



The **Regulation** and
Quality Improvement
Authority



2021-22

**Annual Quality
Report**

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Foreword

This is the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority's (RQIA's) ninth Annual Quality Report, covering the period April 2021 to March 2022.

This Annual Quality Report provides an overview of how RQIA, as the independent regulator of health and social care services, aligns its quality improvement activities to the Department of Health's Quality 2020, a ten year strategy designed to protect and improve quality in health and social care in Northern Ireland. It also provides the opportunity to report on the operation of RQIA's regulatory functions and processes, our findings and actions taken to ensure quality improvement in health and social care services.

Quality improvement is central to all the work that we do. As Northern Ireland's regulatory and improvement body for statutory and independent health and social care services, RQIA has a key role in providing assurance to the public and to the Department of Health, that care provided is safe, effective, compassionate and well-led. We aim to assure that as a result of the improvement requirements set out in RQIA's inspections and reviews, that people in Northern Ireland experience a better quality of health and social care.

Through our work we aim to secure high quality health and social care service provision and evidence of continuous improvement against standards. We embed these aims into our plans and work programmes, underpinned by effective governance and corporate performance management arrangements.

RQIA measures improvement in quality across health and social care through programmes of inspection and review programmes against key themes and standards. We assess the arrangements in place to ensure the delivery of safe, effective, compassionate and high quality care in line with legislation, standards and guidance, as well as the quality of leadership and management in those services.

A vital part of our work is listening to the experience of service users, and their loved ones. The lived experience is a key aspect of seeking evidence of quality.

As well as listening to and talking with service users, families and those working in health and social care services, we also receive information reported to us.

During 2021-22, RQIA's Guidance Team received and responded to over 2,000 concerns and queries about health and social care services. From these individual experiences of care and through the information shared with us, all of this adds to our assessment of the risks when deciding what regulatory action is required to respond to concerns and to drive improvement.

We use our independent role to ensure consistent application of the legislation arrangements under regulation, to challenge poor practice, and safeguard the rights of service users. We inform the public of our findings through the publication of our inspection reports.

While the function of regulation and its application must be independent, RQIA continues to strengthen our work by building partnerships and collaboration with our communities, with other statutory organisations, with professional and systems regulators and with the wider social endeavours across the region. Partnership creates opportunity for learning, sharing experience and skills, and for improvement through a joined-up approach.

2021-22 has presented many challenges across our whole communities. The health of our population is affected and many have suffered the direct impact on their own health and for loved ones. Health and social care services have continued to respond to the tremendous challenges and impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Throughout this pandemic we continue to safely carry out the work of regulation, supporting health and social care providers and staff to maintain standards and improve quality and safety for both service users and for people working within these vital services.

Briege Donaghy
Chief Executive

Introduction

This is RQIA's ninth 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 2021 to 31 March 2022 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 how RQIA continues to respond and learn from the Coronavirus Pandemic. 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 committed 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 in direct care experience.

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.

This report sets out progress made under each of the five strategic goals of Quality 2020.

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.

Transforming the Culture: Governance and Assurance

RQIA's Authority is responsible for the oversight of corporate performance and governance arrangements within the organisation. Through regular meetings, Authority Members of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) and the Business, Appointments and Remuneration Committee (BARC) assess arrangements for financial probity, risk management and audit, as well as oversee corporate performance reporting, detailing the organisation's progress against strategic and operational aims and objectives and its commitment to quality improvement. The committees report directly to the Authority on their role and assurances

The RQIA Governance Framework was refreshed in February 2022. This easy-read document set out the roles, responsibilities and procedures for the effective and efficient conduct of its business.

It also highlighted the internal and external elements of governance, outlining a timetable for key governance documentation to be presented to the RQIA Authority, its Committees and the Executive Management Team.

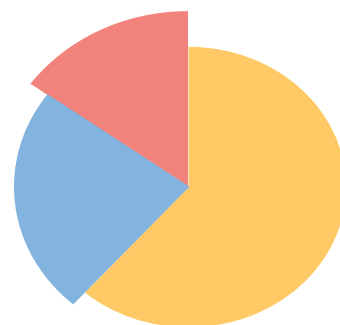
As part of RQIA's Performance Management Framework, regular performance management meetings for the three Directorates and Business Support Unit took place. These provided the opportunity for detailed reporting against key performance indicators and progress in meeting set objectives for each Directorate.

RQIA's Directorate Teams reported on their performance to the Authority, showing steady progress on the delivery of the actions identified within the Management Plan 2021-22. Through ARAC, RQIA ensured the effective identification and management of risks, in our Risk Management Strategy. These were monitored and managed by the Authority through regular review of the Principal Risk Document and Directorate Risk Registers.

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

- Financial Review – specifically Payroll, Non Pay Expenditure, Travel and Subsistence and Annual Fee Income) (satisfactory assurance);
- Registration Process for Agencies (limited assurance);
- Follow up on RQIA Trust Recommendations by RQIA in the Trust Hospital Inspection Programme (satisfactory assurance));
- Information Governance (satisfactory assurance);
- Risk Management (satisfactory assurance); and
- Governance (satisfactory assurance).

RQIA's response to address the recommendations arising from each audit are shared with Authority Members through ARAC which monitors progress through its meetings, providing assurance to the Authority.



Transforming the Culture: Partnership

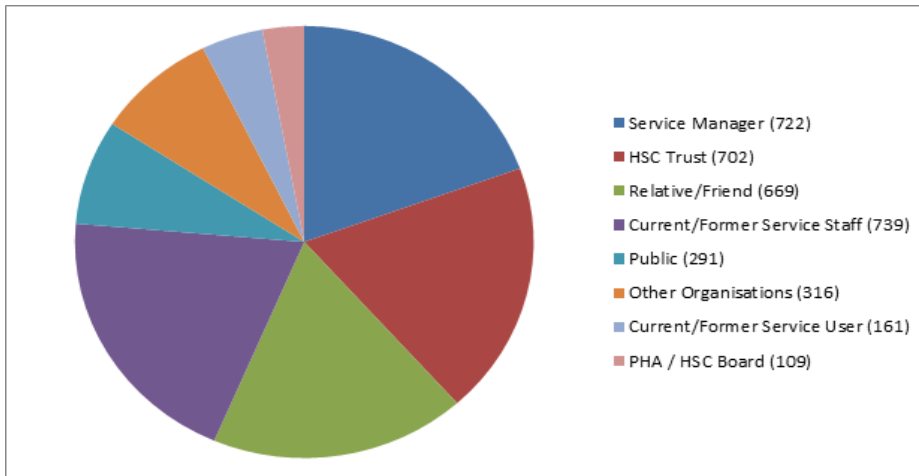
RQIA is determined to improve the safety and quality of services through active listening, dialogue and engagement with the public, service users, and health and social care workers and to ensure that our actions are properly informed by on the ground realities and lived experience.

