



# **Annual Quality Report 2019-20**

**Assurance, Challenge and Improvement in Health and Social Care**

## Contents

Foreword .....	2
Introduction .....	4
Strategic Goal 1: Transforming the Culture .....	5
Strategic Goal 2: Strengthening the Workforce.....	12
Strategic Goal 3: Measuring the Improvement.....	16
Strategic Goal 4: Raising the Standards.....	26
Strategic Goal 5: Integrating the Care .....	27
COVID-19 Response.....	30

## Foreword

This is the Regulation and Improvement Authority's (RQIA's) seventh Annual Quality Report for 2019-20.

The report provides an overview of how RQIA aligns its quality improvement activities to the Department of Health's ten year strategy designed to protect and improve quality in health and social care in Northern Ireland; Quality 2020<sup>1</sup>.

Quality and quality improvement is central to all RQIA plans and does. As Northern Ireland's regulatory and improvement body for health and social care (HSC), RQIA has a clear vision for how it supports providers and service users and ensures care is safe, effective, compassionate and well-led. RQIA's work programmes aim to assure that people in Northern Ireland experience a better quality of health and social care.

RQIA is committed to **transforming the culture** by ensuring quality and improvement is embedded into its strategic and business plans; this is underpinned by governance and corporate performance arrangements.

During 2019-20, RQIA continued to develop a risk-adjusted, dynamic and responsive (RADaR) framework, complemented by a risk stratification exercise, which illustrated differences in the level and type of risk observed in nursing and residential care homes; this was essential in helping to support care homes during the Coronavirus Pandemic and provided a proportionate response to regulation.

RQIA's Duty Desk, complaints and whistleblowing processes captured concerns about health and social care services and assisted in improving the intelligence used when deciding what regulatory action is required. RQIA was able to improve how it listens to the voice of service users by introducing calling cards to care homes for service users and their relatives to help communication about their personal experiences.

June 2019 saw the initiation of a Quality Improvement (QI) Strategy, which will be further progressed during 2021/22. RQIA held an Open House event in October 2019, inviting members of the public to hear about its work and how it uses inspection, regulation and review to drive improvement in services across Northern Ireland.

In **strengthening the workforce**, RQIA adopted the regional HSC values which staff have embraced. Being an accredited 'Investors in People' (IiP) organisation, RQIA supported staff by celebrating success, discussing performance and listening to staff views at regular briefings.

A range of human resources policies have supported the workforce, along with learning and development opportunities, with 72% of staff completing Level 1, QI training. During the year, RQIA appointed a member of staff following their participation in the Joint Disability Placement Scheme.

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<sup>1</sup> Quality 2020: A 10- Year Strategy to Protect and Improve Quality in Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland. Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (November 2011). Cited: April 2021. Available from: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dhssps/q2020-strategy.pdf>

RQIA **measures improvement** in quality across health and social care through inspection and review programmes. These programmes assesses the arrangements in place to ensure the delivery of safe, effective, compassionate and high quality care in line with relevant legislation, standards and guidance, as well as the quality of leadership and management in those services subject to regulation and review. In 2019/20 RQIA implemented a change to its hospital inspection methodology, incorporating a multidisciplinary approach, focussing on governance arrangements, identifying areas of good practice and addressing any issues which required attention. RQIA also published reviews in relation to a range of services, utilising recommendations aimed to support and drive quality improvements across Northern Ireland.

RQIA continued to focus on **raising the standards** through all its work programmes. As part of the Clinical Audit, Guidelines and Quality Improvement Programme, RQIA supported projects across Northern Ireland, which successfully delivered improvements in outcomes for patients, clients and carers. Lay assessors joined RQIA staff in a range of inspections to care homes, mental health and learning disability services and in the Review of Outpatient Services in the Belfast HSC Trust.

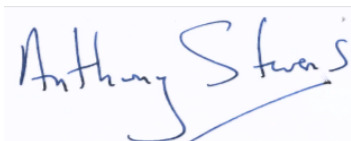
Working in partnership with HSC organisations, systems regulators, inspectorates and professional regulatory bodies helped to **integrate the care**, as RQIA shared best practice and benchmarked its work. RQIA engaged with stakeholder groups, which facilitated information sharing and co-production and held several roadshows with registered providers, supporting provision of advice and guidance and shared learning.

On 20 March 2020, as a result of the Coronavirus Pandemic and in accordance with Departmental direction, RQIA reduced the frequency of statutory inspection activity and paused its review programme, in order to help minimise the risk of spreading infection to the most vulnerable in society. Responding to risks and concerns, however, continued through regulatory activity conducted by innovative means. RQIA strongly supported the regional HSC response by implementing a strategic and collaborative approach in supporting care services.

RQIA provided advice, guidance and support to registered services, re-balancing its role as a regulator. This has resulted in the creation of a new model of regulation in 2020/21, developed further under RQIA's Assurance Framework, using a risk-based and blended approach to inspection, strengthened by collaborative working with stakeholders throughout health and social care. This has renewed RQIA's focus on quality improvement and is underpinned by enhanced engagement with those people who use the services, as well as those who provide them.



**Ms Christine Collins MBE**  
Interim Chair



**Dr Anthony B Stevens OBE**  
Interim Chief Executive

## Introduction

This is RQIA's seventh Annual Quality Report, which provides an overview of how RQIA's quality improvement activities are aligned with ***Quality 2020: A 10- Year Strategy to Protect and Improve Quality in Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland***. It describes RQIA's progress in the areas of quality and continuous improvement from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020 to support the delivery of Quality 2020's strategic goals.

The report highlights examples of practice RQIA has contributed to and which are significant in assuring and improving the quality of health and social care for all those in receipt of these services; as well as what RQIA has learnt from the Coronavirus Pandemic; and how RQIA will move forward. This report is focused on the five strategic goals of Quality 2020:

- Transforming the Culture
- Strengthening the Workforce
- Measuring the Improvement
- Raising the Standards
- Integrating the Care

As Northern Ireland's inspection and improvement body for health and social care, RQIA has a clear vision for how its activities ensure care is safe, effective, compassionate and well-led. Its work programmes help to support and regulate providers to ensure that people in Northern Ireland can experience a better quality of health and social care services.

RQIA registers and inspects a wide range of independent and statutory health and social care services. Through its Review Programme it assures the quality of services provided by the HSC Board, HSC Trusts and Agencies. It also undertakes a range of responsibilities for upholding quality of care for people with mental ill health and those with a learning disability.

RQIA is committed to working closely with providers of health and social care services so that they can deliver improved care. RQIA is also dedicated to hearing and acting on the experiences of patients, clients, families and carers. It is only by working in partnership with users and providers of care that RQIA can effectively encourage and influence improvement.

Through its work, RQIA provides assurance about the quality of care, challenges poor practice, promotes improvement, safeguards the rights of service users and informs the public through the publication of its reports.

RQIA has adopted the regional HSC Core Values. These are: working together; excellence; compassion; and openness and honesty; they underpin all RQIA's work.

RQIA is committed to contributing to the delivery of the Department of Health's Quality 2020 Strategy through its programmes of work, which aim to support and encourage continuous improvement in the quality of Northern Ireland's health and social care services.

## Strategic Goal 1: Transforming the Culture

***We will make achieving high quality the top priority at all levels in health and social care. We will promote and encourage partnerships between staff, patients, clients and carers to support decision making.***

### Governance and Assurance

RQIA's Board is responsible for the oversight of corporate performance and governance arrangements within the organisation. Through regular meetings, Board Members assess corporate performance reports, which detail the organisation's progress against strategic and operational aims and objectives and its commitment to quality improvement.

