training commensurate with their role and responsibilities. An induction programme had been developed for each new member of staff, which was relevant to their role and responsibilities. The volunteer manager further confirmed that there was also robust recruitment, training and support procedures in place for volunteers.

Review of staff records confirmed that systems and governance processes are in place to monitor and support staff in maintaining registration with their relevant professional bodies, ensuring compliance at all times.

It was determined that robust recruitment and selection procedures were in place to ensure compliance with the legislation and best practice guidance.

### **5.2.3 Are the arrangements in place for safeguarding in accordance with current regional guidance?**

The arrangements in respect of the safeguarding of adults and children were reviewed.

Policies and procedures were in place for the safeguarding and protection of adults and children at risk of harm. The policies included the types and indicators of abuse and distinct referral pathways in the event of a safeguarding issue arising with an adult or child. The relevant contact details were included for onward referral to the local Health and Social Care Trust should a safeguarding issue arise.

There are safeguarding champions in place throughout the hospice and this was reflected in the relevant organisational policies. Staff spoken with were aware of the types and indicators of abuse and the actions to be taken in the event of a safeguarding issue being identified.

Review of records demonstrated that all staff had received safeguarding training at the level required in keeping with the [Northern Ireland Adult Safeguarding Partnership \(NIASP\) training strategy \(revised 2016\)](#) and minimum standards.

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.

Appropriate arrangements were in place to manage a safeguarding issue should it arise.

### **5.2.4 Is the hospice fully equipped and are the staff trained to manage medical emergencies?**

The arrangements for the management of medical emergencies and resuscitation were reviewed.

The hospice had undertaken a risk assessment and have retained emergency medicines and equipment as recommended by the Resuscitation Council (UK) guidelines.

The emergency equipment and medicines were stored separately in the IPU treatment room and were readily available to staff in the event of an emergency. All staff spoken with were aware of the location of medical emergency medicines and equipment.



Checklists were available and kept with the emergency medicines and equipment. Staff were designated responsibility for completing these checklists to ensure that emergency equipment and medicines are always stored in sufficient quantities and within their expiry dates.

Review of training records and discussion with staff confirmed that resuscitation and the management of medical emergencies is included in the induction programme. A review of training records identified that all staff had received basic life support training on an annual basis in keeping with best practice guidance. Discussion with staff demonstrated that they have a good understanding of the actions to be taken in the event of a medical emergency.

It was determined that satisfactory arrangements are in place to manage a medical emergency in line with legislation and best practice guidance.

#### **5.2.5 Does the hospice adhere to best practice guidance concerning the management of medicines?**

The management team were requested to prepare a range of documents to support the inspection. These documents were reviewed by the RQIA pharmacy inspectors.

Medicines management policies and procedures were in place and were reviewed on a regular basis and following any policy changes or changes to legislation. Systems were in place to ensure that any updates were communicated to the nursing and medical staff.

Satisfactory records for the ordering and receipt of stock medicines were in place. Staff were reminded that stock requisition forms should be archived in chronological order and those for controlled drugs and other medicines filed separately according to the hospice's own policy.

Nurses received a comprehensive induction, which included the management of medicines and syringe drivers. Competency assessments were completed following induction. Refresher training was provided and competencies were reassessed following any medication related incidents or if a need was identified.

Robust arrangements were in place to ensure the safe management of medicines when a patient was admitted. Medicines were reconciled by the admitting doctor using the Northern Ireland Electronic Care Record (NIECR), hospital discharge information, information provided by the patient/their family and the patient's supply of medicines.

Medicine related records were well maintained. A medicine kardex was in place for each patient; this is a record that details the medicines prescribed for each patient. Records of the administration of medicines were completed and medicines were available for administration when patients required them. Two nurses were involved in the administration of controlled drugs and injectable medicines. There was evidence that syringe driver pumps were checked regularly during administration.

Robust arrangements were in place to manage medicines when a patient was discharged from the hospice to ensure a continuous supply of their medicines and to ensure their representative was given any necessary advice. Relevant information was shared with other health care professionals as necessary.



Medicines were stored appropriately; safely and securely in the treatment room. Controlled drug cabinets and a medicine refrigerator were available for use as needed. Temperatures of the medicine refrigerator were monitored and recorded daily. It was agreed that a daily record of the temperature of the medicine storage area would also be maintained going forward.