RQIA continued to develop collaborative working and embed partnership arrangements with a number of organisations including Patient and Client Council (PCC), Commissioner for Older People Northern Ireland (COPNI) and others.

As part of our ongoing engagement programme, RQIA met with a range of stakeholder representative groups. During 2021-22, we established a Communications and Engagement Group, working with representatives from the independent and statutory health and social care sectors, as well as the Patient Client Council (PCC) and networking with other health regulators.

Transforming the Culture: Listening to Service Users, Families and Staff

The RQIA Guidance Team is on duty each day responding to calls from service providers and the public, and during 2020-21 we received over 3,700 calls. While the majority of these calls were from staff and management seeking advice and guidance, RQIA also received almost 1,100 calls from service users, members of the public and relatives wishing to discuss queries or concerns about care services. In each case, the Guidance Team Member listens to the caller, ascertains the issue, and provides appropriate advice. Details of the call are recorded on the i-Connect information system.



Where specific concerns are raised the information provided is assessed and a decision reached on how best to respond. This may include following up the issues raised with management of the service; conducting an unannounced inspection to investigate the concerns; and where necessary, taking enforcement action.



Transforming the Culture: Engaging with the Public

RQIA is committed to increasing effective engagement with the public and stakeholders to achieve improvements in the safety and quality of health and social care services. RQIA's Service Improvement Officer represents the organisation at the regional Personal and Public Involvement (PPI) Forum, which aims to support HSC organisations in the active and effective involvement of service users, carers and the public in decisions that affect their health and social care.

During the pandemic it was challenging for RQIA to involve lay assessors in on the ground inspection and review activities. However, to ensure RQIA is best placed to reinvigorate involvement as we emerge from the pandemic, RQIA has worked on the development of a lay assessor handbook. This project has been conducted in partnership with members of the public who supported RQIA in this area previously, and with colleagues in Care Inspectorate Scotland's Involvement and Equalities Team.

Other projects have included the development of dementia-friendly questionnaires to support feedback on the quality of care during inspections, developed in partnership with services and service users.

In March 2022, RQIA also established a co-production approach to reviewing the need for publication of the findings and outcomes of inspections of children's services. These are not currently published on RQIA's website, however, during 2022-23 we plan to consult on proposals for an agreed publication framework.

In August 2021, RQIA participated in the Voice of Young People in Care's (VOYPIC) Manifesto, a festival celebration to create a manifesto for change for young people in and leaving care. Here we engaged with young people on our work, and discussed how they can become involved in RQIA's work including inspections and reviews.

Transforming the Culture: Action on Concerns

RQIA takes every concern brought to its attention about a health and social care service seriously. The information is carefully considered and assessed to determine if there are any issues that require the immediate action by RQIA. Where necessary RQIA will undertake an inspection or follow the issues up with partner organisations, including the relevant Health and Social Care Trusts.

RQIA's "How Can I Raise a Concern ..?" leaflet provides advice and guidance to support the public in raising a complaint about a service. While RQIA does not have legal powers to investigate complaints about services, RQIA provides contact details for organisations that can help in taking a complaint forward - including the Patient and Client Council and the Health and Social Care Trusts. Where a complainant is dissatisfied with the service's response to their complaint, they may raise this matter with the Northern Ireland Public Service Ombudsman.

Every health and social care service is required to have its own complaints policy and procedures in place. RQIA checks that these are in place during its inspections of these services.

Transforming the Culture: Complaints About RQIA

We do welcome reports of concerns and complaints about our actions or how we conduct our work. These are a valuable source of learning for the organisation. The learning from individual complaints is applied to help improve how we do things.

During the year RQIA received 16 complaints or expressions of dissatisfaction in relation to the work of RQIA. These covered a range of themes including how RQIA carried out its inspections; registration processes; and responses to requests for information. Each complaint was managed in line with RQIA's complaints policy and procedure. Eight complaints were resolved at the early resolution stage and two were addressed at the formal resolution stage following a complaints investigation. Following review, three complaints were not considered to fall within the remit of RQIA's complaints policy, or where another process may be used to address the issues raised.

For these we gave advice on where to address their complaint, as well as an opportunity to discuss their concerns in a meeting with relevant RQIA staff. At 31 March 2022, three complaints investigations remained ongoing, all at the formal resolution stage. Each complaint was managed in line with RQIA's complaints policy and procedure, which reflects the approach laid out in the regional HSC Complaints arrangements.

Each complaint was reviewed to determine any learning for the organisation. This learning was then applied to help improve a service we deliver, or where something has gone wrong, to help ensure it does not occur again. Where there are themes or trends in complaints, these are analysed to help ensure any broader learning for RQIA can also be applied.

Where a complainant remains dissatisfied with RQIA's response to their complaints, they are advised of their right to bring their complaint to the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO).



Transforming the Culture: Whistleblowing

Under the public interest disclosure legislation anyone wishing to raise concerns about wrongdoing in their workplace can bring these to the attention of RQIA. In 2021-22 RQIA was contacted by telephone, email and in writing on 234 occasions by 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. This information provides RQIA with an invaluable insight into services, and included concerns around the quality of care, staffing issues, management and general care concerns.



While many staff provided their name and contact details, allowing further information to be sought on their concerns, others wished to remain anonymous. In each case RQIA carefully considered the information to determine what action was required. Where necessary, we conducted unannounced inspections to follow up on concerns, and to drive improvements in quality for those using these services.

Transforming the Culture: Living our Values

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:



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 staff behaviours and our personnel management. RQIA is an 'Investors in People' (Silver Award) 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.

Transforming the Culture: 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 have the opportunity to contribute to the agenda to ensure the meetings are relevant to employees at all levels.



Transforming the Culture: Evidence of Effective Regulation

During the year, RQIA commenced work with an Associate from the HSC Leadership Centre to develop a new Regulation Assurance Framework. This Framework aims to consolidate and set out the current best practice being undertaken by RQIA and to build a strengthened approach, ensuring our work is underpinned by robust risk, decision-making and judgement processes. The Framework will also be underpinned by a person-centred human rights based ethos, ensuring a consistent and robust approach and producing information to inform a regulatory risk decision.