RQIA's programme of internal audit provides the Board and the Department of Health with assurance on governance arrangements. During the year, the following areas were audited:

- Complaints and Whistleblowing
- Financial Review
- IT Security
- Follow Up – Inspections 2019 / 20

RQIA's response to address the recommendations arising from each audit are shared with Board members through RQIA's Audit Committee, which monitors progress through its meetings and provides assurance to the Board. The Head of Internal Audit's annual report found that there is a satisfactory system of internal control designed to meet RQIA's objectives.

### Policy Development

During 2019-20, RQIA continued to progress the development and analysis of its risk-adjusted, dynamic and responsive (RADaR) framework in partnership with the University of Ulster, to identify, quantify and respond to regulatory risks more robustly.

This approach brings together intelligence - including incident notifications, complaints and whistleblowing information – as well as the individual inspector's detailed knowledge of a particular service to help determine the frequency and urgency of inspection.



Through this approach RQIA aims to identify services where there are concerns about the quality of care and which may require additional inspection. This enables RQIA to identify services of most concern and to focus resources and inspection programmes appropriately.

In April 2019, RQIA began a second year of data collection across nursing and residential care home inspections and carried out analysis on the findings from 2018-19 which showed significant differences in the level and type of risk observed in nursing and residential homes.

The findings have been presented to colleagues in the Department of Health, at the Independent Healthcare Providers AGM, Reform of Adult Social Care Project Group and Queen’s University Belfast (QUB) Care Homes Conference.

## Driving Quality Improvements for Service Users

### Listening to the Voice of the Public

The majority of RQIA inspections are unannounced and therefore families will not be aware when inspections are taking place. In order to capture the views of service users and families, every care home in Northern Ireland displays posters which highlight RQIA’s role in inspecting the service and provides contact details to allow service users, their families and staff to speak directly with inspection teams.

RQIA also introduced “calling cards”, which inspectors leave in bedrooms and day rooms, inviting service users and their families to contact RQIA about their personal experiences in the home.



Did You Know? Calling Cards



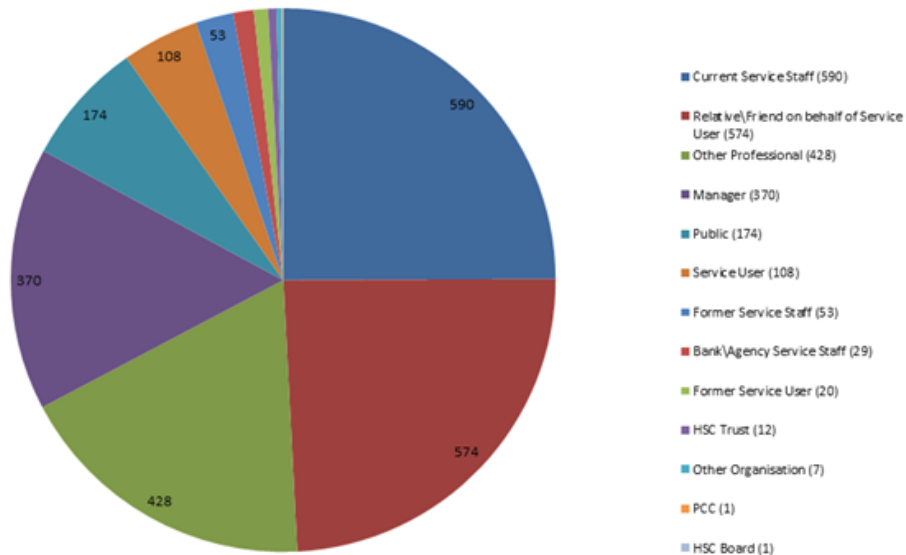
Tell Us Posters

This first-hand information provides RQIA with a unique insight into the care provision and helps to develop a fully rounded view of a service.

## RQIA's Duty Desk

On a daily basis there is a dedicated inspector on duty who responds to calls from service providers and the public. During the year, duty inspectors responded to over 2,350 calls – almost 900 of which were from members of the public wishing to discuss queries or concerns about a care service.

Source of Contact to RQIA Duty Desk: 2019-20



In each case the duty inspector listens to the caller, provides advice and records details of the call and follow-up actions on the iConnect information system. Where specific concerns are raised, RQIA assesses the information provided and determines how best to respond. This may include following up the issues raised with management of the service; conducting an unannounced inspection to examine the concerns and, where necessary, taking enforcement action.

## Complaints about Health and Social Care Services



RQIA takes every concern brought to its attention about a health and social care service seriously. It uses this information to inform inspection and review work.

RQIA complaints guidance leaflets

Any information received is passed to the inspectors aligned to that particular service, to determine whether there are any issues that require immediate attention.



Through inspections RQIA also ensures that each provider has a complaints and investigations procedure in place. RQIA will provide advice and guidance to support individuals in raising their concerns or complaints in the most effective manner, signposting key organisations including Health and Social Care Trusts and the Patient and Client Council. Where a complainant is dissatisfied with the response to their complaint, they may raise this with the Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsman

## **Whistleblowing**

Under public interest disclosure legislation health and social care workers wishing to raise concerns about wrongdoing in their workplace can do so by bringing these to the attention of RQIA. During 2019-20, RQIA was contacted by telephone, email and in writing by almost 200 staff, from a range of statutory and independent health and social care settings, who wished to raise concerns about the services being provided in their workplace. These included: concerns around the quality of care, staffing issues, management and general care concerns.

While some staff wished to remain anonymous, many provided their name and contact details, allowing RQIA to seek further information about their concerns. This provides RQIA with valuable information and insight into services. In each case RQIA considered the information carefully to determine what action was required. Where appropriate, RQIA conducted unannounced inspections to follow up on concerns and to drive improvements in quality for those using these services. In other cases no evidence to substantiate the allegations was found.

## **Commitment to Excellence**

RQIA is strongly committed to ensuring that all its work is of the highest quality. It operates within a shared culture of excellence. RQIA has adopted the regional health and social care values, which underpin its work. These values are:

- Working together
- Excellence
- Compassion
- Openness and Honesty

RQIA endeavours to live these values in all that it does and how it behaves with service users, providers, carers and the general public. These values also underpin our personnel management system and staff behaviours.

RQIA is an 'Investors in People' accredited organisation and supports its staff through regular supervision meetings and its staff appraisal programme, where performance is discussed; difficulties identified and achievement is celebrated.

## **Listening to Staff**

The Chief Executive and Executive Management Team lead regular staff meetings, where the latest news is shared. These provide senior management with an opportunity to listen to staff and encourage them to be involved in decision-making, problem solving and innovation. The meetings also provide a platform for staff to share examples of best practice with colleagues across RQIA. Staff contribute to the agenda to ensure the meetings are relevant to employees at all levels. Following the meeting, a minute is circulated to all staff to ensure those unable to attend are kept fully informed.

## **HSC 2019 Staff Survey**

The biannual regional HSC Staff Survey was launched in early March 2019, providing all staff an opportunity to have their say about what is working well within RQIA and also to indicate where positive improvements could be made.

Staff Survey results were received in late 2019 and shared with RQIA's Board.

## **Complaints about RQIA**

During 2019-20, we received eight complaints or expressions of dissatisfaction relating to RQIA, including one anonymous complaint. These were managed in line with the Complaints Policy and Procedure.

Following examination of each complaint, two were deemed to fall outside the role and remit of RQIA. Four complaints were resolved at the early resolution stage; one was resolved at the formal resolution stage. The issues raised in the one anonymous complaint were examined to determine whether any further action was required by RQIA. Learning from these complaints was disseminated to relevant staff.

## **Communications and Engagement**

In September 2019, RQIA's Board approved the RQIA Communications and Engagement Strategy, which aims to support the delivery of RQIA's strategic goals, and underpins all RQIA communications and engagement activities.