The management of controlled drugs was reviewed. Standard Operating Procedures were in place. The Accountable Officer (AO) is responsible for the safe management of controlled drugs and related governance issues; the AO is the registered manager. There were systems in place to ensure that controlled drugs were ordered, received, stored and administered appropriately and that records were accurately maintained. Reconciliation stock checks were completed on current stock twice daily. The registered manager agreed to review the frequency of audit of stock awaiting destruction, to ensure it is line with the hospice's policy.

The disposal of other medicines was managed appropriately in a timely manner. Records of medicine disposal were signed by the two members of staff involved. Patients' own medicines were returned to the community pharmacy for disposal and records were signed by the nurse involved and the representative from the community pharmacy.

An effective incident reporting system was in place to identify, record, report and share learning from any medicine related incidents. Medicine related incidents are reported to RQIA and any that involve controlled drugs are reported to the Local Intelligence Network. These were reviewed at eight-weekly Governance and Risk meetings and at quarterly Trustee meetings.

A range of audits was completed to ensure the safe and effective management of medicines. Practice was regularly reviewed to identify shortfalls and areas for improvement. Systems were in place for the management of drug and medical device alerts. A record of all alerts received and the actions taken in response was maintained.

#### **5.2.6 Does the hospice adhere to IPC best practice guidance?**

The arrangements for IPC procedures throughout the hospice, to evidence that the risk of infection transmission to patients, visitors and staff was minimised were reviewed.

It was confirmed that the hospice had an overarching IPC policy and associated procedures in place.

Good compliance with IPC practices was observed during inspection in relation to hand hygiene, use of personal protective equipment (PPE) and equipment cleaning. During a tour of the premises all areas were found to be clean, tidy and well maintained. Hand hygiene posters were displayed for patients, visitors and staff regarding good hand hygiene and handwashing techniques.

There was a dedicated IPC advanced nurse practitioner (ANP) available to advise staff on the management of IPC issues, outbreak management and isolation procedures and the completion IPC audits.

It was confirmed that there are up to date outbreak and pandemic plans in place for regional hospices. Staff who spoke with us demonstrated a good understanding of IPC measures in place including isolation procedures and undertaking terminal cleaning.

A range of IPC audits undertaken in clinical areas, including environmental and hand hygiene audits, were reviewed. These audits confirmed good compliance and oversight in IPC practices. It was confirmed that IPC audits are a standing agenda item at clinical governance meetings and that staff are regularly given feedback of IPC audit scores.

Staff stated that actions would be taken if environmental standards were to fall below the expected standard. Staff were also able to describe the actions they would take to address areas requiring improvement and demonstrated a comprehensive understanding of this.

It was confirmed a policy was in place regarding aseptic non-touch technique (ANTT) and that staff had undertaken both training and competency-based training assessments. Through discussion, staff demonstrated good knowledge and understanding of the application of ANTT into clinical practices and the management of invasive devices.

Policies and procedures are in place with regards to catheterisation, catheter care and other invasive medical devices. A system of audit had been implemented regarding the management of invasive devices, with audit results being disseminated to staff through the hospice's governance systems. There was a policy in place for the decontamination of any equipment related to patient care.

There is a policy in place for IPC in relation to the clinical environment. Environmental cleanliness was found to be of a high standard with a regular programme of environmental auditing and equipment cleaning schedules in place for both day and night shifts.

It was confirmed that IPC training is provided to staff in ancillary roles. Discussion with housekeeping staff demonstrated that they were knowledgeable about the daily, weekly and monthly cleaning schedules and the records to be completed and were able to describe the ongoing arrangements concerning cleaning audits.

Hepatitis B vaccination is recommended for healthcare workers who may have direct contact with patients' blood or bloodstained body fluids. Miss Casey confirmed that the hospice had commenced a review of the vaccination status of all relevant staff and that appropriate action would be undertaken for those staff who require this vaccination. Assurance was provided to RQIA that records will be retained in this regard for future inspections.

Review of the current arrangements with respect to IPC practice evidenced areas of good practice. The collaborative approach by all staff in relation to IPC ensured efficiency and consistency in upholding the high standard of IPC practices evidenced throughout the hospice. It was noted that areas of IPC risks were being assessed and managed appropriately with robust auditing measures in place in clinical areas.

It was determined that effective governance mechanisms and collaborative working across the hospice is in place to ensure that staff adhere to IPC best practice guidance.

### **5.2.7 Does the hospice adhere to best practice guidance concerning the provision of palliative care?**

The provision of palliative care delivered both within the hospice and the community specialist care team was reviewed. Discussion with staff, observation of care practices and a review of documentation evidenced that palliative care was delivered in accordance with best practice guidance.