Transforming the Culture: Sharing Information

Throughout the year RQIA continued to add new and updated content to its website www.rqia.org.uk to support service providers and the public alike. During 2021-22 RQIA received some 200,000 visitors, resulting in around 750,000 webpage views, a 25% increase on the previous year.

To date, over 15,500 inspection reports for both regulated and HSC trust services have been published and are available directly through the search function on the RQIA homepage or via an interactive map. These continue to be the most visited part of the website, with over a quarter million page views during the year. In response to feedback from those visiting the website, each month a list of recent inspection reports made available online over the previous month is published.

RQIA continued to provide a range of useful resources for service providers and the public relating to Covid-19, from a variety of sources such as the Department of Health, PHA and Trusts.

RQIA has continued to work collaboratively across the health and social care system in the regional response to the Covid-19 pandemic.



Our work included hosting a regional web portal to enable Care Homes to submit data on a daily basis about the issues being faced, including infection control, testing and workforce.

RQIA shared this information with HSC organisations to enable a collective response and support. We also maintained and strengthened our 'Guidance Team' support desk, which provided a point of contact, by telephone or email, for all stakeholders, including service users, families, staff and the public to contact RQIA about their concerns relating to any aspect of services.

RQIA also directs traffic to the website via [@RQIANews](https://twitter.com/RQIANews), the RQIA's Twitter account, where new content added can be notified immediately to almost 5,500 followers.

Transforming the Culture: Political Engagement

Throughout the year, RQIA continued its engagement with representatives from the main political parties to discuss the role of RQIA and specific areas of interest. Where RQIA undertook significant enforcement actions, the Chief Executive liaised directly with local political representatives to ensure they were fully briefed on the rationale for the action and on the carefully considered steps being taken to ensure the ongoing wellbeing and safety of those in receipt of these services.

During the year, RQIA had considerable engagement with the Health Committee.

RQIA provided responses to calls for evidence in respect of the:

- Health and Social Care Bill (in April 2021);
- Severe Fetal Impairment Abortion (Amendment) Bill (in May 2021); and
- Abortion Services (Safer Access Zones) Bill (in November 2021).

In November 2021, RQIA's Chief Executive, lead Director for Reviews and RQIA's Clinical Lead appeared before the Committee for Health to provide an update on the progress on The Expert Review of Records of Deceased Patients of Dr Watt (2008-2018).

RQIA also provided written updates to the Committee in June and November in respect of this review. A further written update was provided to the Committee in March 2022 in relation to Neurology review work streams, care homes, and RQIA's role in respect of Muckamore Abbey Hospital.

In December 2021, Robin Swann MLA, Minister of Health, met with RQIA's Interim Chair, Authority members and Executive Management Team to discuss current work, challenges and priorities for the year ahead.

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.

Strengthening the Workforce: Investors in People

Following an extension to the organisation's Investors in People (IiP) accreditation in 2020 due to the Covid-19 Pandemic, RQIA underwent its re-accreditation in 2021-22 and increased its level of award to Silver. During November/December 2021, the assessment involved over 90 people participating in an online survey, contextual meetings with Authority Members, the Chief Executive and senior leaders, and one-to-one discussions with 16 members of staff. The IiP Assessor commented: "Achieving Silver accreditation during a time of unprecedented challenge is a significant achievement. It demonstrates that the RQIA has not only sustained a purpose-values-driven culture but is evolving in the most difficult of circumstances, creating a strong platform for the future as the organisation continues to adapt, transform and thrive."

Strengthening the Workforce: RQIA Staff Profile

The RQIA's staff are its most valuable asset and responsible for the achievement of our corporate objectives and the effective delivery of the work programme. RQIA has a staffing complement of 120 people (114.33 whole time equivalent), excluding Authority members, bank and agency staff. The staff composition, by headcount, is 75% female and 25% male. During 2020-21, there was an average staff absence rate of 6.94%, against a (regional key performance indicator) target set for RQIA by DoH of 8.44%.

During 2020-21, there was a staff turnover of 12.6%, with 15 members of staff leaving RQIA through taking up new opportunities or retirement. RQIA advertised for a range of administration and inspector positions, which attracted a very high level of interest, and 14 new staff joined teams inspecting care homes, independent health care, hospitals and mental health and learning disability wards and the Business Support Unit.

As a result of the pandemic and in line with government guidance, from late March 2020 RQIA staff worked from home where this was practicable.

Strengthening the Workforce: 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 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 staff within 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.

Strengthening the Workforce: Staff Training

RQIA is committed to the development of its staff and ensures that staff have access to training opportunities to enable them to contribute fully to achieving its objectives. In addition to job-specific training, during the year, staff undertook mandatory training on:

- risk management;
- information governance;
- personal and public involvement;
- fraud awareness;
- fire safety;
- display screen equipment; and
- cyber security.

Compliance is managed at director level through RQIA's performance management arrangements. As a result of technical issues across health and social care, staff were unable to access the e-learning platform, which hosts the training courses, until Summer 2021, which delayed uptake in the early part of the year.



Strengthening the Workforce: Well Being

RQIA manages all sickness absence in line with its attendance management policy and associated procedures. During 2021-22, there was an average staff absence rate of 5.71% (2020-21: 6.94%), against a regional key performance indicator target set for RQIA by DoH of 6.94%.

RQIA also introduced a Winter and Service Pressures Resilience Plan, to prepare for a period of increased demand across health and social care services. This focused on four key areas: Staff Well Being; Supporting Service Providers; Continuing inspections and reviews safely; and Improving Communication and Partnership working. Key actions to support staff included: Promotion of the Covid-19 and flu vaccines; training and resources to support staff wellbeing, and development of a staff recognition and appreciation strategy.

Strengthening the Workforce: Social, Community and Environmental Matters

While the majority of staff continued to work from home during the year, RQIA continued to focus on energy reduction, recycling office waste, promotion of healthy lifestyles and use of public transport where this was possible and safe.

In partnership with the Business Services Organisation Equality Unit, RQIA held two health and wellbeing awareness days.

In December 2021, the Consultant Lead Clinical Psychologist for Older People in the Northern Trust, an expert in dementia, discussed caring for a loved one who has the condition. The session also focused on diagnosis of the condition and specialist support available in relation to older people's mental health, dementia and delirium. This session was well attended and was particularly relevant to RQIA's inspection teams.