## **Public Awareness of RQIA**

Planning has commenced to increase and encourage public involvement and participation in RQIA's work using a range of methods including face to face engagement and via social media.

The Communications and Engagement Strategy was approved by the Board during quarter two and the inaugural RQIA Open House event took place with highly positive feedback from attendees.

## Engaging with the Public



RQIA Open House Event

In October 2019, RQIA held its first Open House, where members of the public had an opportunity to visit the offices and meet staff; hear about RQIA's work to assure public confidence in health and social care; speak directly to the Senior Management Team and Acting Chair; ask about any aspect of RQIA; and explore how they could get involved in RQIA's work.

The event was promoted through social media channels, newspapers and with support from partner organisations including Age Sector Platform, Age NI, VOYPIC, the Patient and Client Council, HSC Board, Ulster University and QUB. Feedback from attendees was highly positive and will be used to inform future public engagement activities.

## Political Engagement

RQIA continued its engagement with representatives from the main political parties, through meetings with representatives, including their health and social care spokespersons, to discuss the role of RQIA and specific areas of interest.

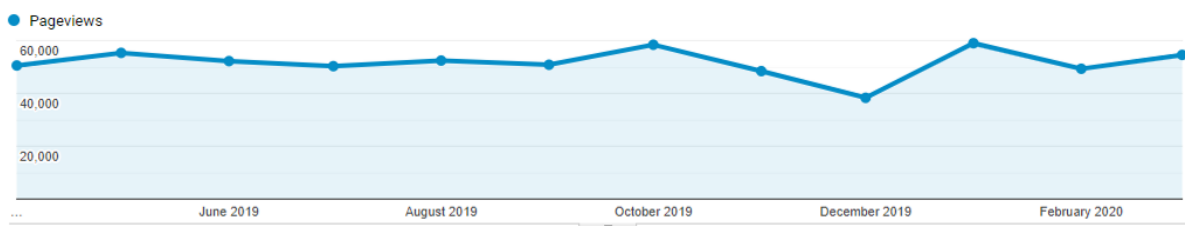
## Digital Communication

Throughout the year RQIA continued to add new content to the website to support service providers and the public. During 2019-20 [www.rqia.org.uk](http://www.rqia.org.uk) received around 130,000 unique visitors, resulting in over 600,000 webpage views, a 9% increase on the previous year.

RQIA published over 13,000 inspection reports for care services, which are available through an interactive map, or directly through the search function on the website. This continues to be the most visited part of the website, with around a quarter of a million page views during the year.

Visits to the website are also promoted via [@RQIANews](https://twitter.com/RQIANews), the Twitter account, which highlights when new content is added.

## Web Traffic: April 2019-March 2020



Web Traffic: April 2019-March 2020



@RQIANews Twitter Account

In response to feedback from visitors to the website, a monthly list is published of the latest inspection reports. These lists were accessed over 13,000 times during 2019-20, an increase of 60% on the previous year.

## Quality Improvement (QI) Strategy

In 2019, following a baseline Quality Improvement (QI) capability and capacity assessment, RQIA developed a QI Strategy. This was presented to, and agreed by, the RQIA Board on 6 June 2019. It encompassed three strategic principles: collective leadership, effective use of data; and nurturing an improvement culture. It aimed to train 90% of RQIA staff to Level 1, 3% to Level 2 and 1% to Level 3 within the first year. It was intended that internal QI coaches would be identified, trained to Level 2 QI and would implement a QI Forum where staff could bring QI ideas and be supported in taking them forward. Following completion of successful QI initiatives, it was intended that QI showcase events would be held.

During 2020, five internal Quality Improvement Initiatives were completed: Learning Implemented from SAIs in a Mental Health Unit; Strengthening Assurance of Controlled Drugs and Conscious Sedation in Dental Practice; Strengthening Assurance of the Form 10 Process; Introduction of Safety Briefs: Improving the effectiveness of safety briefs.

RQIA is committed to building internal QI capability during 2021-22 and, as part of this, will take forward plans for a QI Forum and showcase events. The RQIA QI Programme for 2021-22 will fund regional QI work; and RQIA will work with HSCQI during the application process in order to determine best use of this resource.

## Strategic Goal 2: Strengthening the Workforce

***We will provide the right education, training and support to deliver a high quality service. We will develop leadership skills at all levels and empower staff to take decisions and make changes.***

### External Accreditation

Since 2018 RQIA has held International Organization for Standardization (ISO) 9001 accreditation, which provides evidence internally to RQIA's staff and Board and to external stakeholders that there are robust governance systems and processes in place to deliver RQIA's core functions to this international standard. To ensure a continued focus on quality, RQIA processes are subject to ongoing audit.

RQIA also holds Investors in People (IiP) accreditation - the standard for people management. The IiP performance model provides a pathway to future progress and a journey of continuous improvement, which aligns with RQIA's approach to quality improvement.

### RQIA's Staff

RQIA is structured to ensure that staffing resources are aligned to deliver Business Plan objectives. RQIA has 124 staff, excluding Board Members, bank and agency staff. The staff composition, by headcount, is 75% female and 25% male.



hscrecruit.com

### Inspector Band 7

Are you interested in driving quality improvement in health and social care across Northern Ireland?

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) is the independent regulator of health and social care in Northern Ireland. Through our programme of inspections, reviews and audits, we support quality improvement in health and social care services.

We are offering an exciting opportunity for nurses, social workers and allied health professionals with drive and ambition to join RQIA's inspector team, as a Band 7 inspector, on a permanent basis (full-time or job-share) or as a member of our bank staff.

The successful applicants will join our enthusiastic team of inspectors, responsible for supporting and driving quality improvement in care homes, domiciliary care, dental practices, independent health, hospitals and mental health wards. The results of your work will also help members of the public to choose a care service that meets their individual needs.

**Salary:** Band 7 (€31,072 - €40,964 per year)

**Location:** RQIA has office bases in Belfast and Omagh

For further information, and to make an application, visit [www.hscrecruit.com](http://www.hscrecruit.com)

The closing date for applications: **19th June 2018**. Interviews will take place **late June, early July 2018**.

WE ARE AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES EMPLOYER

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority

During 2019-20, 21 members of staff left RQIA through retirement and taking up new opportunities.

A range of administration and inspector positions were advertised. This attracted a very high level of interest and 27 new staff joined the teams inspecting care homes, independent health care, hospitals and mental health and learning disability wards, and also our Business Support Unit.

## Staff Policies

RQIA has a duty of care to every member of staff, supported with a comprehensive range of human resources policies and procedures. In addition, RQIA ensures compliance with relevant employment legislation in this area, including: Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act, the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and The Disability Discrimination (Northern Ireland) Order 2006. RQIA has a range of human resources policies in place, which promote equality of opportunity across all Section 75 groupings.

Throughout the year, organisational learning development activities continued to ensure staff were equipped to deliver against the objectives within RQIA's Business Plan. This included a range of mandatory and job-specific training for staff across RQIA. RQIA has ensured that all staff have equal access to development opportunities in line with RQIA's Equality of Opportunity policy and the Agenda for Change terms and conditions.

Through the Joint Negotiating and Consultative Forum, RQIA takes a partnership approach to working with staff in conjunction with trade union representatives. The Forum continued to meet during the year, acting as a reference group for good practice and a focus for consultation and negotiation on policies and issues affecting the organisation.

RQIA is an equal opportunity employer and its policies and procedures are developed in line with equality legislation to ensure equal treatment for all. RQIA is committed to working with the Equality Commission in all aspects of equality and diversity in employment and occupation.

