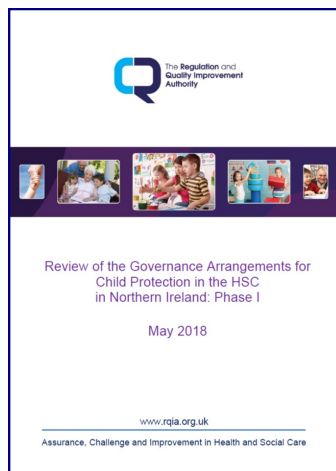


Find Out More

You can read the full report of our findings and recommendations on our website, or by clicking [here](#).



This review was undertaken as part of RQIA's Three Year Review Programme 2015-2018. Read more about our review activity by visiting our website, or by clicking on this image.



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Review of the Governance Arrangements for Child Protection in the HSC in Northern Ireland, May 2018



This review reports on the effectiveness of current governance arrangements in place in relation to child protection across the health and social care trusts (trusts). During this review we considered the following themes:

- corporate leadership and accountability
- workforce
- workload and management of unallocated cases
- supervision
- training
- assessment
- records management and record keeping
- interdisciplinary working at an operational level
- compliance with policies and procedures

Our review also reports on progress of the implementation of the recommendations from RQIA's previous review of child protection arrangements in Northern Ireland, published in 2011.

This review makes 14 recommendations to support further improvement in child protection arrangements across Northern Ireland.



Background

During 2008 to 2011 RQIA undertook a review of child protection services in Northern Ireland. Our review assessed systems and procedures in place to protect children from harm, and focused on arrangements for managing staff performance, access to services and interagency communication at the point of referral to child protection services.

In 2011, we published the [Review of Child Protection Arrangements in Northern Ireland: An Overview](#), containing 28 recommendations to drive improvements across child protection services.

During 2016-17, we revisited child protection services, to review the implementation of the 28 recommendations from our previous review, and to assess the effectiveness of the current governance arrangements in place across the HSC trusts in Northern Ireland.

In conducting [this review](#), we analysed progress against our previous recommendations; held focus groups with over 200 health and social care professionals from across the service; audited social worker's client notes; and, met with senior management teams in the trusts and at the Health and Social Care Board.

Findings and Recommendations

We welcome significant progress made to support improvement in outcomes for vulnerable children and their families in Northern Ireland. We found evidence of strong leadership and a committed workforce, and noted some concerns in relation to workload, which includes often complex cases, and the management of unallocated cases.

[This review](#) makes **14 recommendations** to support further improvement in child protection arrangements across the HSC.

Three recommendations require attention now. These relate to the performance and risk management arrangements for unattended cases. Also, given the service changes that are anticipated, we highlight the need to clearly describe responsibilities relating to commissioning and delivery of child protection services into the future.

Other recommendations address:

- **Staffing:** dealing with short-term absences, recruitment and group/peer supervision.
- **Assessment:** the need to update the understanding the needs of children in Northern Ireland (UNOCINI) assessment tool; and volume of administrative work for frontline practitioners.
- **Liaison with other services:** children attending emergency departments, child protection issues during school holidays, domestic violence support services and local early intervention / prevention hubs.
- **Service user involvement** to help inform and improve service development.