In February 2022, a Specialist Health Visitor from the Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) Behaviour Assessment Service in the Northern Trust discussed assessment, diagnosis and management of the condition and its impact on both those with the condition and their carers.

As part of the Winter Plan, RQIA ran a series of workshops to support the health and wellbeing of its staff. These included a series of interactive sessions on positive mental health, personal resilience and mindfulness. Throughout the year RQIA also shared a range of online resources on connecting with others; homeworking; keeping active; support for parents and carers; and details of support helplines.



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.

Measuring the Improvement: Regulation of Services

Registration and Inspection of Health and Social Care Services

Under a range of legislative powers RQIA is responsible for the inspection of health and social care services. RQIA registers and inspects nursing and residential 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.

At 31 March 2022 there were 1,532 services registered with RQIA, an increase of two from 31 March 2021 (see table below).

Service Type	Registered as at 31.03.2022	Change since 01.04.2021
Agencies and Day Care	541	+4
Adult Placement Agencies	4	
Domiciliary Care Agencies	302	
Nursing Agencies	67	+3
Day Care Settings	168	+1
Care Homes	477	-4
Nursing Homes	246	-2
Residential Care Homes	231	-2
Children's Services	52	
Children's Homes	48	-1
Voluntary Adoption Agencies	3	+1
Residential Family Centres	1	
Independent Healthcare	462	+2
Independent Clinics	7	
Independent Hospitals	72	-1
Dental Practices	375	+2
Independent Medical Agencies	8	+1
Grand Total	1,532	+2

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 under Ionising Radiation(Medical Exposure) Regulations (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.

How We Inspect

RQIA has a team of experienced nurses, social workers, pharmacists, estates and finance officers, who assess various aspects of service provision. Inspections of regulated services are undertaken in line with the 2003 Order and its associated regulations and standards. Unregulated services are subject to oversight and inspection under relevant mental health, ionising radiation (medical exposure) (IR(ME)R) and other legislation, standards and guidance.

During inspections we may examine a range of issues, including:

- care
- medicines management
- estates issues
- arrangements for safeguarding service users' finances

During 2021-22 RQIA undertook 1,732 inspections, compared to 1,549 in 2020-21. The majority of these (67%) are unannounced. Before every inspection, RQIA's inspectors review information and intelligence relating to the particular service held on its i-Connect information management system.

The information held provides details of the service's regulatory and inspection history - such as serious concerns and/or enforcement action; intelligence about the service including complaints or compliments from service users, their families or advocates; whistleblowing from staff members; and statutory notifications relating to specific categories of incidents which may have occurred at the service.

When conducting an inspection, RQIA examines compliance with regulations and care standards, and assesses:

- is care safe, effective and compassionate, and
- is the service well managed.

In assessing a service RQIA inspectors observe practice and review records of care. To ensure a fully rounded view of the service, inspectors talk to management, staff and health care staff such as GPs, nurses, social workers and care managers to hear their views and experience of working at the service.

The most important people in any service are those in receipt of care, and inspectors also talk to service users and with any carers, friends or relatives available during the inspection. Through RQIA's Guidance Team, calls were received from the public on their experience or concerns on the services being provided during this time.

At the end of each inspection verbal feedback is provided to the management of the service, highlighting both good practice and areas that require attention. A formal written report of findings is provided. (Where service is subject to inspection by care, pharmacy, estates and/or finance inspectors, a combined report will be produced). Where a service does not meet the required standards, a quality improvement plan (QIP) is issued as part of the inspection report, detailing any improvements required and how the provider is addressing any issues raised by RQIA.

Service Type	Announced	Unannounced	Grand Total
Adult Placement Agency	4	0	4
Children's Home	11	65	76
Day Care Setting	36	88	124
Domiciliary Care Agency	51	166	217
HM Prison*	1	1	2
HSC Hospital*	0	12	12
Independent Clinic (IC)	7	0	7
Independent Hospital (IH)	61	13	74
Dental Practices	338	2	340
Independent Medical Agency	5	0	5
IR(ME)R*	9	0	9
Mental Health/Learning Disability Facility*	5	36	41
Nursing Home	4	398	402
Nursing Agency	35	18	53
Residential Care Home	6	344	350
Residential Family Centre	0	1	1
Voluntary Adoption Agency	1	0	1
Young Adult Supported Accommodation*	2	12	14
Grand Total	576	1156	1732

* While there is currently no legislative requirement to inspect HSC hospitals (both acute and mental health and learning disability services), radiation (IR(ME)R) services, young adult supported accommodation or prisons, RQIA completed 68 inspections at these services.

RQIA is pleased to report that the outcome of 758 inspections (45%) demonstrated that the service was operating in compliance with the relevant legislation and standards, with no areas for improvement highlighted by RQIA inspectors. This is an increase from 42% of inspections in 2020-21.

The findings of each inspection of adult services are published online at www.rqia.org.uk/inspections. Individual inspection reports are also available on request from each service inspected. In March 2021 RQIA established a task and finish group of key stakeholders to review the position on publication of children’s services inspection reports, with a plan for public consultation on the resulting proposals.

