

RQIA Strategic Plan 2022-27 Consultation Response

Do you agree that the four strategic objectives of RQIA address its core purpose to keep people safe by improving safety and quality in health and social care?

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the consultation on the RQIA's new strategic plan for 2022-27. The core purpose of your strategy and the direction that it sets out confirms the benefits of close co-operation between health and care regulators, and many of the objectives and values outlined in your plan closely align with those that we set out in our [own strategy](#). We have a shared commitment to securing improvements in the wellbeing of people in Northern Ireland and ensuring timely and effective regulation and this is reflected in some of our shared priorities.

While our respective remits are different, the RQIA and NMC have a shared interest in supporting health and care professionals and services to provide the safest possible care, to identify risks quickly through the sharing of data, and to promote public understanding of the role of regulation. As the professional regulator of around 27,000 nursing and midwifery professionals in Northern Ireland, we have an important role to play in making this a reality.

We support the four strategic objectives identified in the RQIA's strategy and welcome the commitments to effective information and intelligence gathering, sharing this with stakeholders, and creating networks and building relationships. We look forward to working with the RQIA further as you develop these objectives and we would be happy to meet and discuss how we can work together to help you achieve them.

Strategic Objective 1 - Regulation

Do you agree that taking the actions listed above, and detailed in our Draft Strategic Plan, would enable us to provide an independent view of the safety and quality of Health and Social Care services that we regulate in Northern Ireland?

We agree that the actions set out in your strategic plan will enable you to provide an independent view of safety and quality in the services you regulate. We welcome your objective to develop ways for people who use services and their families to share their experiences and your ambition to ensure this is rooted in your regulation. We also welcome your commitment to ensuring that children are included in discussions around your reporting template.

Person-centred care is at the core of what we expect from all the professionals on our register. We set this out in our [Code](#), which includes themes around prioritising people by listening to their preferences and treating people as individuals. Our [education standards](#) also support this. We look forward to seeing how your strategic plan helps to further embed this in health and care settings in Northern Ireland.

Intelligence gathering and stakeholder engagement, and the use of intelligence to inform risk assessments, is a vital part of a regulator's role. Your commitment to regular reporting is important for ensuring accountability and transparency and sharing data and information between regulators is central to ensuring that we have fulfil our regulatory roles and act as quickly as possible.

Our strategy sets out how we aim to work closely with other organisations and regulators to promote best practice and share insights and intelligence. We would be happy to work with the RQIA to explore new ways that we can share our data and insights to help drive improvements in the health and care system. For example, we have developed our revised quality assurance process and we collaborate with employers and educators to provide useful guidance and emotional and practical support to all those involved in our processes, delivering better outcomes for all.

Strategic Objective 2 – Improving Safety and Quality

Do you agree that taking the actions set out above, and detailed in our Draft Strategic Plan, will support us in providing an independent view of the safety and quality of the services we regulate and report on in Northern Ireland?

We support your goal to facilitate the sharing of learning and good practice and your commitment to work with partners to improve the health and care system. We also welcome your plans to publish and share key themes and issues regularly. We would be happy to work with you and other partners to ensure that there is a cohesive regulatory approach to driving improvements in care in Northern Ireland.

We note your objective to support public inquiries, particularly the Muckamore Abbey Hospital inquiry team, to ensure lessons are learned and embedded. In our Corporate Strategy 2020 - 2025 we recognise it is imperative we learn lessons from major failings in care, to help reduce the risk of future harm. As part of this we have created a more sophisticated mechanism to coordinate our response to public inquiries and reviews and embed learning from their findings. We are currently working with several active inquiry and review teams across the UK to share relevant information and to support these teams to make appropriate referrals so we can take any action needed to protect the public. We would be happy to work more closely with the RQIA as we both seek to support these inquiries and ensure we protect the public.

We also note that your strategy sets out a commitment to ensure that the health and care system delivers for children and young people to give everyone the best possible start in life. There may be areas of learning here from other parts of the UK in terms of maternity and neonatal care and some of the recent reviews that have taken place.

Strategic Objective 3 – Building Relationships

Do you agree that taking the actions set out above, and detailed in our Draft Strategic Plan, would help create sustainable relationships and partnerships that expand our reach and add support to achieving our objective of keeping people safe by improving quality and safety in Health and Social Care in Northern Ireland?

We fully support the proposals around greater sharing of intelligence and developing strong relationships with key organisations to help make this happen. We particularly note your clear commitment to working with the public and being more engaging with all stakeholders. We are eager to expand our own joint working with other regulators to help us to develop our understanding of risks in health and social care. We would be

happy to work with the RQIA further as you develop this aspect of your strategy and note that the RQIA and the NMC have an existing Memorandum of Understanding to support our joint working and the sharing of information.

We welcome your plans to host collaborative events which can serve as a key link between the regulatory world, partners and the public. Part of our strategy seeks to achieve better public understanding of our role as a health and care regulator and we have a Public Voice Forum through which we can engage with the public and enable them to help shape our work. We have also conducted a perceptions audit looking at stakeholder views of our role and how we work with the public, professionals, students and employers. We look forward to seeing more details on the events you have planned as you put your new strategy into action.

Strategic Objective 4 – Informing Service Transformation

Do you agree that taking the actions set out above, and detailed in our Draft Strategic Plan, would raise standards across health and social care provision through informing and shaping service transformation?

Influencing policy and driving change in the wider health and care system is a vital part of a regulator's work and we welcome that this one of the main objectives in the RQIA strategy. We agree that the actions set out in your strategic plan will help to drive your organisation's work in this area and strengthen the RQIA's voice in shaping services.

Influencing is one of the three key roles we set out in our own strategy, including working with our partners to address common concerns and drive improvement. Sharing intelligence from our work, and collaborating with partners to address mutual concerns, will enable us to positively influence the context for learning and care.

This has been especially important during the coronavirus pandemic. We've worked with the UK government and devolved administrations, the royal colleges and unions, other health and care regulators, employers, educators and others in health and social care. Our partners rely on the data and insight we offer. This comes from our register and other regulatory activities, like revalidation and fitness to practise. We share this intelligence to help reveal the true state of the nursing and midwifery professions, and inform decision making. There are always opportunities to further develop how we share these data between regulators and improve our understanding of health and care systems, and we look forward to exploring these with the RQIA. It is essential that we always follow the best evidence in developing our policy, standards and strategy, and by sharing data and insights we can help to ensure we maximise the evidence we draw from.

Enabling Actions

Do you agree that RQIA should: invest in and develop its staff; work to ensure collective leadership and good governance; ensure we use our resources effectively including finance, information technology and buildings we have access to?

We welcome your commitment to promoting a culture of safety, openness and compassion. This closely mirrors our own ambitions as a regulator to create a culture of openness and learning and our core value of kindness. We are pleased to see the focus on equality and the in-depth equality and human rights screening template published alongside your strategy. It is right that human rights and equality should underpin all the other behaviours you've identified in your strategy. This echoes our own strategic commitment to eliminate discrimination and root out systemic and avoidable differences in health outcomes between different groups of people. We know our professions play a vital part in addressing these inequalities and we seek to strengthen our approach to equality, diversity and inclusion, by working collaboratively to drive improvements.

Your plans to focus on and develop workforce is also a vital one, and one that we would reiterate in relation to the professions we regulate. The nursing and midwifery professions will play a key part in driving improvements in health and care systems. We know from our [leavers' survey](#) that pressure and workloads are high and are being cited by those leaving our register. It will therefore be important to ensure that the workforce is properly supported, including nursing and midwifery professionals, to help you achieve the objectives set out in your strategic plan.