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Our reviews are undertaken as part of RQIA's Three Year Review Programme 2015-2018. Read more about the areas we are reviewing by visiting our website or by clicking on this image.

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## Review of Governance Arrangements in HSC Organisations that Support Professional Regulation, January 2017



As part of its 2015-18 review programme, RQIA conducted a review of governance arrangements in health and social care (HSC) organisations (HSC Board; trusts; Public Health Agency; Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service) to support professional regulation by: General Dental Council (GDC); General Medical Council (GMC); Northern Ireland Social Care Council (NISCC); Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC); and Pharmaceutical Society Northern Ireland.

The review examined the clinical and social care governance arrangements to consider if they were in keeping with the standards and guidelines set by HSC organisations and professional regulatory bodies, in order to provide assurances to the Northern Ireland public that all health professionals are registered and fit to practise.

RQIA found that the HSC organisations reviewed had robust governance arrangements in place, to ensure essential requirements for adherence to professional registration and regulation.



## Background

There are increasing demands placed on health and social care services in Northern Ireland due to an ageing population, high patient expectations, increasing prevalence of chronic conditions, advances in technology and therapeutics, and changes in the way services are delivered. Given the challenges facing professional health and social care staff in Northern Ireland, it is important that the public are assured that these staff are fit to practise, and HSC organisations have robust governance processes in place.

The review team examined the effectiveness of the governance arrangements in HSC organisations to support professional regulation in: medicine; nursing and midwifery; social work, including social care workers; pharmacy, including pharmacy technicians; community dentistry, including dental care professionals; and biomedical science (NI Blood Transfusion Service only)

The review team met with the professional regulators and with senior representatives from each HSC organisation's professional group; considered self-assessments completed by the HSC organisations; and held focus groups with frontline staff.

Our findings were presented at a summit event for key stakeholders, and our full review report is now published at [www.rqia.org.uk](http://www.rqia.org.uk).

## Conclusions

The review found that the HSC organisations function in well-established regulated environments, with robust governance arrangements to assure adherence to requirements for registration and regulation. We found effective engagement with the professional regulatory bodies and arrangements to ensure continued registration of their staff.

RQIA was advised that a number of national and local initiatives are currently underway, for example, the intended UK-wide government consultation to explore reform of healthcare professional regulation.

This will consider development of a national framework to assess which professional groups should be regulated and how. It is anticipated that the future direction of professions subject to professional regulation will be impacted by these initiatives. The review team considers that this needs to be accounted for during any review that takes place.

RQIA found strong commitment among HSC organisations to take forward professional registration and regulation of their workforce in Northern Ireland. This is an important element in providing assurance to the general public that the HSC workforce is fit for purpose and will continue to provide a high standard of care.