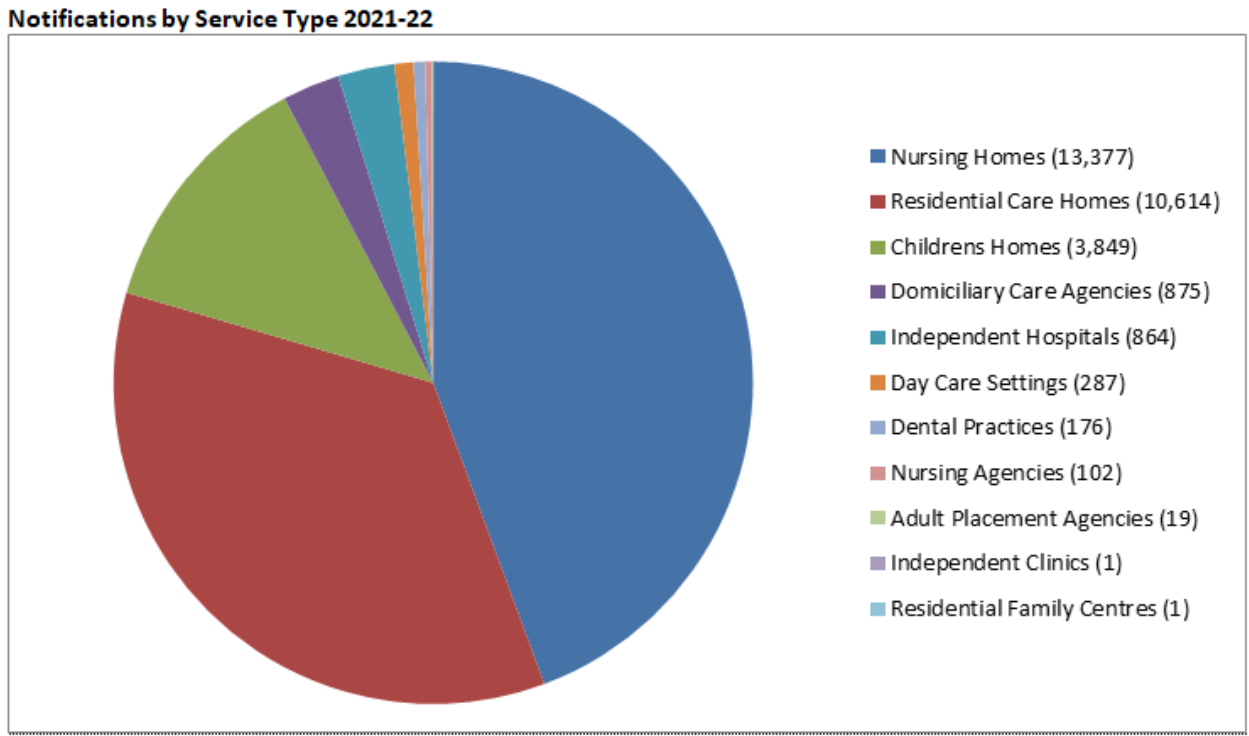
RQIA also works closely with the Patient and Client Council, Commissioner for Older People and representative organisations to ensure any concerns are followed up and addressed in a timely manner. RQIA also focusses on assessing notifications, concerns and other intelligence for every service. Where areas of concern are identified, additional inspections may be conducted and inspectors will meet with providers. Where necessary enforcement action is taken to ensure the concerns identified are fully addressed.

The primary means of communication between RQIA and service providers for issues relating to inspections and for incident notifications is via a secure online web-based portal. There are just under 5,000 registered users on this system – including service providers and managers.

Every provider is required to notify RQIA when specific categories of incidents or events occur within their service. These include:

- accidents and incidents;
- deaths (expected and unexpected);
- injuries and fractures;
- infectious diseases;
- medication issues;
- police incidents, theft or burglary; and
- misconduct.

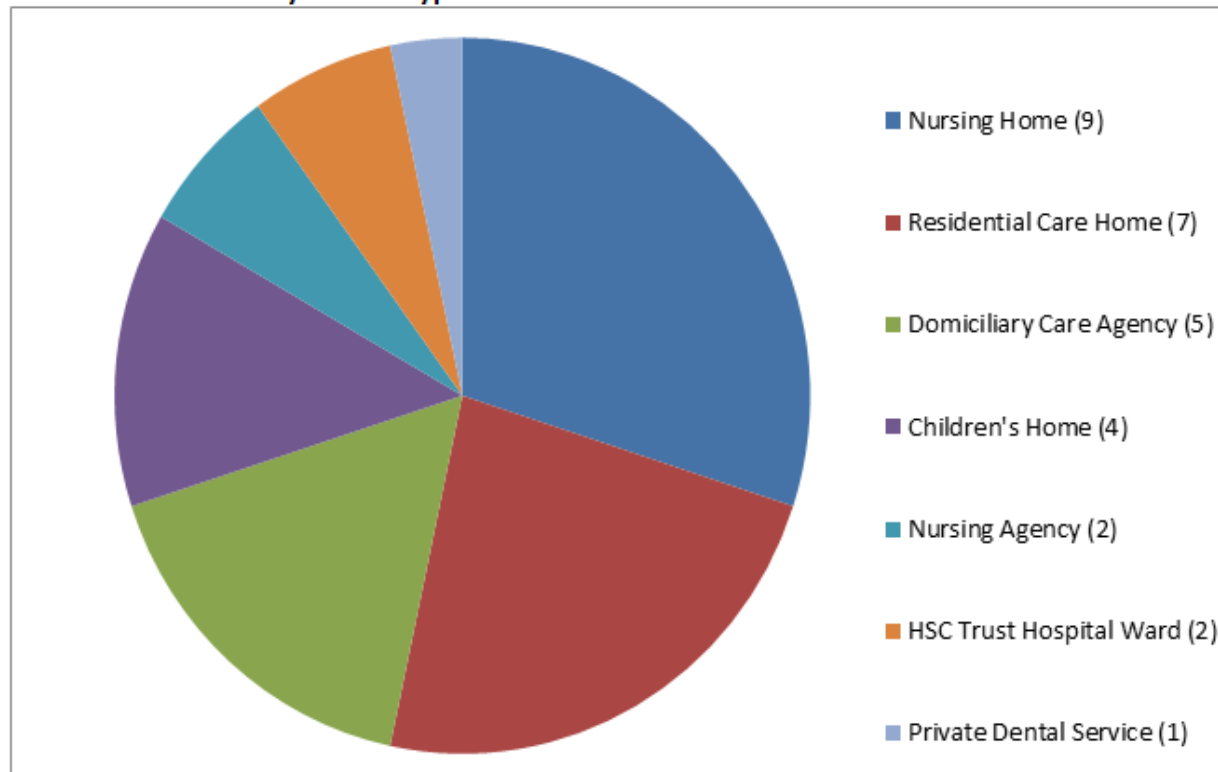
During the year over 30,000 incident notifications were submitted to RQIA via this portal (see figure below), and in each case the Inspector for the service assessed the notification to determine whether further action was required, or if a pattern was emerging that required further consideration.



At times, it is important for RQIA to take enforcement action to ensure providers address significant deficits in a service. During 2021-22 RQIA took enforcement action on 30 occasions across a range of services.

The majority of this action involved issuing enforcement notices to ensure concerns at a service were appropriately addressed in a timely manner. RQIA moved to cancel the registration of three services where the provider did not adequately address identified concerns, which had the potential to place the health and wellbeing of service users at risk. These included a nursing home, residential care home and a children's home. RQIA also moved to cancel the registration of a non-operational domiciliary care agency.

