

## **UK COVID-19 INQUIRY**

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### **WRITTEN OPENING STATEMENT IN RESPECT OF MODULE 6 ON BEHALF OF THE REGULATION AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT AUTHORITY**

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1. These written opening submissions are made on behalf of the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority ("RQIA") for the purposes of Module 6 of the UK Covid-19 Inquiry.
2. RQIA is Northern Ireland's independent health and social care regulator and is a non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department of Health in Northern Ireland. It was established pursuant to The Health and Personal Social Services (Quality, Improvement and Regulation) (Northern Ireland) Order 2003, as amended, and came into existence in April 2005.
3. RQIA is the body responsible for monitoring and inspecting the availability and quality of health and social care services in Northern Ireland and encouraging improvements in the quality of those services.
4. RQIA wishes to express its sincere condolences to all those who lost loved ones during the Covid-19 pandemic across all four nations. It also wishes to acknowledge the devastating impact that the pandemic has had on families, the wider community, care homes and, in particular, care home residents in Northern Ireland.
5. During the pandemic RQIA had to find different ways in which to conduct its core statutory functions – registration, inspection and enforcement. RQIA is committed to being a learning organisation, has reflected upon the lessons learned during this period; and sought to embed into continuing normal practice the benefits of this learning. A particular example of this is the development of a risk-based, intelligence assessed approach to informing decision making when considering inspection, coupled with a regular frequency of inspections of Residential and Nursing Care Homes.
6. RQIA also firmly believes that developments in, and improvements to, technology, structures and support mechanisms, coupled with RQIA's agile response during the relevant period, have ensured a sound basis upon which to build should RQIA be required to respond to a future pandemic.
7. RQIA remains committed to its core purpose of securing and improving safety and quality in health and social care services across Northern Ireland. RQIA thanks the Inquiry for the valuable opportunity to participate actively in the production of evidence in Module 6. RQIA will continue to consider the evidence that the Inquiry has heard and will carefully reflect and act upon the Inquiry's findings.

13 June 2025