

## A REVIEW OF THE PATHWAYS ASSOCIATED WITH THE TEMPORARY SUSPENSION OF EMERGENCY GENERAL SURGERY AT SOUTH WEST ACUTE HOSPITAL (SWAH)

The Terms of Reference for this RQIA Review have been developed to review the effectiveness of clinical pathways associated with the temporary suspension of Emergency General Surgery at the South West Acute Hospital (SWAH), Enniskillen, with a view to identifying any aspects for improvement.

### Background

In November 2022 the Western Health and Social Care Trust (WHSCT) announced the temporary suspension of Emergency General Surgery at SWAH, a decision which was effected on 18 December 2022.

On 22 February 2024, the Department of Health (DoH) wrote to RQIA to commission a review of the pathways associated with the temporary suspension of Emergency General Surgery at SWAH.

The DoH has directed that RQIA undertake a review of the pathways developed as a result of the temporary suspension of Emergency General Surgery and consider whether any improvements might be made.

RQIA Reviews provide informed expert assessments to the Department of Health and to the public about the quality, safety and availability of health and social care services in Northern Ireland.

This review is being conducted under RQIA's statutory functions, as outlined within Article 35 of the Health and Personal Services (Quality, Improvement and Regulation (Northern Ireland Order, 2003):

***“(c) the function of conducting reviews of, and making reports on, the management, provision or quality of, or access to or availability of, particular types of health and social care for which statutory bodies or service providers have responsibility.”***

RQIA reviews and inspections must consider the statutory duty on public authorities under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998<sup>1</sup> and consider the European Convention on Human Rights<sup>2</sup>. Methodologies adopted will support RQIA's compliance with these obligations.

### Terms of Reference

1. Assessment of the current pathways, developed in response to the temporary suspension of Emergency General Surgery at the South West Acute Hospital (SWAH). To include:

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<sup>1</sup> [Northern Ireland Act 1998 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

<sup>2</sup> [European Convention on Human Rights \(coe.int\)](https://coe.int)

- Describe the full range of mitigations and clinical pathways developed by Western Health and Social Care Trust (WHSCT) and Northern Ireland Ambulance Service (NIAS) in response to these changes.
  - Describe the process of development, communication/dissemination, implementation and ongoing review of these clinical pathways (to include engagement with relevant stakeholders).
  - Assess the current effectiveness of these clinical pathways in supporting compliance with relevant clinical guidelines and best practice.
  - Identify any omissions in the mitigations, protocols or pathways developed.
  - Assess the effectiveness of arrangements for monitoring the direct and indirect impact of these pathways on accessibility, quality (to include patient/ population outcomes) and safety of services.
2. To seek the views and experiences of Health and Social Care staff, and service users in respect of the pathways and protocols associated with and resulting from the temporary suspension of Emergency General Surgery at SWAH.
  3. To provide a report on the findings and make recommendations to support improvements in service accessibility, quality and safety, or in respect of wider system learning.
  4. To escalate any emerging patient safety concerns identified during the course of the review to the WHSCT and the Department of Health.

### Scope

- The scope of this review is restricted to examination of the clinical pathways associated with the temporary suspension of Emergency General Surgery, and their direct and indirect impacts.
- The scope may require examination of aspects of primary care, referral routes in and out of hospital, paramedic protocols and available capacity within receiving sites, and in transport services.

### Exclusion

- This review will not assess the current pathways related to the provision of Elective Surgery.

(Approved by Authority 28 March 2024)