

11 May 2020

Mr Robin Swann MLA
Minister of Health
Department of Health
Castle Buildings
Stormont
Belfast
Northern Ireland
BT4 3SQ

By email: private.office@health-ni.gov.uk

Dear Minister Swann,

Re: The role and practice of the Regulator – RQIA

We are writing to seek assurances, in the absence of physical inspections in care homes at this time, that there are alternative measures in place that will ensure that the standards of care and treatment expected in care home settings is being provided.

We are aware that the RQIA has been 'repurposed' to minimise and control the risk of bringing infection of the coronavirus into nursing homes, and is fulfilling an advisory role to care homes on request. There is no doubt of the value of this for care home managers and providers. Nonetheless, with the ongoing absence of family members and inspectors in homes can you advise what alternative steps have or are being introduced to ensure that any problems in care provision are identified quickly and acted upon.

As you are aware, both of us have, in the past, highlighted poor and dangerous practices in some care homes in Northern Ireland. So while we are confident that most care providers will be working hard to ensure their residents are cared for at this difficult time we also need to be assured that if this is not happening, there is a process to identify this and act urgently to protect and safeguard residents.

Equality House, 7-9 Shaftesbury Square, Belfast, Northern Ireland, BT2 7DP

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Email: info@copni.org

While all actions to prevent infection of Covid 19 in nursing homes, including visitor restrictions, are welcomed, there remains a duty on your Department to ensure the safety and care of all older people continues, particularly when the care home lockdown is expected to be necessary for some time.

We look forward to hearing from you as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

NR

Eddie Lynch
Commissioner for Older People
for Northern Ireland

NR

Les Allamby
Chief Commissioner
Northern Ireland Human Rights
Commission

CC Mark Ovens
Dermot Parsons

NR

NR

David Russell

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