



The Regulation and
Quality Improvement
Authority

STRATEGIC PLAN

Priorities For Quality
Improvement and
Regulation

2022-2028

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Quality, Improvement and Regulation in Health and Social Care: The Way Ahead

On behalf of the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority, I am pleased to present this Strategic Plan, covering the five years to 2028. I would like to thank all those who have engaged with us, and helped to shape its development.

Rightly, there is public debate about the challenges facing health and social care services, and the response to those challenges. At times, RQIA has been the subject of those discussions, and of criticisms. In drawing up this Strategic Plan, we have listened carefully, and have used the insights of those impacted by the health and social care system, including patients; service users; their families and those working within health and social care, and the public. We have combined this with our knowledge and experience as Northern Ireland's independent regulator, to set our strategic direction and priorities, recognising that the environment is changing rapidly and at times unpredictably.

Our RQIA values as the independent system regulator - of putting those impacted by the health and social care system at the heart of all that we do; using evidence as the foundation for all our actions; and speaking and acting independently and with integrity whilst working in partnership with others - together with the shared HSC values of working together, excellence, openness and honesty, and compassion underpin this Strategic Plan, and provide its moral compass.

RQIA is dealing with sharply increasing and changing demands, at a time when capacity is restricted especially in terms of availability of skilled staff and of acute financial pressures, which will endure for the lifetime of this Plan. Under these pressures, the Authority is clear that we must not abandon oversight, or adherence to quality standards. Neither can we shy away from firm regulatory action when necessary. These provide essential protections for the safety and well-being of service users, the public, and staff.

We must be both efficient and effective in fulfilling our core statutory duties, of:

- keeping the Department informed as to the quality and availability of health and social care services;

- encouraging improvement in the quality of those services;
- protecting the interests of those with mental health conditions and learning disabilities; and
- safeguarding standards by regulation

Our Strategic Plan sets out to support health and social care providers (public, not for profit and private sector) to maintain quality and safety and to achieve improvement, in the prevailing stark environment.

To deliver this support and play our statutory role in keeping people safe and improving services through effective oversight, we need to renew our efforts to develop a more agile, information-led and risk-based approach to all our scrutiny regimes. We must work more openly in an intelligent and informed partnership using improved methods, particularly maximising the capacity of data analytics, through technology new to the RQIA.

The Strategic Plan therefore proposes a phased development process, managed within a constrained financial context. It sets out a pragmatic, intelligence led and risk based approach aimed at growing, over a five-year period, through digital transformation to a new IT enabled, knowledge and risk based operational model, and an effective, enabling set of relationships across key stakeholders.

The Authority also recognises the need for legislative change to enable and support a modern approach to sustain quality and safety and promote improvement through its statutory roles, as we head deeper into the twenty first century.

Our clear focus is on driving improvement in service availability, safety and quality. We will do our best, working together with all our partners and stakeholders, to bring about real and sustained improvements; this Strategic Plan provides our Sat Nav.

Christine Collins

Christine Collins MBE
Chair



CHIEF EXECUTIVE - OVERVIEW



Many people living in Northern Ireland access health and social care services at some part, or at many times, in their lives. People expect care and support to be safe, of high quality, to be compassionate and to assist each person achieve their best possible outcome. RQIA believes that too.

We gather a lot of data about services, and we ask people about their experience of health and social care services, both people who use services, their families and carers and people who work there. We talk to other organisations who also have information about the safety, quality and experience of services.

Health and social care services need to change. The demography of our population continues to change, with more of us living longer and with cultural and ethnic diversity. There is a drive towards integrated planning, commissioning and delivery of services, and plans to improve access to urgent care and hospital services. Social care is changing, with a focus on supported independence, human rights and safeguarding.

Regulation has to change too, to ensure that in specific services and across service boundaries, there remains a focus on providing and improving safety and quality. That means equipping ourselves with the skills and technology to enable us to use the information we have more effectively, so that we anticipate emerging issues and take preventative steps, and that we respond quickly to areas of raised risk.

This will assist in making the best use of the resources and capacity that we have, directing our effort to the issues that present the greatest risk to service users.

Supporting and developing our staff is vital in this, so that we can carry out our role across a wide range of different types of services, maximising a mix of professional skills and experience, and supporting staff with the information and tools they need to do their work consistently and effectively.

Listening to service users, families, carers, advocates, victims, staff and those who represent a wide range of experiences, is a priority for us. Through our public consultation we have heard that this experience must be taken into account in our assessment of the quality and safety of services, and must be set out in our inspection reports. We are committed to taking this forward, collaboratively with service users, their families and carers, and in partnership with other organisations.