This included a review of referral pathways, the arrangements for admission and discharge, the care pathway, and the provision of bereavement services.

Well-established referral procedures were evidenced to be in place. There was a robust multi-disciplinary system in place for the review of referrals and the triage/assessment of cases referred to the Foyle Hospice IPU, the integrated care clinic or to the community specialist palliative care team. Patients and/or their representatives are given information in relation to all of the services provided by Foyle Hospice, which is available in different formats if necessary.

Referrals can be received from healthcare professionals which include the palliative care team, hospital consultants, the hospice's community specialist nursing team and GPs. Multidisciplinary assessments are completed with the referral information received through the regional referral arrangements.

On admission to the IPU, patients and/or their representatives are provided with information regarding the various assessments that may be undertaken by members of the MDT. Results of these assessments are used to develop individualised patient-centred care plans and to determine if MDT referrals are required.

Review of patients' care records evidenced meaningful patient involvement in planning care and treatments and interventions provided were flexible and met the expressed wishes and assessed needs of individual patients and their families.

Staff confirmed that care was patient centred with ongoing review to ensure care is adapted according to assessed need. It was good to note that patient care plans were personalised to individual patients and a system was in place for their ongoing review. It was confirmed that the MDT, with the patient's consent, provide information and support to carers and family members.

Staff were observed to be compassionate and positive interactions were observed between staff and patients as staff entered and exited patient's rooms. During observation of care practices and discussion with staff it was evident that patients' needs were being attended to in a timely manner.

The service of the lunchtime meal was well co-ordinated, with patients receiving their meals in a timely way. Discussion with staff confirmed that assistance with eating is provided to patients if required. Feedback from one patient was positive in relation to the availability of food and fluids, menu choices and the quality of food served. Discussion with staff confirmed a choice of nutritious meals being offered that included specific meals for patients requiring specialised diets, and meal times that were flexible and individually tailored according to the patient's wishes and needs. Nursing and catering staff were familiar with best practice guidance regarding nutrition and the specialised dietary descriptors outlined in the International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI).

Discussion with staff confirmed there were measures in place to ensure good pain management and control for patients. It was confirmed that pain is assessed and effective pain relief prescribed. Discussion with staff confirmed arrangements are in place for pain relief to be prescribed during the day and out of hours, if required. It was also confirmed that pain medication is administered as prescribed in the medicine Kardex. Staff also confirmed that they were trained in medicines management and the administration of controlled drugs.

There was evidence of good practice in the management of syringe drivers. Discussion with staff confirmed that there was an adequate number of syringe drivers in place to meet the needs of patients and that there was a robust system in place to manage the availability and return of syringe drivers when a patient was discharged. Staff confirmed that they have received training in the management of syringe drivers and that update training is provided annually.

The management of pressure area care was discussed and it was confirmed that various pressure area care assessment tools were in place. A review of a sample of patient care records noted that these assessment tools were completed consistently. Staff had a sound knowledge of wound management and the use of ANTT. It was also confirmed that there was an adequate supply of pressure relieving equipment, which is readily available for patient use and additional pressure relieving equipment can be arranged if required. Staff also discussed the role of the tissue viability nurse (TVN) in relation to pressure area care and highlighted the valuable support that these services provide to patients.

The provision of bereavement care was reviewed and this evidenced that a range of information and support services were available. Foyle Hospice can provide internal individual and group based counselling services for patients, families, children and young people or can link with external providers. Ongoing bereavement care is available for families and children coping with the loss of a loved one. Discussions regarding the delivery of bereavement care services confirmed that there are appropriately trained and skilled staff in this area.

The hospice has a policy and procedure for delivering bad news to patients and/or their representatives which is in accordance with the Breaking Bad News regional guidelines 2003.

Staff confirmed that bad news is delivered to patients and/or their representatives by professionals who have experience in communication skills and who act in accordance with the hospice's policy and procedure. Where this news is shared with others, staff confirmed that consent must be obtained from the patient and this is documented in patient records. Following a patient receiving bad news, future treatment options are discussed fully with the patient and documented within their individual care records. Staff spoken with were very aware of the importance of being available to provide support to the patient and/or their representatives to help them to process the information shared.