RQIA is committed to ensuring full and fair consideration is given to applicants with a disability, having regard to their abilities and aptitudes. During the year RQIA participated in the Joint Disability Placement Scheme in partnership with a range of HSC organisations, where two people with a disability worked in RQIA for a 26 week period, gaining valuable experience in the workplace and contributing significantly to RQIA's work. RQIA is pleased to report that one participant has been appointed to a permanent post within RQIA.

## Staff Training

RQIA's staff are its most valuable asset; RQIA is committed to ensuring that they are equipped to achieve. In addition to job-specific training, during the year staff undertook mandatory training on ICT Security; Information Governance; Fraud Awareness; Personal and Public Involvement; Risk awareness; and the Quality 2020 Attributes Framework.

72% of RQIA staff completed Level 1 QI training. Six Level 2 SQB places were secured at the Belfast Trust. Six RQIA staff commenced this training in February 2020. However, training was halted due to COVID-19. It is intended that staff will recommence Level 2 training as early as possible. One member of staff completed Level 3 QI training on the Scottish Quality Improvement Leader Programme.

The Scottish Improvement Leader Programme (ScIL) is designed to develop individuals who will be able to design, develop and lead improvement projects, generating support for change, while providing expert improvement support and advice.

In May 2019, RQIA welcomed Assumpta Ryan, Professor of Ageing and Health at Ulster University, who provided staff with an overview on supporting older people and their families navigating the changing roles and responsibilities associated with old age and caregiving.

In the autumn, RQIA held its annual learning week to support staff in their daily work. This included sessions on: quality improvement; collective leadership; data interrogation and analysis; governance; and the Mental Capacity Act; and LGBT rights.



Professor Assumpta Ryan, Ulster University; Linda Edgar, PHA Enrich Programme

Colleagues from RQIA, representatives from other HSC organisations, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and voluntary organisations also led training, including sessions on: infection prevention and control; oral health in care homes; improving the experiences of adults with swallowing difficulties; nutrition and hydration in care homes; and maintenance of hearing aids in care homes.

### Sickness Absence

RQIA manages all sickness absence in line with its attendance management policy and associated procedures. During 2019-20, there was an average of 8.88% staff absence. The absence target for 2019-20 was 7.39%. This compares to a rate of 7.78% in 2018-19.

### Social, Community and Environmental Matters

Throughout the year RQIA continued its focus on energy reduction, recycling office waste, promotion of healthy lifestyles and the use of public transport.



(L) RQIA staff join a Sustrans lunchtime bike ride;

(R) Representatives from Hope 4 ME Fibro and Versus Arthritis visit RQIA

Each month RQIA held a “dress down day” where staff organised collections for local health-related charities. RQIA also hosted a Mental Health Awareness Day for staff where a representative from Inspire focused on issues including depression, anxiety and obsessive compulsive disorders (OCD). RQIA also held an information session focusing on Fibromyalgia, joined by speakers from Hope 4 ME Fibro and Versus Arthritis.



## Strategic Goal 3: Measuring the Improvement

***We will improve outcome measurements and report on progress for safety, effectiveness and the patient/client experience. We will promote the use of accredited improvement techniques and ensure that there is sufficient capacity and capability within the HSC to use them effectively.***

### Regulation of Services

#### Registration and Inspection of Health and Social Care Services

RQIA is responsible for the inspection of health and social care services under a range of powers. RQIA registers and inspects care homes; children's homes; domiciliary care and nursing agencies; residential family centres; adult day care services; private dental clinics; hospices; and independent hospitals and clinics. These are known as regulated services. There were 1,521 services registered with RQIA at 31 March 2020, an increase of 33 from the previous year.

#### Number of Registered Services by HSC Trust at 31 March 2020

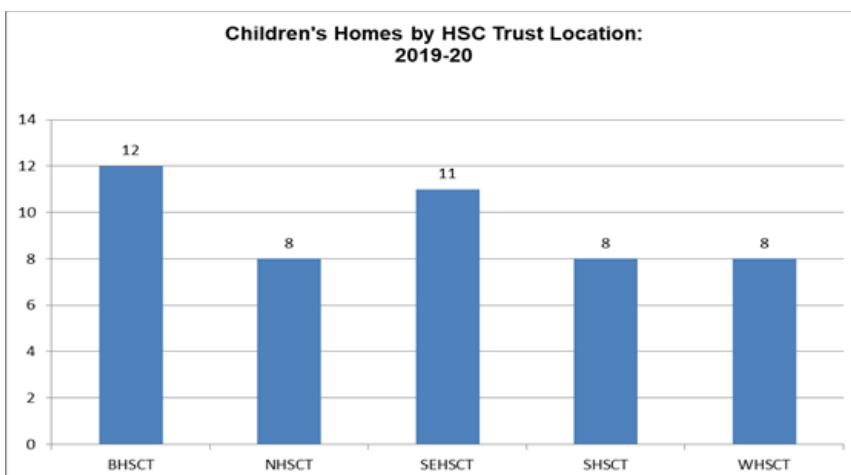
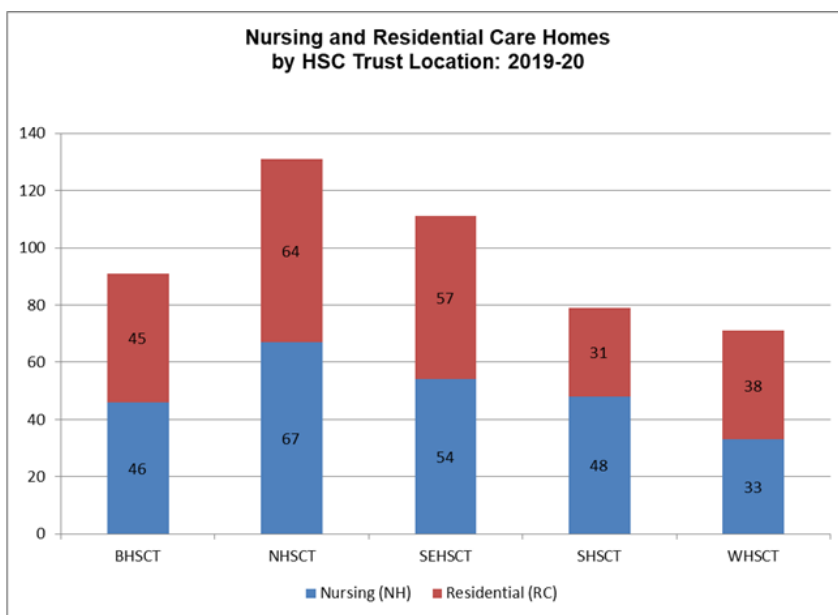
Service Type	BHSCT	NHSCT	SEHSCT	SHSCT	WHSCT	Total
Adult Placement Agencies						4
Children's Homes	12	8	11	8	8	47
Day Care Settings	31	26	27	31	54	169
Domiciliary Care Agencies (Conventional)						115
Domiciliary Care Agencies (Supported Living Services)						188
Dental Practices	93	85	65	73	57	373
Independent Clinics	4		1	1		6
Independent Hospitals	26	13	11	8	11	69
Independent Medical Agencies						6
Nursing Homes	46	67	54	48	33	248
Nursing Agencies						58
Residential Care Homes	45	64	57	31	38	235
Residential Family Centres	1					1
Voluntary Adoption Agencies						2
<b>Total</b>	<b>258</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>226</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>201</b>	<b>1,521*</b>

Under separate responsibilities RQIA also **inspects** a range of other services, which are not required to **register** with RQIA. These include:

- HSC hospitals
- Mental health and learning disability wards
- Custody suites and prisons
- Young adult supported housing services
- School boarding departments
- Radiation services (IR(ME)R)

In each case RQIA assesses the arrangements in place to ensure the delivery of safe, effective, compassionate and high quality care in line with relevant legislation, standards and guidance. RQIA also examines the quality of leadership and management in these services.