Enforcement Action by Service Type



Measuring the Improvement: RQIA's Review Activity

Each year RQIA undertakes a programme of reviews of health and social care services, in response to current events, or to examine emerging issues. These reviews may be initiated by RQIA or commissioned by the Department of Health. In planning reviews and reporting on the findings, RQIA focuses on whether care is safe, effective and compassionate; and on the quality of leadership within a service. Review findings are reported to the Minister and Department of Health.

RQIA's review programme provides independent and professional assurance to the Minister and to the public about the quality, safety and availability of health and social care (HSC) services in Northern Ireland, in both the public sector HSC itself and the independent sector. It drives continuous improvement of those services and ensures that the rights of service users are safeguarded. In each review RQIA endeavours to highlight examples of good practice and make recommendations for improvement which aim to support and drive quality improvements for service users. RQIA also aims to provide useful evidence to provide a basis for future policy development in the areas under review.

RQIA Review of Services for Vulnerable Persons Detained in Northern Ireland Prisons

In July 2020, following criticism by the Prisoner Ombudsman for Northern Ireland of the care provided to vulnerable prisoners, the Ministers of Justice and Health commissioned RQIA to review services provided to vulnerable people in Northern Ireland prisons.

An Expert Review Team, led by RQIA, found evidence of improvement in partnership working and governance arrangements and examples of good practice, such as: health and wellbeing engagement work during Covid-19; the Towards Zero Suicide Initiative; the Forensic Managed Care Network; and the Supporting People at Risk (SPAR) Evolution approach to supporting people in crisis.

However, the Expert Team found a need for further improvement in how services are commissioned, planned and delivered. The team noted that services are under considerable pressure, with demand greatly exceeding capacity.

There are long waiting times for mental health appointments, for addiction appointments and for transfer to acute mental health beds within hospital; and significant lack of psychological support for people with a history of personality disorder and trauma.

Many committed prison service and healthcare staff were working with great compassion and dedication to make things better for vulnerable people in custody, but co-ordinated effort is needed across the Criminal Justice and Health and Social Care systems to improve outcomes.

The Expert Review Team made 16 recommendations, which, if fully implemented, will support better outcomes for vulnerable prisoners - including the avoidance of harm; better prospects for treatment and rehabilitation; reduced reoffending; and reduced risk to wider society. Achieving this will be a considerable challenge in a highly complex system with limited resources. Success depends on sustained commitment and deepening partnership across the Criminal Justice and Health and Social Care systems, recognising that prisons are not "a place apart" but a part of society.

Reviews in Response to Concerns Regarding the Clinical Practice of a Consultant Neurologist Employed by the Belfast HSC Trust

In May 2018, Belfast HSC Trust announced a recall of 2,500 patients in relation to concerns regarding the clinical practice of Dr Watt, a consultant neurologist employed by the Belfast Trust. The Department of Health's Permanent Secretary established an Independent Neurology Inquiry, chaired by Brett Lockhart QC, which was converted to a Statutory Public Inquiry in December 2020, under the Inquiries Act 2005.

The Permanent Secretary also directed RQIA to:

- undertake a review of governance arrangements of outpatient services in the Belfast HSC Trust, with a focus on neurology and other high volume specialties (published in February 2020);

- review governance arrangements in independent hospitals and hospices in Northern Ireland, as Dr Watt practised in several independent hospitals; and
- commission an expert review of the records of all patients or former patients of the consultant neurologist, who had died over the previous ten years.

Review of Governance Arrangements in Independent Hospitals and Hospices in Northern Ireland

In June 2021, RQIA published the findings of this review which examined:

- Governance processes for accountability and oversight;
- Patient outcomes and the management of risk;
- The effectiveness of partnership working and communication with GPs, the HSC Board and other HSC Organisations; and
- Arrangements to ensure effective communication with patients and their families

The Review identified issues in relation to:

- Internal leadership and accountability, enabling a comprehensive overview of the services provided.
- The need to strengthen medical governance, particularly in relation to accuracy of records; scope of practice; and practicing privilege arrangements.
- Improvement in information gathering and management for: incidents, complaints, quality and patient outcomes, and patient and family experiences.
- The need for a focus on communication between the independent sector and the wider HSC to ensure the delivery of effective care and continuity of treatment for patients.

RQIA's system-wide recommendations form the basis on which the independent sector can continue to strengthen and improve the key areas of governance that underpin patient safety and quality of care.

Since the fieldwork was completed in 2019, the independent sector has moved rapidly to develop and improve upon their governance systems, particularly in light of the pressures of the Covid-19 pandemic.

RQIA continues to work with the independent sector to monitor progress and ensure further improvements. RQIA is committed to continuously review its approach to registration for the independent sector, recognising the independent sector's growth, increasing diversity and the pace of innovation; and to advise the Department of Health on any changes to the statutory framework that may be desirable.

Expert Review of Records of Deceased Patients of Dr Michael Watt

In 2020, RQIA completed the preparatory phase of this review, including the development of a legal framework to allow RQIA to access the clinical records of the deceased patients of Dr Watt.

RQIA commissioned the Royal College of Physicians (RCP) to establish an Expert Panel to review of the records of:

- 29 deceased patients whose family members had approached the RQIA with concerns; and
- 16 patients who were included in the Belfast Trust's Cohort 1 neurology recall but unfortunately died before either attending or completing their re-assessment.

In April 2021 RQIA contacted families offering an opportunity to meet its Family Liaison Team to share their views on the care and treatment provided to their relative by Dr Watt. Twenty-five families accepted this offer to engage with the Family Liaison Team and agreed for their information to be shared with RCP's Expert Panel.

In August 2021, the Expert Panel began its review of clinical records and also considered concerns shared with RQIA by the families of the deceased patients.

It is anticipated that individual patient summaries will be provided to RQIA in May/June 2022, when RQIA's Family Liaison Team will make arrangements to share individual reports with family representatives.

Throughout this time RQIA has maintained regular contact with affected families, and has also kept the Department of Health updated through the Neurology Recall Assurance Group, chaired by the Permanent Secretary.

It is anticipated that the findings of this expert review will be published during 2022-23.

Review of Urgent Care Out-of-Hours Services

This Review examined the operational systems in place within Urgent Care Out-of-Hours Services and assessed the governance arrangements that assure the provision of a safe, person-centred, quality service, including the effectiveness of the leadership arrangements.