The hospice has a policy and procedure in place in relation to patient discharges. The arrangements concerning discharge planning were reviewed and it was confirmed that discharge plans are agreed with the patient and carers in accordance with the discharge procedure. Discussion with staff confirmed that there was multi-disciplinary involvement. A comprehensive discharge summary and plan is completed prior to the patient leaving the hospice and a letter is provided to the patient's GP and community services, as applicable, outlining the care and treatment which has been provided.

Robust systems were in place ensuring that agreed discharge arrangements are co-ordinated with all services that are involved in the patient's ongoing care and treatment.

The current arrangements with respect to specialist palliative care and bereavement support services were noted to be of an extremely high standard and adhered to current best practice guidance. There were examples of good practice found in relation to care delivery; the care pathway including admission and discharge arrangements; and patient engagement.

It was determined that systems are in place to ensure that staff adhere to best practice guidance concerning the provision of palliative care.

### **5.2.8 How does the hospice ensure that record keeping is in line with legislation and best practice guidance?**

The management of records within the hospice was found to be in line with legislation and best practice. A range of policies and procedures were in place for the management of records however, these were not reviewed during this inspection.

Staff confirmed that the hospice maintains both electronic and paper records. The hospice has access to the NIECR, which will enhance communication between the hospice and the rest of the Health and Social Care (HSC) sector leading to better continuity of care for patients.

A sample of patients' notes completed by medical staff and nursing staff were reviewed. There was evidence of an up to date review of each patient, as well as clear decision making by the MDT involved in the delivery of the patient's care. A multi-disciplinary, holistic and empathetic approach to patients' care was evident.

The multi-disciplinary care records reviewed contained the following:

- an admission profile
- a range of validated assessments
- medical notes
- care plans
- nursing notes
- results of investigations/tests
- correspondence relating to the patient
- reports by allied health professionals
- advance decisions
- do not attempt resuscitate (DNAR) orders
- records pertaining to previous admissions and community care team, if applicable.

It was identified that some matters in relation to patients' notes required further attention. Miss Casey was receptive to advice and guidance provided in this regard.

It was confirmed that systems were in place to audit the patient care records as outlined in the hospice's quality assurance programme. A number of audits relating to patient care records were reviewed and an excellent compliance rate was noted.

There was a range of policies and procedures in place for the management of records which includes the arrangements for the creation, use, retention, storage, transfer, disposal of and access to records which were comprehensive and reflected best practice guidance.

The hospice also has a policy and procedure in place for clinical record keeping in relation to patient treatment and care which complies with the General Medical Council (GMC) guidance and Good Medical Practice.

A review of the management of records policy found that patients have the right to apply for access to their clinical records in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulations and where appropriate Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) regulations and Freedom of Information legislation. The hospice is registered with the ICO.

Staff who spoke with us demonstrated that they had a good knowledge of effective records management. The management of records within the hospice was found to be in line with legislation and best practice.

It was determined that systems are in place to ensure that staff adhere to best practice guidance concerning all aspects of record keeping.

#### **5.2.9 How does the hospice ensure the environment is safe?**

A review of the building engineering services maintenance documents was completed remotely. A checklist of building engineering documents was requested at the beginning of the inspection. The required documents were submitted electronically by HR and the administration manager to the RQIA estates inspector for review. The submitted documents were compliant with relevant standards and codes of practice.

Risk assessments were in place relating to: fire safety and water safety in the domestic water storage and distribution system.

The fire risk assessment recorded that the risk in the premises was 'tolerable', while the action plan of the legionella risk assessment relating to the water system was confirmed as having been addressed.

Maintenance validation certificates relating to a range building engineering services was received and indicated that the systems are subject to a programme of maintenance by specialist contractors. These included:

- fire alarm and detection system
- emergency lighting installation
- first aid and firefighting equipment
- fixed wiring installation
- electrical equipment
- emergency standby generator
- patient lifting equipment
- nurse call system
- space heating boiler

There were no estates issues listed as requiring areas for improvement.

#### **5.2.10 Are robust arrangements in place regarding clinical and organisational governance?**

##### **Organisational Governance**

The governance structures were reviewed and found to be robust. The governance framework ensured an effective organisational structure within the hospice that supported service delivery.

We reviewed minutes and reports related to the board, senior management team and sub committees. We spoke to Miss Casey, the chief executive, members of the Board of Trustees, the medical director and members of staff.

We found there were clear lines of responsibility, accountability and these were easily identified by staff we spoke to.

The senior management team and trustees were able to describe their roles and responsibilities and how they fitted into the overarching governance structures and committees.