This Strategic Plan sets out how we will take this work forward. In all of it we will work collaboratively, encouraging a culture of openness to improve safety for everyone, enable quality improvement and service user experience, and support staff who work across the whole health and social care system.



Brieghe Donaghy
Chief Executive

ABOUT THE REGULATION AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY

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The RQIA is Northern Ireland's independent health and social care regulator.

RQIA's relationships, with people in Northern Ireland, the Department of Health, other HSC bodies, independent health and social care providers and other Regulators are driven by **RQIA's Duties** to:

- Keep the Department informed about the provision of health and social care services, in particular their availability and quality;
- Encourage improvement in the quality of those services;
- Protect the interests of those with mental health conditions and learning disabilities; and
- Register, inspect, and enforce adherence to regulations and standards for service providers that fall within the scope of RQIA's statutory powers.

WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE SAFETY AND QUALITY IN HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE SERVICES

OUR CORE PURPOSE



RQIA's core purpose is: To secure and to improve the safety and quality of health and social care services in Northern Ireland

Our Strategic Plan is informed by the Programme for Government's (PfG) draft outcomes framework.

RQIA will aim to ensure a health and social care system that delivers on PfG commitments:

- Our children and young people have the best start in life;
- We all enjoy long healthy active lives;
- We have a caring society that supports people throughout their lives; and
- We have an equal and inclusive society where everyone is valued and treated with respect.

RQIA's core purpose supports health and social care services in Northern Ireland, public, private and not for profit.

RQIA's actions support the Department of Health's integrated system of health and social care designed to:

- Secure improvement in the physical and mental health of the people in Northern Ireland;
- Secure improvement in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of illness; and
- Secure improvement in the social wellbeing of people in Northern Ireland.

To achieve our core purpose we have set four strategic objectives

1. SCRUTINY: REGISTER, INSPECT, REPORT AND ENFORCE

Provide independent oversight of the quality of health and social care services against regulations and standards, through robust assessment of those providers who are required to register with us; through inspection of services; meaningful reporting of our findings; and taking proportionate enforcement action.



2. IMPROVE: SAFETY AND QUALITY

Improve safety and quality through effective information gathering and assessment; involving and listening to people who use or are impacted by services and those who work there; learning from Public Inquiries and other Reports; and use existing networks and create new ones to share learning, evidence the impact of poor practice, showcase good practice and encourage its adoption.



3. BUILD: PARTNERSHIPS TO STRENGTHEN SAFETY

Build effective relationships and partnerships that expand our knowledge and bring additional expertise, and work together to protect the safety of service users and the public, sharing and connecting information to help identify emerging issues and risks and take effective action.



4. INFORM: SERVICE TRANSFORMATION

Our inspections, reviews and reports influence service transformation by informing policy decisions, raising standards and shaping future services that “build in” improved safety, promote adoption of effective practices and service models, and drive out poor practice and performance.



DELIVERING ON OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

**ACTIONS TO DELIVER ON
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1

Strategic Plan 2022-28

SCRUTINY: REGISTER, INSPECT, REPORT AND ENFORCE



Provide independent oversight of the quality of health and social care services against regulations and standards, through robust assessment of those providers who are required to register with us; inspection of services; meaningful reporting of our findings; and taking proportionate enforcement action.

OUTCOME

- **Service users, families and carers are able and willing to share their experience and knowledge** of services and their concerns: this evidence is firmly rooted in our regulation processes and decisions and is evidenced in our inspection reports
- **Strong ongoing scrutiny and assessment of service providers** from the time of **registration** ensures providers have the ability to provide high quality, sustainable services from the outset, and when things change in their organisation
- **Inspections are conducted both regularly and in response to assessed risk** across registered services, including care homes and children's services, hospitals and homecare services, and lead to appropriate enforcement action
- **Inspection reports reflect the views and experience of people using services and staff working in the service**; and service users, families and others can readily access inspection reports
- **Themed Reviews of issues that cross services and communities identify issues** and improve safety and outcomes across service and organisational boundaries, and for individuals
- **Our transparent Framework for Regulation** shows how we go about regulation consistently and proportionately and is underpinned by human rights: providers and service users can engage with the processes effectively
- **Our advice to the Department of Health about risks and issues in services** informs and influences debate, policy and legislation

WE WILL MEASURE PROGRESS BY

Registration

- Reporting on the volume of registrations and changes we assess and process within time frames
- Survey of views of providers and review of complaints raised with us about registration

Inspections and Reporting

- Publish our inspection reports for registered services within 64 days of the inspection
- Begin the publication of Children's Services' reports, co-produced with young people and advocates and evaluate same

Regulation Framework

- Share our approach to intelligence led / risk based regulation so that our efforts are targeted at services that show greatest risk
- Develop a Programme of Reviews and publish the findings to improve safety and quality across service boundaries

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2

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IMPROVE: SAFETY AND QUALITY

Improve safety and quality through effective information gathering and assessment; involving and listening to people who use or are impacted by services and those who work there; learning from Public Inquiries and other Reports; and use existing networks and create new ones to share learning, evidence the impact of poor practice, showcase good practice and encourage its adoption.