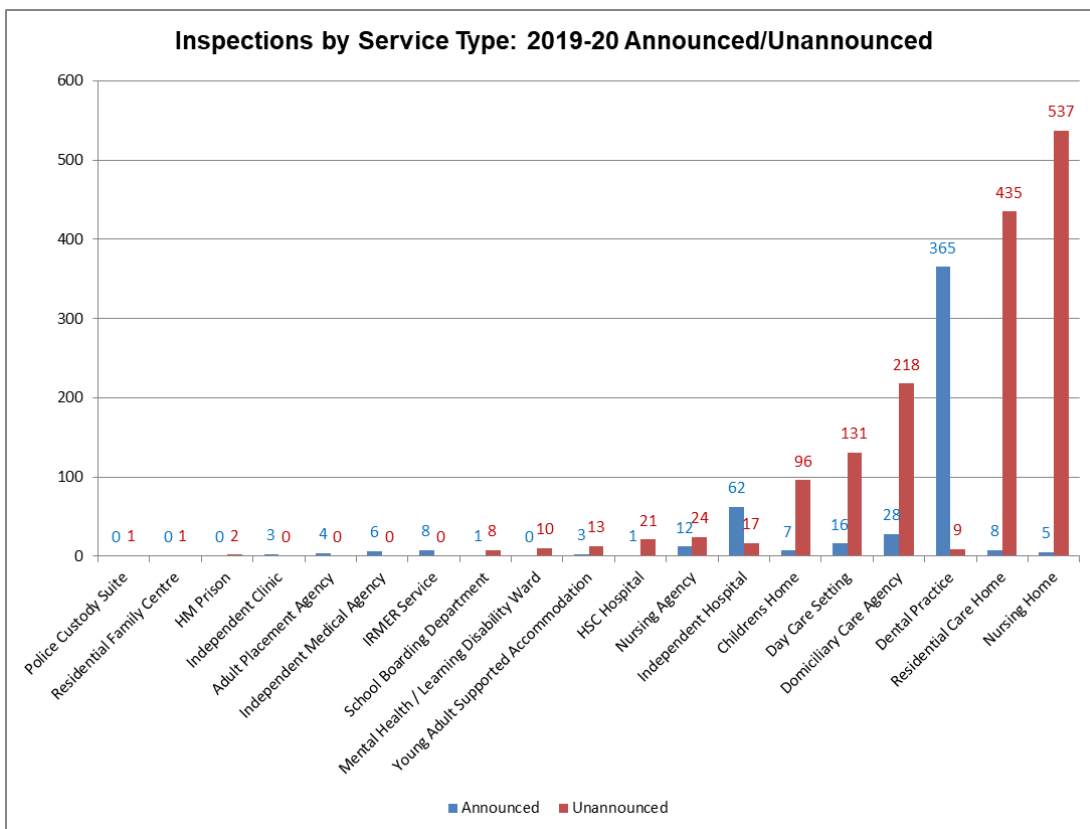
The following charts show the distribution of care homes for adults and children across Northern Ireland, by their HSC trust location.



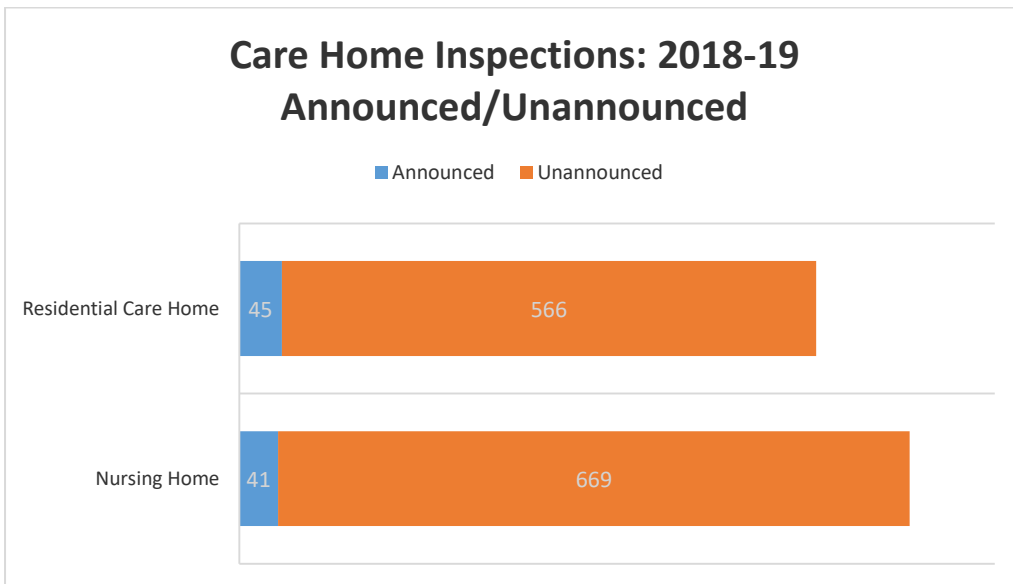
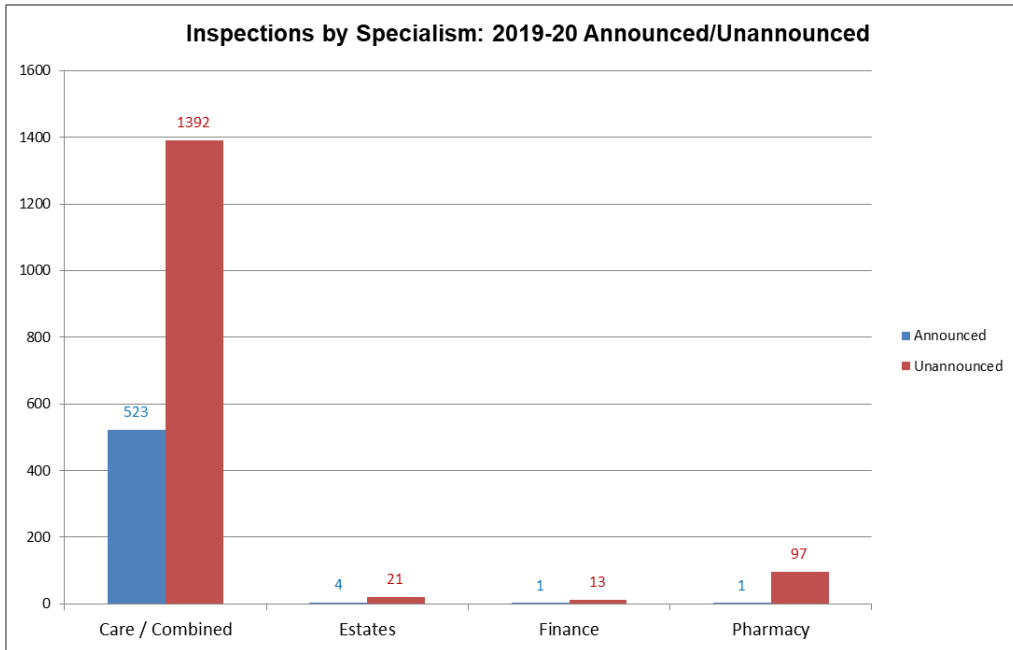
## How We Inspect

RQIA has a team of experienced nurses, social workers, pharmacists, estates and finance officers, who examine care, medicines management, estates issues and arrangements for safeguarding service users' finances. When preparing for an inspection, inspectors review information about the service, held on RQIA's iConnect information system, which includes details of the regulatory history of the service.

