

16 August 2023

BY EMAIL: sara@pprproject.org

Our Ref: FOI 2017

Dear Ms Boyce

I am writing to you in response to your Freedom of Information request received by the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) on 4 August 2023 in which you requested information relating to procedures for inspection of mental health hospitals.

Please find the response below.

Development of RQIA inspection methodology from 2018-2019

RQIA has continued to seek to improve and refine its inspection methodology over time, and has considered observations and feedback from relevant stakeholders in that process. The following sets out some of the most relevant aspects that have resulted in improvement of inspection methodology:

Referring back to April 2014, when the then Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety requested that RQIA carry out a series of inspections in acute hospitals across Northern Ireland. RQIA undertook a rolling programme of unannounced inspections to examine the quality of services in acute hospitals in Northern Ireland in 2015-2016. This programme led to learning about the approach to inspection, and in 2017 RQIA developed the inspection methodology underpinning its inspection of Mental Health and Learning Disability (MHL) services, following the successful implementation of this methodology in acute services.

These changes included, moving to a wider systems approach to inspection, the use of multi-disciplinary inspection teams, supporting enhanced thematic analysis, facilitating systematic assessment and review, examining models of care across Trusts and the region, and integrating what we see at ward level, what we hear from staff and patients and what we read from a range of sources. Since late 2018, mental health acute care wards within a specific Trust, are inspected at the same time. Prior to this each ward at the hospital site would have been inspected separately and reported on. By looking at services and experience across several of the wards there is an opportunity to identify recurring issues and indeed issues that may be specific to one area or ward. This approach also reduces RQIA staff footfall into the wards and reduced disruption to patients and staff. These changes provide

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assurance across the areas that we look for in our inspections: safe, effective, compassionate and well-led care and promotes shared learning across the Trust MH/LD facilities.

Co-joining with the learning from the acute hospitals work, RQIA also considered the content and recommendations made in an independent report, received in November 2018. The report was produced following the commission by Belfast Health and Social Care Trust of an independent team, chaired by Dr Margaret Flynn, to undertake a Serious Adverse Incident review to examine safeguarding practices in response to reports of inappropriate behaviour and allegations of abuse of patients by some staff in Muckamore Abbey Hospital. Reflecting on the findings of this review, which also endorsed the need for a 'systems' based approach to inspection, which a focus on the entirety of a hospital site, or entirety of a service, as appropriate, rather than a focus on inspections of individual wards.

The 'whole site' inspections were undertaken by multi-disciplinary inspection teams consisting of MHLID inspectors (including Nurses and Social Workers), lay assessors (now referred to as 'Inspection Support Volunteers'), psychiatrists, pharmacists, psychologists, senior RQIA officers, peer reviewers and others. These whole site inspections commenced in the MHLID team from late 2018 and continued to be unannounced.

Given the tragic death of a patient at Grangewood, in 2019 RQIA undertook a review of its inspection methodology in MH/LD facilities and reflected on the need to consider the reporting of SAIs and trends that may emerge.

This aspect, and other aspects of the development of the methodology, were further assisted by the gathering and transfer of all MHLID data and information management to a single MHLID module on RQIA's iConnect 2019 information management system. RQIA introduced this module on its information system iConnect in 2019 specifically for information relating to MHLID services, including the capturing of information about Serious Adverse Incidents (SAI). There is a review of each received SAI notification and consideration given to any regulatory steps that may need to be taken. When the full SAI Report is received further review and consideration is given to any regulatory steps that are required in line with the SAI report recommendations. Capturing the information in this way also enables trends to be considered. SAI and wider intelligence analysis is part of preparing for an inspection of a service. The multi-disciplinary inspection team have access to relevant intelligence held by RQIA in advance of inspections and examine the information in advance seeking to identify relevant intelligence.

Inspection methodology today continues to adopt the approaches developed and set out above. Inspections are usually undertaken over a period of two to three days, with all members of the multi-disciplinary team operating from an identified base within the facility. The multi-disciplinary inspection team attend daily debriefing sessions to identify themes emerging from the inspection and to discuss those themes.

I hope that the information provided assists you. If you are dissatisfied in any way with the handling of your request, you have the right to request a review. You should do this as soon as possible or in any case within two months of the date of issue of this letter, as the RQIA, along with all other public authorities are not obliged to accept internal review requests after this period has lapsed.

In the event that you require a review to be undertaken, you can do so by writing to The Business Services Organisation (BSO), which provides an Information Governance service on our behalf:

Post: Information Governance Manager,
2 Franklin Street,
Belfast,
BT2 8DQ

Email: foi.bso@hscni.net

If, following an internal review, carried out by an independent decision making panel, you remain dissatisfied in any way with the handling of the request, you may make a complaint to the Information Commissioner's Office and ask that they investigate whether the RQIA has complied with the terms of the Freedom of Information Act

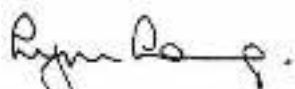
You can contact Information Commissioner at:

Website: www.ico.org.uk

Phone: 0303 123 1113
Email: icocasework@ico.org.uk
Post: Information Commissioner's Office
3rd Floor, 14 Cromac Place
Belfast
BT7 2JB

In most circumstances the Information Commissioner will not investigate a complaint unless an internal review procedure has been carried out. However, the Commissioner has the option to investigate the matter at his discretion.

Yours Sincerely,



Lynn Long

Director of Mental Health, Learning Disability, Children's Services and Prison Healthcare