OUTCOME

- Northern Ireland's health and social care services develop a culture of openness, collaboration and partnership, sharing and adopting good practice, with service users and carers playing a central part in shaping and evaluating services (*Public Inquiries: Hyponatremia, Neurology*)
- Providers use the key themes and outcome indicators identified during our Inspections relating to safety, quality and service user experience to drive their improvement programmes and workforce development
- Regulatory recommendations are implemented rapidly and consistently; the Department of Health is fully informed and engaged in ensuring accountability
- A new fit for purpose Serious Adverse Incident process supports all who are involved in an incident to find out what happened; and make sure any risk of repetition is minimised (*Hyponatremia Inquiry: RQIA Report of Review of SAI process*)
- Strong and collaborative oversight of Care and Nursing Homes protects the human rights, dignity and well-being of service users (*COPNI's Home Truths Report*)
- *RQIA's evidence and expertise provides the information required by the Muckamore Abbey Hospital Inquiry and other Public Inquiries in a timely way, and supports the Public Inquiry process*

WE WILL MEASURE PROGRESS BY

- Publication of key themes and outcome indicators identified in particular services
- Undertake a further stock-take of progress made since publication of 'Home Truths'
- Set out an action plan to embed the legacy of the Deceased Patient Review (DPR) to become an integrated part of our processes
- Publish an Annual Review Programme
- Report progress on our provision of information and support to the work of Muckamore Abbey Hospital Public Inquiry and other Public Inquiries through our Authority meetings
- Publish number of improvement events held, attendees and focus of the events

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3

BUILD: PARTNERSHIPS TO STRENGTHEN SAFETY

Build effective relationships and partnerships that expand our knowledge and bring additional expertise, and work together to protect the safety of service users and the public, sharing and connecting information to help identify emerging issues and risks and take effective action.



OUTCOME

- RQIA's role and purpose is well known, and the public, service users, families and others can easily contact RQIA if they have concerns about services, and readily find information we have published on service safety, quality and access:
- A safety network of key organisations:
 - Shares information that is important to service users, families, communities and staff about service delivery issues or standards that concern people, or are below what should be expected
 - Shares intelligence (underpinned by appropriate information governance), with RQIA taking a lead to develop mechanisms to identify and share risks and emerging issues that require a collective NI wide/specific response
- Our relationships with academic and other organisations lifts our capability through workforce, skills and knowledge and assists us with expertise in key issues as we meet future challenges

WE WILL MEASURE PROGRESS BY

- Undertake baseline survey of views of key stakeholders and of the public in terms of knowledge and experience of RQIA's work, and measure this at regular intervals
- Publish the Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) that underpin relationships and keep these updated
- Develop and adopt an 'Emerging Concerns' protocol with professional Regulators

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4

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INFORM: SERVICE TRANSFORMATION

Our inspections, reviews and reports inform policy decisions, influence service transformation, raise standards and shape services, “building in” improved safety, and promote adoption of effective practices and service models, driving out poor practice and performance.



OUTCOME

- Improvement and service reforms are informed by a sound evidence base drawn from RQIA's service reviews on key issues and by RQIA's collated and analysed inspection reports
- Policy and service developments by policy makers, commissioners and regulators draw on and are informed by regular liaison with RQIA and its information and evidence
- Open lines of communication and dialogue with political, professional and community leaders and the public allow informed and honest debate on major issues and concerns, support effective coproduction, and promote shared decision making
- A modernised legislative basis for oversight and regulation supports innovation and good governance in health and social care services (public; private and not for profit) allowing new ways of working while keeping people safe through effective and flexible risk based and proportionate regulatory activity

WE WILL MEASURE PROGRESS BY

- Development of the Partnership Agreement with the Department of Health to ensure effective delivery of our core purpose
- The publication and delivery of the Review Programme
- A calendar of public engagements, publications activity and planned events for the year
- Report on RQIA presence in contributing to regional national and other events and activities

OUR ENABLING PRIORITIES

To enable the delivery of our Strategic Outcomes we will progress three organisational Enabling Priorities:

Excellence in governance and collective leadership, promoting a culture of safety, openness and compassion.

1

2

Developing a confident, competent and supported workforce.