We had the opportunity to meet with two Board Trustees. They were able to describe the role and responsibilities of the Board and the governance structures within the hospice. The trustees confirmed that there were good working relationships between members of the senior management team and the Board. They also felt the governance structures gave them assurances regarding the quality and standard of services delivered. They were able to discuss the key priorities for the hospice over the next 12 months.

A review of the Board minutes confirmed that they detailed the reports and documents reviewed by them and the action taken. It was evidenced that the Board of Trustees interrogate the performance data presented to them and provide constructive feedback to the senior management team.

The minutes of the governance structures and committee meetings were reviewed. These evidenced that the governance structures were functioning well to provide a level of assurance to the Board of Trustees and the multidisciplinary clinical governance team.

The senior management team were visible and accessible to staff, staff describe an open culture, and that managers updated them on issues that affected separate departments and the whole unit.

The governance and risk committee is provided with data that gives robust assurances on safety and tangible evidence of ongoing audit and quality improvement.

A risk management policy is in place and there is a structured process to ensure risks are effectively identified, assessed and managed. We reviewed the corporate and organisational risk registers and found that risks are appropriately captured and reflect the current business and work priorities of the hospice.

The organisational risk register is reviewed by the senior management team on a monthly basis. and the corporate risk register is reviewed quarterly, most recently in October 2025. Any amendments to the risk register are discussed and ratified by the governance and risk committee and then escalated to the Board of Trustees. The strategic development plan was found to align with the risk register, as it outlined the hospice's strategic priorities and the risks that may impact its ability to achieve these objectives. The plan was found to include a comprehensive risk management strategy that covers all aspects of the hospice operations.

It was confirmed that the statement of purpose and patient's guide were kept under review, revised and updated when necessary and made available for all interested parties to read.

The RQIA certificate of registration was up to date and displayed appropriately and it was confirmed that current insurance policies were in place.

Where the entity operating a hospice is a corporate body or partnership or an individual owner who is not in day to day management of the service, Regulation 26 unannounced quality monitoring visits must be undertaken and documented every six months. Mr Henderson, Responsible Individual, is in day to day control of the hospice.



However, the chairperson of the Board of Trustees undertakes unannounced quality monitoring visits as part of their internal governance arrangements. Miss Casey and trustees told us that arrangements are in place to induct additional members of the Board of Trustees to undertake these monitoring visits. Mr Henderson receives a copy of the reports generated for review and sign off. The most recent unannounced quality monitoring visit report dated 18 September 2025 was reviewed.

It was confirmed that should these unannounced visits identify issues an action plan would be developed to address any deficits; including timescales and persons responsible for completing the actions.

## **Medical Governance**

The medical advisory committee (MAC) is formalised within the governance and risk committee and has an identified quorum. The terms of reference for the MAC were reviewed and these have been developed in accordance with the Minimum Standards for Independent Healthcare Establishments (July 2014). MAC meetings are minuted and the minutes of recent MAC meetings were reviewed and noted to be a detailed account of the topics discussed and decisions made. The medical director produces a quarterly report for the governance and risk committee.

Multidisciplinary morbidity and mortality (M&M) meetings, known as debriefing meetings, are held regularly and are formally documented. M&M meetings provide a unique opportunity for health professionals to improve the quality of care offered through the review of case studies.

They also provide clinicians and members of the healthcare team with a routine forum for the open examination of individual events surrounding a patient's care, with a view to sharing any learning and improving practice. It was confirmed that any learning from the M&M meetings would be shared with relevant staff and the senior management team through the governance structures. Feedback received from staff regarding these meetings was very positive.

All medical practitioners working within the hospice must have a designated responsible officer (RO). ROs are experienced senior doctors, who work with the GMC, to make sure doctors are reviewing their work. In accordance with the GMC all doctors must revalidate every five years. The revalidation process requires doctors to collect examples of their work to understand what they are doing well and how they can improve. As part of the revalidation process, RO's make revalidation recommendations to the GMC. Where concerns are raised regarding a doctor's practice information must be shared with their RO who then has a responsibility to share this information with all relevant stakeholders in the areas of the doctor's work. It was established that all medical practitioners working in the hospice have a designated RO. How concerns would be raised regarding a doctor's practice with the MAC and within the wider HSC sector, was discussed with the medical director. Good internal arrangements were in place and the hospice was linked in with the regional RO network.

A sample of personnel files held for medical practitioners were reviewed and it was found that they contained all of the relevant information as outlined in Schedule 2 of the Independent Health Care Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005, as amended.

