

**From the Chief Medical Officer
Dr Michael McBride**



BY EMAIL

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Your Ref:
Our Ref:
Date: 20 March 2020

Dear Olive

CORONAVIRUS COVID 19 – DEPARTMENTAL DIRECTION

We are all aware of the rapidly developing situation in respect of Coronavirus (Covid-19) which will require RQIA to keep its operations under review. For this reason, I am issuing a Departmental Direction (Appendix A) under Article 6 (2) of The Health and Personal Social Services (Quality, Improvement and Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 2003.

The Departmental is directing RQIA to reduce the frequency of its statutory inspection activity (as set out in The Regulation and Improvement Authority (Fees and Frequency of Inspections) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005) and cease its non-statutory inspection activity and review programme with immediate effect until otherwise directed.

I ask RQIA to continue to respond to ongoing areas of risk, such as where there are services currently in enforcement or where enforcement is being considered that RQIA will focus their activity where it is needed most to ensure safe care and act flexibly and proportionately.

I am confident that RQIA will take a pragmatic and flexible approach to how and when they inspect as and when this situation develops. I trust this Departmental direction will enable RQIA to prioritise inspections on an evidence, intelligence led and risk-assessed basis.