Ensure effective management of our resources including finance, information technology and accommodation.

3

1 Excellence in collective leadership and effective governance

Objectives

- To ensure we have effective organisational capability, control, stewardship and accountability
- That our behaviours (organisational and individual) are underpinned by human rights principles including dignity, respect and equality
- That we demonstrate the shared values of the HSC of compassion, openness, working together and excellence
- That we embrace and fulfill the RQIA Values of putting service users and their families at the heart of all that we do; speaking and acting independently and with integrity; using evidence as the foundation for all our actions, and working in partnership

Deliverables:

- Completed new organisational structure
- Draft Strategic Plan with facilitated Consultation
- Performance and Accountability Framework implemented
- Partnership Agreement with the Department of Health completed

Actions:

Organisational restructuring and Leadership

Complete the organisational restructuring to align staff resources and roles to the three operational Directorates; build the corporate and business capacity of the organisation through developing Corporate Affairs and Business Services functions, in collaboration with BSO shared services; and invest in collective leadership and develop our culture based on human rights and shared values.

Strategic Planning and Outcomes

Develop our Strategic Plan and embed what we have heard through public consultation, continuing engagement with political representatives, and with policy leads, commissioners, the public, services users and their representatives to continue to evolve plans and report on outcomes.

Performance Management

Adopt an outcome focussed performance and accountability arrangement across the organisation so that all staff can see their role and work contributing directly to RQIA's objectives and outcomes.

Partnership Agreement

Develop our sponsoring arrangements with Department of Health so that there is clarity on how we perform our functions as an Independent Regulator and ensure accountability for our effective delivery of those functions and organisational stewardship; clarify how RQIA will fulfil its role post the HSC Board closure; and reflect on how to ensure the implementation of recommendations of Regulatory work and clarity on accountability for this.

2 Develop a confident, competent, supported and enabled workforce

Objectives:

- To ensure we are an employer that demonstrates the safety and wellbeing of staff is our priority
- To ensure personal and professional development is actively supported to ensure confidence and capability
- To ensure we recruit and develop staff with the skills and competency to undertake regulatory work across the broad range of health and social care services within our regulatory scope
- To seek to ensure our staff profile is reflective of the communities served, valuing equality and diversity
- To secure the workforce capacity required to enable us fulfil our statutory scope and requirements

Deliverables:

- Welcome and Induction Programme
- Staff Safety and Well Being Programme
- Recognition and Appreciation Strategy and Delivery Plan - implemented
- Strategic Outline Case for Workforce Capacity and Development
- Sustained lowered workforce vacancy rate

Actions:

Welcome and Induction

Refresh our programme to combine effective self-service induction through an eProgramme, facilitated induction, direct supported learning and supported in the fieldwork.

Training and Development

Ensure every member of staff has a personal development plan and professional development is facilitated across our staff groups.

Staff Wellbeing

Provide a range of safety and wellbeing programmes accessible to staff and evaluated and adjusted to ensure providing effective support, alongside occupational health.

Recognition and Appreciation (R&A)

Launch and implement our R&A Plan and evaluate impact, making improvement as it progresses.

Recruitment

Sustain our lowered vacancy rate by effective and timely permanent recruitment to posts and succession planning.

Workforce Planning

Set out the Workforce and business case for the investment in skills and capacity to deliver on our objectives and statutory requirements. Immediately expand opportunities for peer review, Inspection Support Volunteers, professional placements in training, peripatetic staff and commissioned expertise.

3 Ensure effective management of our resources including Finance, Information Technology and Accommodation

Objectives:

- To ensure we optimise the utilisation of public funds and registration income through effective financial management
- Develop our Digital infrastructure to maximise our use of information and intelligence to direct our work to intelligence led, risk assessed issues and support staff in planning for, and during, inspections to work effectively
- Adopt and embed Hybrid working, making effective use of office bases and consider how we optimise the opportunity to attract and retain staff across the region balancing with value for money in infrastructure

Deliverables:

- An Annual Finance / Budgetary and Spending Plan
- iConnect upgraded and maintained
- Hybrid Working Scheme embedded
- Full Business Case for iConnect replacement

Actions:

Finance

Ensure we plan and spend our allocation and income to maximise the delivery of our strategic objectives. Devolve responsibility for effective Directorate, Business Unit and Corporate Affairs financial management.

Digital and Intelligence

Upgrade the existing information system iConnect to ensure compliance with service and maintenance contract requirements; develop the specification and business case and seek approvals for the required investment for same, including capital and revenue.

Accommodation and Hybrid Working

Relocate our Headquarters to James House, Belfast and consider the issues linked to office based and home based working, finding a model that suits our business needs.



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