The Expert Review Team were impressed by many examples of good practice; including improving access to consultations for patients residing in border areas; proactive engagement with nursing homes to reduce calls, audits of clinical notes to improve recording of “safety netting” advice for patients, the establishment of a staff forum to facilitate collaboration between different operational staff and management; and engagement with disability groups to improve accessibility of services.

We commended the providers for their exceptional commitment to delivering high quality, safe and effective care. However, we found that their ability to do so was impacted by a reduction in the number of GPs working in Out-of-Hours Services and limited support being provided by HSC Trusts for these services.

This review paid particular attention to the progress made with respect to the implementation of the recommendations from two previous reviews:

- RQIA Review of GP Out-of-Hours Service (2010);
- DoH Review of GP-Led Primary Care Services in Northern Ireland (2016).

We found that the majority of the recommendations from both of these reviews had either not been implemented, or had been only partially implemented. This Review highlighted the urgent need for a new operating model for Urgent Care Out-of-Hours Services for Northern Ireland in the context of the wider HSC transformational agenda, to address the immediate challenges and to stabilise services. It made recommendations that, if implemented, we believe would support the establishment of a safe, more effective and sustainable service model, whilst strengthening the governance arrangements within Urgent Care Out-of-Hours Service throughout Northern Ireland.

It is hoped that our assessment of progress against previous recommendations and the new recommendations within this report will inform both the regional work to deliver the transformation of Northern Ireland Urgent Care out of Hours services and also local improvement initiatives.

Full consideration of these recommendations by providers in collaboration with the DoH, and Regional Working Group should support the delivery of services in future which meet the changing needs of our population.

Ongoing Review Activity

Work also continued on a number of reviews for publication during 2022-23:

- Review of Serious Adverse Incidents (SAIs); and
- Review of Implementation of Choking Recommendations.

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.

Raising the Standards: RQIA Clinical Audit, Guidelines and Quality Improvement Programme

RQIA is in a unique position as a regulator to undertake a whole system approach to implementing improvement within HSC. RQIA, through its inspection and review programme, is best placed to identify areas of need where regional work may have maximal impact, whilst utilising resources effectively achieving a value for money approach.

RQIA is committed to promoting leadership in safety and quality in health and social care. Through its Clinical Audit and Quality Improvement Programme, each year RQIA invites applications from the HSC community for funding to undertake clinical audits, guidelines and quality improvement (QI) projects.

The programme aims to ensure that the 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.

Clinical Audits

- Northern Ireland Oesophago-Gastric Cancer Audit - Measuring the quality of care for patients diagnosed 2018-2019 (published January 2022).

Quality Improvement Projects

- The Pro-Vac Movement - a Quality Improvement and Educational Initiative (published February 2022);
- Development and implementation of Postpartum Contraception Service (published March 2022); and
- Introduction of harm reduction resources for clinical staff in acute mental health settings (due for publication in early 2022-23).

In October 2021 RQIA approved funding and support for four new quality improvement projects, which are scheduled for completion in March 2023.

These are:

- Thyroid Eye Disease National Quality Improvement project;
- Streamlining Urology Multidisciplinary Meetings;
- Rapid exome sequencing for unwell neonates; and
- Patient engagement through the use of Digital Reminiscence Therapy (RITA).

Raising the Standards: Public Involvement in RQIA Work

RQIA is committed to increasing effective engagement with the public and stakeholders to achieve improvements in the safety and quality of health and social care services. RQIA's Service Improvement Officer represents the organisation at the regional Personal and Public Involvement (PPI) Forum, which aims to support HSC organisations in the active and effective involvement of service users, carers and the public in decisions that affect their health and social care.

During the pandemic it was challenging for RQIA to involve lay assessors in on the ground inspection and review activities. However, to ensure RQIA is best placed to reinvigorate involvement as we emerge from the pandemic, RQIA has worked on the development of a lay assessor handbook.

This project has been conducted in partnership with members of the public who supported RQIA in this area previously, and with colleagues in Care Inspectorate Scotland's Involvement and Equalities Team.

Other projects have included the development of dementia-friendly questionnaires to support feedback on the quality of care during inspections, developed in partnership with services and service users.



Public Involvement In Children's Services

In March 2022, RQIA established a co-production approach to reviewing the need for publication of the findings and outcomes of inspections of children's services. These are not currently published on RQIA's website, however, during 2022-23 we plan to consult on proposals for an agreed publication framework.

In August 2021, RQIA participated in the Voice of Young People in Care's (VOYPIC) Manifesto, a festival celebration to create a manifesto for change for young people in and leaving care. Here we engaged with young people on our work, and discussed how they can become involved in RQIA's work including inspections and reviews.

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.

Integrating the Care: Partnership Working

On an ongoing basis RQIA maintains its positive relationships with colleagues at the Department of Health, and other HSC organisations including:

- HSC Trusts;
- the Public Health Agency;
- the HSC Board;
- Northern Ireland Social Care Council;
- Patient and Client Council;
- Northern Ireland Guardian Ad Litem Agency;
- Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council for Nursing and Midwifery; and
- Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency.

RQIA engages with these organisations through regular one-to-one liaison meetings and calls, sharing learning and discussing common interests and issues of concern.

RQIA has continued to play a key role in the joined-up and regional response to the Covid-19 pandemic. RQIA worked closely with colleagues across the Department of Health, HSC Board, Public Health Agency and HSC trusts to ensure a coordinated approach to the provision of timely guidance to support regulated services in managing the impact of the pandemic.

RQIA is committed to strengthening effective partnerships with its peer organisations – including health and social care systems regulators, inspectorates and professional regulatory bodies across the UK and Ireland to share best practice and benchmark its work. These included the Care Quality Commission; Care Inspectorate Scotland; Health Inspectorate Wales; the Health Information and Quality Authority; and the Health Care Professionals Council.

RQIA also share best practice through its engagement with the Regional Medical Imaging Board, UK wide groups including the IR(ME)R Four Nations Group; Radiological Safety Working Group; and the Medical Radiation Liaison Group (MRLG).

RQIA also works closely with other inspectorates and representative bodies including:

- Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland;
- Education and Training Inspectorate;
- Her Majesty's Inspector of Prisons;
- The Prisoner Ombudsman for Northern Ireland;
- The Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland (COPNI); and
- The Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY).

