

Regulations in Northern Ireland

Northern Ireland: The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) - Who And What Is RQIA And How Does It Effect Your Business

What Is RQIA?

RQIA stands for the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority. And they regulate health and social care services in Northern Ireland.

Care businesses are required to register with the RQIA so that their services can be monitored and regulated. A bit like OFSTED for schools.

RQIA uses evidence-based practice to inform an overall assessment of health and social care in Northern Ireland. Inspections assess the quality of the services provided against four key domains;

1. Is the care safe?
2. Is the care effective?
3. Is there care compassionate?
4. Is the service well led?

You can log onto the RQIA website and look at care companies ratings and see how well they are rated. It is an excellent help when deciding which care company to use or which care home to recommend for people.



I'm A Care Service, Do I Need To Register Then?

As a self employed carer, or PA (personal assistant) currently you do not have to register with the RQIA. As long as you do not employ anyone and you stay working for yourself as a registered sole trader (not a limited company), the RQIA see our type of work as a private agreement between a carer and the person needing care. And therefore they don't regulate private agreements.

RQIA is fabulous and does a truly fabulous job at regulating care and ensuring top quality care. But as a small business with no start up capital, registering with RQIA is a MASSIVE barrier to entry into the care industry. Financially it costs a lot to register, it is a stressful and time consuming process, which in truth, for the scale of care you are going to be carrying out. It wouldn't really be worth continuing down this route if you needed to register with RQIA.

It is not that we are trying to fly under the radar, we really aren't. We want to shout loud and proud that we are self employed carers and we provide the best care around! It is just, part of the joys of being a self employed carer is that the control is now back in the hands of the person needing care and you as a carer. You aren't having to worry about filling out paperwork correctly, you can actually do what matters and care for the person in question. At the end of the day, a person needing care would 1000 times more prefer for you to spend 10 minutes chatting with them and hearing about their life, than you having to sit down and do the paperwork.

By not registering with RQIA you have a little more freedom and flexibility in how you provide care. This is what makes your service more flexible and able to provide bespoke care to each and every client you have.

Currently self employed carers, or to use the RQIA term, personal assistants or individual care workers, do not have to register with RQIA as long as they are self employed/employed directly by the person receiving care.



What If I Have A Business Partner?

If two or more self employed carers form a partnership, you are allowed to provide care to a shared customer by coordinating care with each other. But it must not be classed as a legal partnership.

So you cannot open a limited company and both become directors and employ yourselves through that company. You would then be required to register with RQIA.

So you must register individually with HMRC as self employed and you must invoice separately from each other, and you will be responsible for your own profits and losses.

You must also not share costs such as equipment you may need, this needs to be purchased individually, otherwise that may be classed as a formal partnership.

The person receiving care must be able to set out their care requirements and have full control on who works when and doing what. Which is the way we work anyhow, the control is handed back to the person needing care and they dictate what and how care is received.

Takeaways:

- Make sure you invoice for the work that you do separately from anyone you work with.
- Make sure you do not share costs with another person
- Make sure the customer retains control of their own care
- Be aware this may change in the future, but we will support you through every step needed and what this would mean you need to do. So don't worry about it!



Care Register

Northern Ireland: Northern Ireland Social Care Council Care Register

All social care workers in Northern Ireland need to apply to be on the register with the NISCC (well nearly all...).

The NISCC is a public body established by the Department of Health to support high quality standards of social work and social care.

The NISCC make a difference to the quality of social care services by regulating workforce standards and promoting continuous training and learning. Through this work they support the development of a strong and professional social work and social care workforce providing quality care and the best outcomes for people who use services and their carers.

NISCC are responsible for:

- Maintaining a register of Social Workers and Social Care Workers in Northern Ireland (over 49,000 registrants)
- Setting standards for Social Workers and Social Care Workers for their conduct, training and practice
- Setting standards for and regulating social work education and training in Northern Ireland

NISCC Vision and Values

The Social Care Council's vision is:

'To Improve Standards in Social Work and Social Care'. Our values underpin our culture and explain how we work with others.

- We promote **Respect**
- We work with **Integrity**
- We believe in **Partnership**
- We strive for **Excellence**

What is registration?

The main purpose of registration is to protect the public as it ensures only those who are competent and qualified can deliver care and support in roles where registration is required.

Being registered with the NISCC means you are part of a professional workforce and can show that you have skills and knowledge which are vital to providing good care and support to the people of Wales.

BUT.....

with all that being said..

SELF EMPLOYED CARERS/PERSONAL ASSISTANTS do not need to/are not able to, register with the NISCC!

The current guidelines, and there is no current plan to change this, is that, if the personal assistant/self employed carer is paid directly by the client/person needing care, then that counts as self directed support and the carer does not need to register with the NISCC.

If the carer was to receive payment from a third party that is RQIA (Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority) registered, so for example if they took work from an agency. Then they would need to register as Self Employed In Social Care.

But as you will be working direct with the client and being paid by the client (and/or their family) you will be classed as a personal assistant in the NISCC's eyes and therefore you are not able to register to be on the Care Worker register.

On the bright side it is one less thing to do and think about!

Summary

Question: Do I need to register with the NISCC?

Answer: No