



The Regulation and  
Quality Improvement  
Authority

press release

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## **RQIA publishes Review of Whistleblowing Arrangements in Health and Social Care**

Today, The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA), has published the findings of its review of Whistleblowing Arrangements in Health and Social Care, as part of a wider Department of Health review in response to Sir Liam Donaldson's Report. RQIA's independent review team, which included representation from whistleblowing charity - Public Concern at Work, examined whistleblowing arrangements in organisations across Northern Ireland

Speaking at the launch of the report, Olive Macleod, RQIA Chief Executive said:

**“During this review we found that that there is often a negative view of whistleblowing. While many staff raise concerns, a significant minority do not, with some feeling that nothing will be done, and fear reprisal.**

**“An open and honest reporting culture gives staff the confidence to bring forward any concerns, without fear, in the knowledge that genuine concerns will be treated seriously and investigated appropriately.”**

**“Employers must take steps to encourage workers to raise concerns about wrongdoing in their organisations. Responding to whistleblowing in a timely manner is key to supporting improvement in the quality of health and social care services, and providing assurance of patient safety.”**

RQIA's Chief Executive continued: **"It is not acceptable for organisations to assume a low level of raising concerns is positive; they must each 'test the silence' to gain assurance that the process of raising concerns is working well in their organisation."**

Olive Macleod concluded: **"RQIA's review team makes 11 recommendations to improve whistleblowing arrangements within HSC organisations Key recommendations include: the development of a model policy for raising concerns in HSC bodies; and piloting a confidential helpline to advise and support staff in raising concerns."**

**ENDS**

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The full report can be accessed at: [www.rqia.org.uk](http://www.rqia.org.uk)

## **Editors' Notes**

### **The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA)**

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority, established in April 2005 under The Health and Personal Social Services (Quality, Improvement and Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 2003, is the independent health and social care regulatory body for Northern Ireland. In its work RQIA encourages continuous improvement in the quality and availability of health and social care services through a programme of inspections and reviews.

### **RQIA Review of Whistleblowing Arrangements in Health and Social Care**

In December 2014, Sir Liam Donaldson was commissioned to carry out a review of the arrangements for assuring and improving the quality and safety of care in Northern Ireland. His report, *The Right Time, the Right Place*, recommended that "the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority should review the current policy on whistleblowing and provide advice to the minister".

In August 2015, as part of the Department of Health's (DoH) overall review of HSC whistleblowing arrangements, RQIA was commissioned to undertake a review of the operation of HSC whistleblowing arrangements.

## **Terms of Reference**

1. The review will consider:
  - a. the existence (current, consistent, robust);
  - b. operation (understanding, training, learning);
  - c. accessibility, availability, support;, and
  - d. governance of arm's length bodies' whistleblowing arrangements
2. In light of the findings of the review RQIA will identify any recommendations for improvement to the arrangements.

The scope of the review included:

- Business Services Organisation
- Health and Social Care Board
- Northern Ireland Blood Transfusion Service
- Northern Ireland Medical and Dental Training Agency
- Northern Ireland Practice and Education Council for Nursing and Midwifery
- Northern Ireland Social Care Council
- Patient and Client Council
- Public Health Agency
- The six health and social care trusts (including the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Health and Social Care Trust);

The review excluded arrangements within the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service, Northern Ireland Guardian Ad Litem Agency and RQIA, which will be assessed by DoH at a later stage.