During the year RQIA conducted 2,052 inspections. The majority of these inspections were unannounced (1,523), taking place with no advance notice to the provider, with almost 99% of all care home inspections unannounced. Most inspections at independent hospitals and dental practices are announced. During inspections, inspectors examine compliance with regulations and care standards, and assess whether care is safe, effective and compassionate, and also consider whether the service is well managed. Given the importance of the manager's role, RQIA will only register a new service where a permanent manager has been registered by RQIA.



RQIA inspections focused on leadership, management and governance and, as a result, identified a number of services where it was necessary to increase regulatory oversight. This included additional inspections, meetings with providers and, in certain cases, enforcement action. RQIA completed 88% of its overall planned inspection programme; every care home received at least one inspection.



During this time, RQIA continued to assess notifications, concerns and other intelligence for every service and, based on the assessed risk, conducted an additional 108 inspections. The Department of Health, RQIA’s Board and the Audit Committee were kept informed of the situation throughout the year.

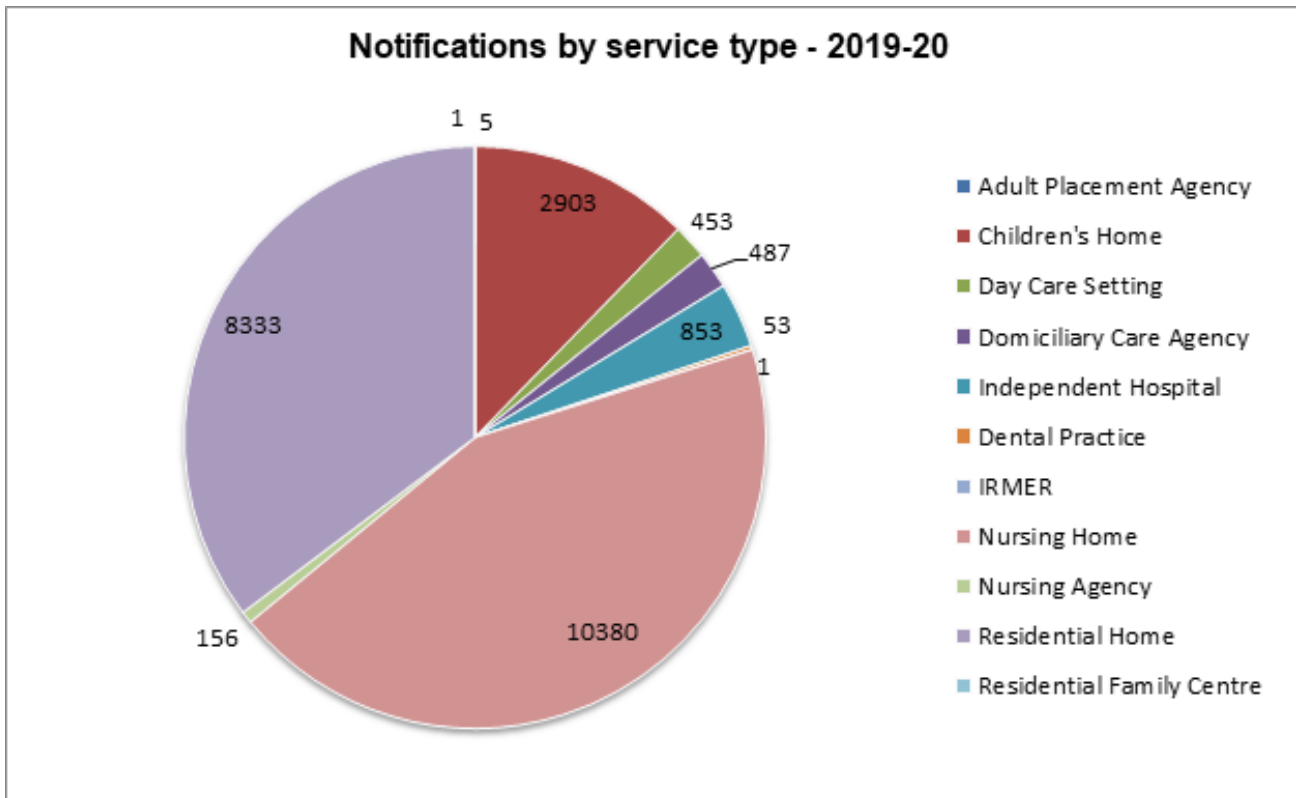
While most inspections at regulated services are conducted by individual inspectors, our hospital and prison inspections involve multidisciplinary teams (MDT’s), including peer and lay involvement.

This year RQIA has extended this MDT approach to I settings, where teams inspect hospital sites rather than individual wards. This allows fuller assessment of governance arrangements for the provision of care across a hospital, identifying both areas of good practice and issues that require attention by the HSC Trust.

## What Information RQIA Uses

When preparing for an inspection, inspectors review information about the service held on RQIA's iConnect information system. This includes details of the regulatory history of the service - such as inspections and enforcement; intelligence about the service, including complaints or compliments from the public, whistleblowing from staff members; and statutory notifications from the service relating to incidents.

All service providers are required to communicate with RQIA via a secure online web-based portal, for issues relating to inspections and incident notifications. There are almost 3,100 registered users on this system – including service providers and managers. During the year over 23,000 incident notifications were submitted to RQIA via the portal.

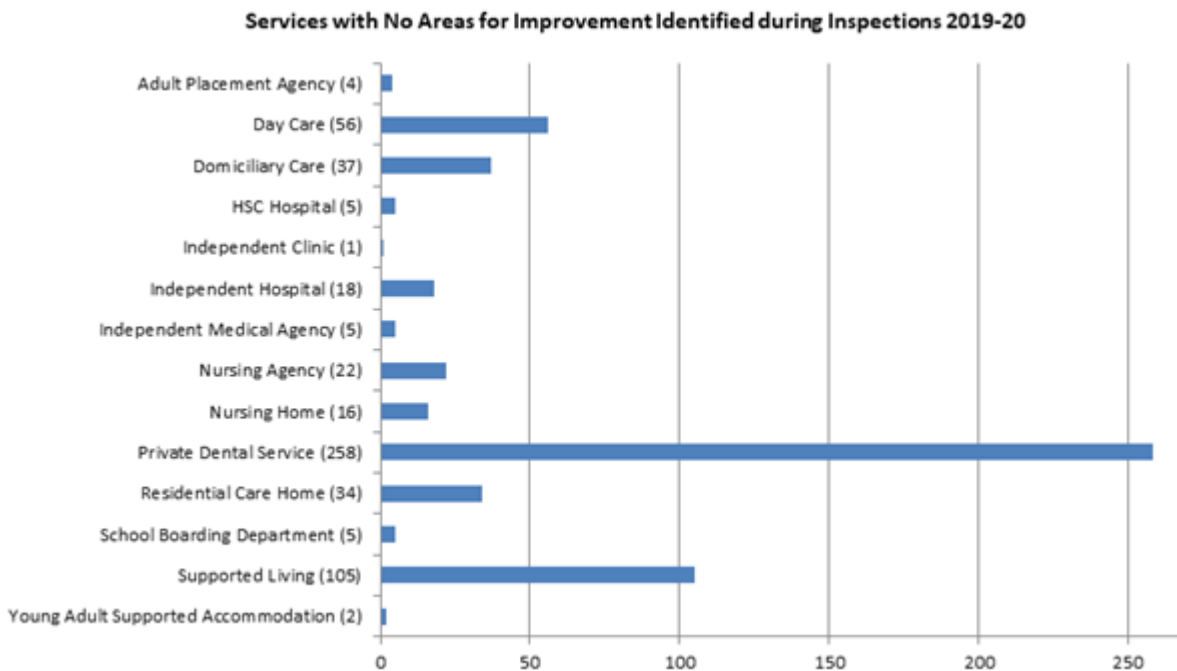


## What RQIA Looks For

During an inspection performance is assessed against standards, guidelines and regulations. In RQIA's assessment of the service, inspectors observe practice and review records of care. To ensure a fully rounded view of the service, inspectors talk to management, staff and visiting health care staff such as GPs, tissue viability nurses, social workers and care managers to hear their views and experience of working in the service. The most important people in any service are those in receipt of care, so inspectors also talk to service users, carers, friends and relatives to hear their views and experiences of the care provided.