RQIA also continued its constructive engagement with a range of stakeholder representative organisations, including:

- Independent Health and Care Providers (IHCP);
- UK Homecare Association;
- The Royal Colleges of Nursing, General Practitioners, and Psychiatrists;
- British Dental Association; and
- Association for Real Change, particularly in relation to the impact of Covid-19 on services.

During the year, RQIA has established new and updated memoranda of understanding and information sharing protocols with a range of partner organisations, to support information sharing and cooperation in joint working, and transparency when working on areas of common interest. These included:

- The Independent Sector Complaints Adjudication Service (ISCAS) a voluntary subscriber scheme for independent healthcare providers (April 2021);
- Nursing and Midwifery Council (May 2021); and
- The Health and Social Care Board relating to the regulation and inspection of dental practice. (May 2021).

Sharing Best Practice: Engagement with Other Health and Social Care Regulators

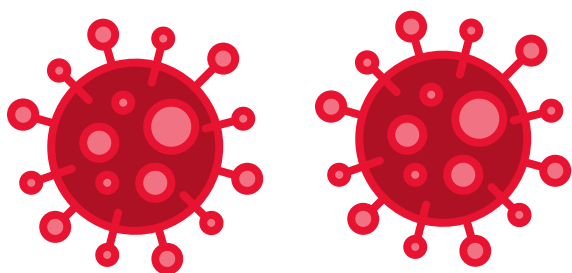
During the year RQIA continued to engage with the Care Quality Commission, Care Inspectorate Scotland and Health Inspectorate Wales to share experiences and learning from our regulation and inspection activities.

Learning from the Covid-19 Pandemic

During 2021-22 in partnership with the wider HSC, RQIA played a key role in the regional response to the global Covid-19 Pandemic, through the distribution of guidance, collection of data, provision of support and continued scrutiny of health and social care services through inspections and reviews.

RQIA has continued to work collaboratively across the health and social care system in the regional response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Our work includes hosting a regional web portal to enable Care Homes to submit data on a daily basis about the issues being faced, including infection control, testing and workforce. RQIA shares this information with HSC organisations to enable a collective response and support. We have also maintained and strengthened our 'Guidance Team' support desk. This provides a point of contact, by telephone or email, for all stakeholders, including service users, families, staff and the public to contact RQIA about their concerns relating to any aspect of services. Physical inspections were the primary method of inspection over the course of the year, with inspection staff adopting safe practice through regular testing, infection prevention and control approaches and a risk based approach.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic's impact on available workforce and the importance of reducing risk from infections, RQIA advised the Department of Health of its adoption of a risk-based approach to inspection, focusing on areas of concern, while ensuring all care homes have at least one physical inspection per year; and those that are identified at greater risk are monitored closely and may be visited more often.



During 2021-22, RQIA continued to play a key role in the regional response to the Covid-19 pandemic, working closely with and supporting statutory and independent partners across health and social care. Throughout the year, RQIA provided guidance and advice to care homes, both about the impact of Covid-19 and other issues in the care home setting.

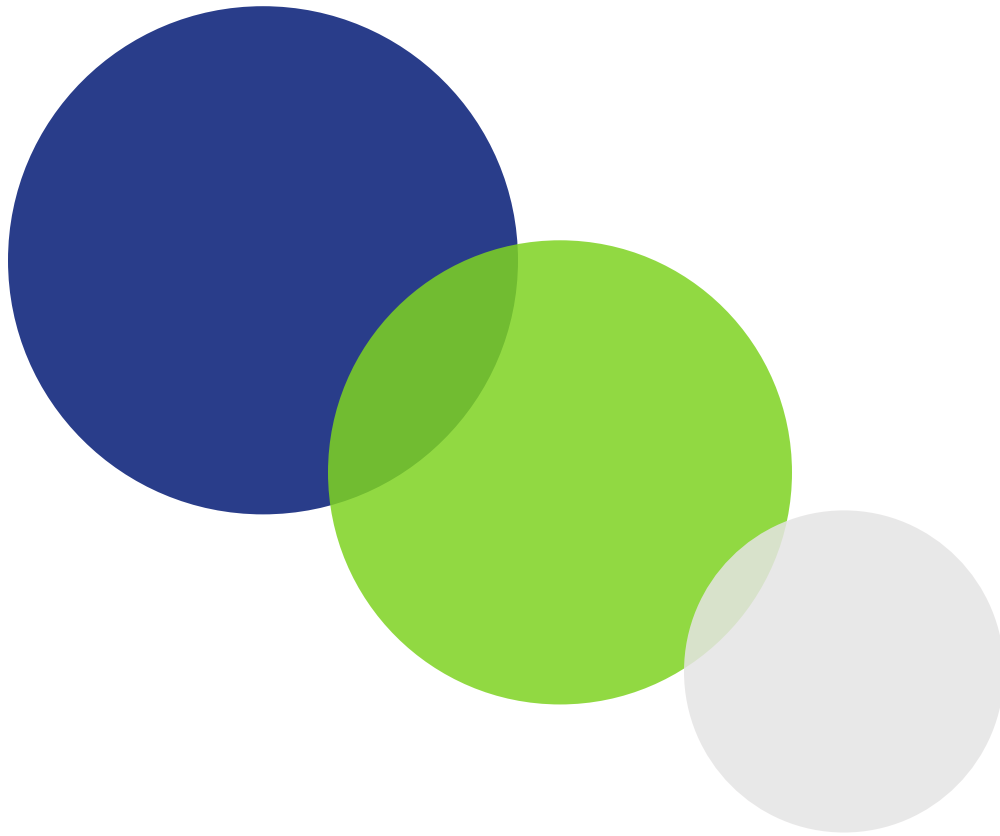
On behalf of the wider HSC, RQIA coordinated the Covid-19 status returns from nursing and residential care homes, reported via RQIA's online provider web portal, providing information on a daily basis about the impact of Covid-19 on each home

The key issues being experienced and advice sought from RQIA by care homes related to:

- Staffing (40%)
- Guidance (16%)
- Personal Protective Equipment (11%)
- Testing (11%)
- Visiting (9%)
- Other issues (13%)

This information helped to inform the Department of Health, Public Health Agency and the Health and Social Care Board and trusts of the current situation within this sector. It also helped RQIA in focusing its attention on those services requiring particular support and attention.

During the year we also disseminated over 200 separate pieces of Department of Health and Public Health Agency guidance to regulated services, including care homes and domiciliary care services. These focused on a range of issues, including: staffing; the vaccination and booster programme; safe visiting in health and social care settings; care partner arrangements, and training resources.



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