The arrangements for the provision of medical practitioners within the hospice were reviewed to ensure that patients had access to appropriate medical intervention as and when required. This review evidenced that robust arrangements were in place to meet the needs of the patients utilising the service. A rota of medical practitioners was easily accessible to inform staff of the doctors working in the hospice and also the arrangements for out of hours cover.

## Clinical Governance

It was confirmed that arrangements were in place to monitor, audit and review the effectiveness and quality of care and treatment delivered to patients at appropriate intervals. Miss Casey generates a quarterly report for the governance and risk committee that includes data on safeguarding; concerns; key performance indicators (KPI's); audit findings; training; complaints and incidents.

An audit programme and audit recording templates are in place. Results of audits are analysed and the findings are presented to the finance and audit committee. Action plans are developed to address any deficits, including the name of the person responsible for implementing the action plan and the timeframe. It was good to note that all grades of staff were involved in the completion of audits as this increases ownership and accountability amongst staff. Audit findings are shared with relevant staff and committees.

A set of clinical quality indicators had been developed and balanced score sheets (dashboards) were being used to display the data in relation to the IPU and the community service. The score sheets along with other KPI's are provided to the governance and risk committee and then shared with the Board of Trustees through the minutes of the governance and risk committee. A similar dashboard format was observed for sharing the other KPIs with the Board of Trustees and staff.

It was acknowledged that the dashboard system was a very useful tool for the quick review of information, comparative data analysis and to share relevant information with all staff and patients, as necessary.

A system was also in place to ensure that urgent communications, safety alerts and notices are reviewed and, where appropriate, made available to key staff in a timely manner.

The hospice has a policy and procedure in place for the management of notifiable events/incidents which includes reporting arrangements to RQIA. Notifications submitted to RQIA since the previous inspection were reviewed. It was confirmed that all notifiable events/incidents were recorded, investigated and reported to RQIA or other relevant bodies, as appropriate, in a timely manner. Miss Casey reviews all incidents.

It was confirmed that any learning from notifiable events/incidents that occurred was identified and shared through the governance structures of the hospice, in a meaningful way, to identify trends and used to affect change or influence practice.

A multidisciplinary approach is applied to the review of notifiable events/incidents and the hospice ensures the dissemination of learning to all staff.

Staff described to us that the reporting of incidents is encouraged in an open and transparent way which leads to a no blame culture within the organisation and enhanced learning outcomes. The management of complaints within the hospice was reviewed. Staff who spoke with us demonstrated good awareness of how to deal with a complaint, if received.

The hospice has a complaints policy and procedure in place in accordance with the relevant legislation and [DoH guidance on complaints handling](#). A copy of the complaints procedure is made available for patients/and or their representatives.

It was evidenced that systems were in place to ensure that any complaints received would be fully investigated and co-ordinated by management and responded to appropriately. A review of records of two recent complaints confirmed that they included details of all communications with complainants; the result of any investigation; the outcome and any action taken. Information gathered from complaints had been used to improve the quality of services provided. Compliments received by hospice are retained and shared with staff.

Staff told us they could approach their line managers, and there were more formal forums in place for staff to communicate with the management team. Staff were encouraged to feedback on how the service is operated and to highlight any areas for potential improvement.

Review of the most recent satisfaction survey, dated April 2025, indicated that patients and relatives had positive experiences of care.

Annual reports were available to review for the integrative care clinic service and the Healing Hearts bereavement support for children and young people. These reports reviewed performance of these services within the hospice and were used to consider allocation of resources and implementation of improvements.

## **Conclusion**

Overall, the governance structures within the hospice provided the required level of assurance to the senior management team and Board of Trustees. It was good to note the continued involvement of Trustees on various committees and their commitment to driving continued quality improvement.

Our discussions with the Board of Trustees and members of senior management established that they continued to have a shared vision and strategy for the hospice coupled with a cohesive and productive way of collaborative working.

### **5.3 Equality data**

The arrangements in place in relation to the equality of opportunity for patients and the importance of staff being aware of equality legislation and recognising and responding to the diverse needs of patients was discussed with staff.

Discussion with staff and review of information evidenced that the equality data collected was managed in line with best practice.

### **6.0 Quality Improvement Plan/Areas for Improvement**

This inspection resulted in no areas for improvement being identified. Findings of the inspection were discussed with Miss Casey, Mr Henderson, the medical director, the ward manager and the HR and admin manager, as part of the inspection process and can be found in the main body of the report.



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