## Outcome of Inspections

At the conclusion of an inspection, inspectors provide verbal feedback to the management of the service, highlighting both areas of good practice and issues that require attention. This is followed up with a formal written report, detailing the findings and, where necessary, including an action plan of areas for improvement. The findings of all RQIA inspections (excluding those for children’s homes) are published on our website at [www.rqia.org.uk/inspections](http://www.rqia.org.uk/inspections). RQIA inspection reports are also available on request from each service RQIA inspects. During 2019-20, 568 services (40% of all services) were operating in line with relevant legislation and standards, with no areas for improvement highlighted by inspectors.



To support the regional response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, on 20 March 2020, the Department of Health directed RQIA to reduce the frequency of statutory inspection activity, in order to minimise the risk of spreading infection to the most vulnerable people in society. This was consistent with the approach of health and social care regulators across the UK and Ireland. However, during this period RQIA continued to regulate and respond to risks and concerns, conducting inspections and taking enforcement action, where necessary.

## RQIA’s Review Activity

Each year RQIA undertakes service and thematic reviews, in response to current events, or to examine the emerging and developing needs of RQIA’s wide range of stakeholders. These include those initiated by RQIA and others commissioned by the Department of Health.

In planning and reporting on the findings of our reviews, the focus is on whether care is safe, effective and compassionate; and on the quality of leadership within a service. The findings from each review are submitted to the Department of Health for consideration.

Review recommendations aim to support and drive quality improvements across Northern Ireland for those in receipt of services. In addition, recommendations also aim to influence policy in a range of areas across health and social care.

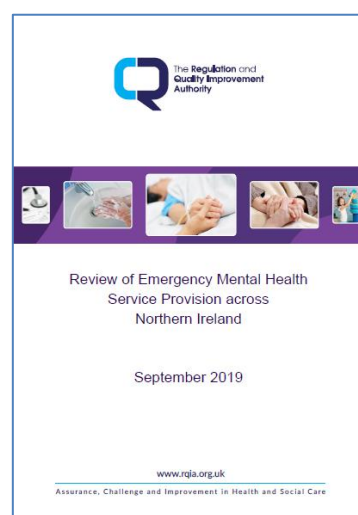
### **During 2019-20, findings from the following reviews were published:**

- Review of Emergency Mental Health Service Provision across Northern Ireland (September 2019)
- Review of Developing Eyecare Partnerships (September 2019)
- Review of General Paediatric Surgery in Northern Ireland (December 2019)
- Review of Governance of Outpatient Services in the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, with a particular focus on Neurology Services and other High Volume Specialties (February 2020)

### **Review of Emergency Mental Health Service Provision across Northern Ireland**

In September 2019, RQIA published the findings of the Independent Review of Emergency Mental Health Service Provision across Northern Ireland. This included: adult mental health services (18-65 years); older people's services (over 65 years); child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) (0-18 years); learning disability services for children and adults; and emergency departments.

Services were assessed in line with the HSC Board and Public Health Agency's Regional Mental Health Care Pathway for Northern Ireland.



RQIA's expert review team found that each HSC Trust had systems and processes in place to provide emergency services for patients of all ages during normal working hours (Monday to Friday 9:00 am to 5:00 pm). However, it was a challenge for all Trusts to provide dedicated specialised services during out-of-hours periods, particularly for children and young people, people with learning disability and older people's services.

RQIA's Review Report made nine recommendations to support the continued improvement of emergency mental health service provision across Northern Ireland.

## Review of Developing Eyecare Partnerships



This Review assessed the implementation and effectiveness of the commissioning and provision of eyecare services in Northern Ireland from 2013 to 2017 under the Developing Eyecare Partnerships (DEP) Strategy (Department of Health).

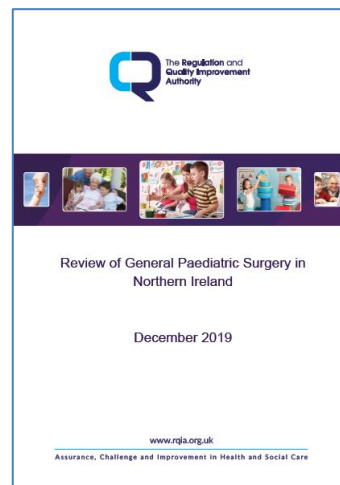
Overall the DEP Strategy was considered by stakeholders to have facilitated service improvement, development and health promotion. RQIA's expert review team found support among stakeholders for the DEP project and considered that the implementation process for the project had generally been effective. RQIA recommended that an eyecare network should be established, following on from the DEP project.

RQIA published the Report of its findings in September 2019, making nine recommendations aimed at consolidating DEP and facilitating the future development of eyecare services across Northern Ireland.

## Review of General Paediatric Surgery in Northern Ireland

In December 2019, RQIA published the findings of its Review of General Paediatric Surgery in Northern Ireland. The provision of general paediatric surgery was examined against the 2010 Standards and the 2016 Paediatric Strategy published by the Department of Health.

RQIA found limited progress had been made in relation to the standards and the 2016 Strategy, and the current surgical model presents challenges for service delivery and inequity of access.



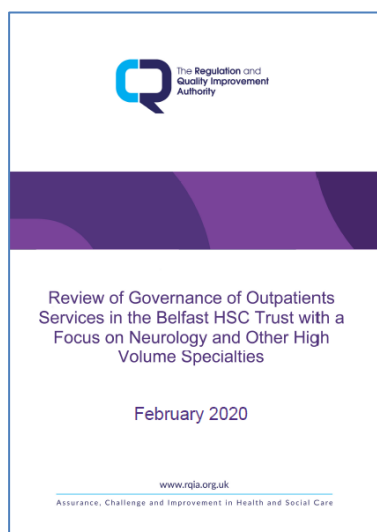
In line with the 2016 Strategy, the Review proposed the establishment and operation of a managed clinical network to develop:

- a new hub and spoke model for general surgery;
- a regional training programme for non-children's nurses;
- arrangements for refresher training in relation to child protection, safeguarding, and paediatric life support;
- the implementation systems for centralised referral and waiting list management.

The review team made 13 recommendations to support further improvement in the provision of general paediatric surgery.



## Review of Governance of Outpatients in the Belfast Trust with a Particular Focus on Neurology and Other High Volume Specialties



In February 2020, RQIA published the findings of this Review, which was part of a wider programme of work commissioned in 2018 related to the recall of 2,500 patients under the care of Dr Watt, a consultant neurologist in the Belfast Trust.

RQIA's expert review team from across the UK, including members with executive management experience in clinical and corporate governance and others with expertise in hospital inspection and general practice, examined a number of aspects of outpatient services across the Belfast Trust.

This included access to services, safeguarding arrangements and medicines management. The team also considered wider governance arrangements, clinical peer review and use of information and intelligence. In addition to engaging with frontline staff and senior management at the Trust, the Review also captured the views and experiences of patients, families and carers and GPs interacting with the service.

RQIA's expert review team considered there was a need for robust validation of waiting lists and improved oversight and monitoring of patients transferring to the Belfast Trust from the independent sector. It also found that the levels of staff training, knowledge and awareness of safeguarding were a significant concern across the Trust's outpatient services. While there was robust oversight of prescribing of specialist medicines, RQIA found limited oversight of all other prescribing in outpatient services, which affected the Trust's ability to identify unusual prescribing practices in outpatient services. RQIA also considered that better use of information and intelligence would strengthen the governance and assurance of these services and improve oversight of outpatient consultants and specialist nurses.

The review team made 26 recommendations for improvement to strengthen the governance arrangements in the Belfast Trust's outpatient services, which are also relevant to other HSC organisations across Northern Ireland.

### Ongoing Review Work

Work continued on a number of reviews, which will be published in the year ahead:

- Review of Implementation of NICE Clinical Guideline CG174 Intravenous Fluid Therapy in Adults in Hospital
- Review of Out-of-Hours General Practitioner Service
- Review of Governance (Corporate and Clinical) in Independent (Private) Hospitals and Hospices in Northern Ireland

Work also progressed on the following reviews:

- Review of Serious Adverse Incidents
- An Expert Review of the Clinical Records of all Patients or Former Patients of Dr Watt who had Deceased over the past 10 years

In March 2020, to support the regional response to the Coronavirus Pandemic, the Department of Health directed RQIA to focus its activities on responding to the impact of the global Pandemic and areas of greatest risk across our health and social care services. This included a temporary pause of RQIA's Review Programme, which was rescinded on 22 June 2020.

## Strategic Goal 4: Raising the Standards

***We will establish a framework of a clear evidence-based standards and best practice guidance. We will establish dynamic partnerships between service users, commissioners and providers to develop, monitor and review.***

### RQIA Clinical Audit Programme

To promote leadership in safety and quality in health and social care, each year RQIA invites applications from the HSC community for funding to undertake clinical audits, develop guidelines and carry out quality improvement (QI) projects. Outcomes for patients, clients and carers are improved through the development and integration of audits, guidelines and QI projects and as a result of their implementation.

During 2019-20 RQIA supported the following audits and QI projects:

- Regional Re-Audit of Medicines Reconciliation of the Immediate Discharge Document
- Stroke Network Regional Transient Ischaemic Attack (TIA) Re-Audit
- Audit of Red Flag Referrals to Belfast HSC Trust Dentistry
- Audit of Guideline for Admissions to Midwife-led Units (MLU)
- Development of Patient Information Leaflets and Departmental Cancer Handbook
- Self-sampling to Decrease the Did Not Attend (DNA) Rate in People referred to Colposcopy or on Follow-up for Cervical Abnormalities

RQIA also published the Guideline for Planning to Birth at Home in Northern Ireland, which was supported by the Programme in 2018-19. RQIA staff joined authors to present the Guideline at its launch in Parliament Buildings, Stormont.

### Public Involvement in RQIA Work

RQIA is committed to effective engagement with the public and stakeholders to achieve improvements in the safety and quality of services.

During inspections and reviews, working in partnership with RQIA staff, RQIA lay assessors observe the care provided and talk to patients, their relatives or carers about their experience of the service. This brings a fresh insight and public focus to our assessment of services. During the year, lay assessors joined in a range of inspections at care homes, mental health and learning disability services; and as part of RQIA's Review of Governance Arrangements in Outpatients Services in the Belfast Trust.

## Strategic Goal 5: Integrating the Care

***We will develop integrated pathways of care for individuals. We will make better use of multidisciplinary team working and shared opportunities for learning and development in the HSC and with external providers.***

### Partnership Working

RQIA continues to foster strong and effective partnerships with peer organisations including health and social care systems regulators, inspectorates and professional regulatory bodies across the UK and Ireland. Through this engagement, RQIA shares best practice in regulation and benchmarks its work with peer organisations.

Within Northern Ireland, RQIA has positive relationships with its sponsor body, the Department of Health, and with other HSC organisations including: the HSC Board, HSC Trusts, the Public Health Agency; Northern Ireland Social Care Council; Patient and Client Council; NI Guardian Ad Litem Agency; NI Practice and Education Council for Nursing and Midwifery and Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency. RQIA engages with these organisations on an ongoing basis and through regular one-to-one liaison meetings to share learning, discuss common interests and share areas of concern.

RQIA also works closely with other stakeholders including: Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland; Education and Training Inspectorate; Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons; The Prisoner Ombudsman for Northern Ireland; Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY); Age Sector Platform; and the Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland.



RQIA welcomes colleagues from partner organisations (L) Independent Health and Care Providers and UK Home Care Association; (R) British Dental Association

During the year RQIA also continued constructive engagement with a range of stakeholder representative organisations, including: the Independent Health and Care Providers; UK Homecare Association; British Dental Association; and the Association for Real Change.

RQIA has memoranda of understanding and information sharing protocols with a range of partner organisations, which support information sharing and co-operation in joint working and transparency when working on areas of mutual interest.

### **Sharing Best Practice: Engagement with Other Organisations**

In September 2019 RQIA welcomed a delegation from Cyprus Ministry of Health, discussing driving improvements in health and social care through effective regulation.

During the year RQIA staff visited the Care Inspectorate Scotland to share learning on approaches to regulation and inspection. RQIA staff also met the Care Inspectorate's Head of Risk and Intelligence in Belfast to discuss the use of intelligence and information to support improvements in health and social care.



RQIA staff host visitors from (L) Care Inspectorate Scotland and (R) Cyprus Ministry of Health

### **Support and Guidance for Care Providers**

As the regulator for health and social care services, RQIA is part of a wider system for ensuring the safety and wellbeing of those in receipt of care. In support of those delivering front-line services, during 2019-20, RQIA held a number of events providing advice and guidance to service providers.

In October 2019, RQIA hosted provider roadshows for care home and domiciliary care providers across Northern Ireland. At these bespoke events, providers received presentations and guidance on a range of topics including governance; monthly monitoring visits; quality improvement; human rights and the impact of the Mental Capacity Act (NI) 2016. Feedback from the roadshows was positive and will help shape future events and engagement with providers.

In December 2019, RQIA participated in a joint training event with the Royal College of Psychiatrists (NI) on the Mental Health Order and Mental Capacity Act.

During the year our inspection staff also participated in training sessions with colleagues from HSC trusts on a range of issues, including medicines management.



RQIA Staff at Royal College of Psychiatrists event

## COVID-19 Response

Responding to the COVID-19 Pandemic has required a strategic and joined up approach to supporting care services. This has fundamentally changed how RQIA operates, refocusing core services to provide support, advice and guidance to services dealing with the unforeseen challenges of the global Pandemic.

In line with the Departmental direction, RQIA re-balanced its role as a regulator with the provision of support to health and social care services. A number of key staff were transferred to other organisations to support the regional response to the Pandemic.

During the Pandemic, a new operational model developed which went some way towards modernisation of RQIA's regulatory approach – moving from traditional on-site inspection of registered services, to a model which used the RQIA Services Support Team to provide support for the sector, and enabling collaborative sharing of expert knowledge and information to HSC partner organisations, for example, the HSC Trusts and the Public Health Agency.

This shift has enhanced RQIA's regulatory and assurance functions, with a renewed focus on quality improvement.

It is underpinned by comprehensive and positive engagement with service users, their families and representative groups around such topics as visiting care homes. RQIA has also been able to add value by providing real-time data and intelligence, thus directing resources and support where it was most needed at the time.

The response to COVID-19 has emphasised an increased use of continuous assessment, based on information and intelligence, directing proportionate inspection, resulting in the development of a new assurance framework and a modernised approach to regulation.



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