

Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety

End of session report 2013/14

The Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety is a Statutory Departmental Committee established in accordance with paragraphs 8 and 9 of the Belfast Agreement, section 29 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and under Standing Order 48.

The Committee has power to:

- Consider and advise on Departmental budgets and annual plans in the context of the overall budget allocation;
- Consider relevant secondary legislation and take the Committee stage of primary legislation;
- Call for persons and papers;
- Initiate inquiries and make reports; and
- Consider and advise on any matters brought to the Committee by the Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

The Committee has 11 members including a Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson and a quorum of 5.

Democratic Unionist Party

Mrs Pam Cameron
Mr Gordon Dunne
Mr David McIlveen
Ms Paula Bradley¹

Alliance Party

Mr Kieran McCarthy

Sinn Fein

Mr Mickey Brady
Ms Maeve McLaughlin (Chairperson)²
Ms Sue Ramsey³

Social Democratic and Labour Party

Mr Fearghal McKinney⁴

Ulster Unionist Party

Mr Roy Beggs
Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson⁵

¹ With effect from 24 September 2014 Ms Paula Bradley replaced Mr Jim Wells as Deputy Chairperson.

² With effect from 16 September 2013 Ms Maeve McLaughlin replaced Ms Sue Ramsey as Chairperson.

³ With effect from 16 September 2013 Ms Sue Ramsey was no longer a Member of the Committee.

⁴ With effect from 30 September 2013 Mr Fearghal McKinney was appointed as a Member of the Committee.

⁵ With effect from 04 July 2014 Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson replaced Mr Samuel Gardiner as a Member of the Committee.



Committee members meeting in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Meetings

Between September 2013 and August 2014 the Committee held 31 meetings.

Two of these meetings were held outside Parliament Buildings:

- A meeting was held at the Niamh Louise Foundation, Dungannon, as part of the Committee's visit to the Foundation's facilities; and
- A meeting was held in Magee College, Derry/Londonderry to coincide with an informal meeting with researchers from the University of Ulster on suicide and self-harm statistics and trends.

In addition to the above the Committee has visited:

- The Emergency Department and Acute Medical Unit at the Royal Victoria Hospital;
- Cedar Court supported living facility in Downpatrick;
- The Pavilions model for elderly care, Lisburn; and
- QUB Centre for Cancer Research and Cell Biology.

The Committee went into closed session during six of its meetings when it was considering legal advice on the Tobacco Retailers Bill, and when discussing potential recommendations as part of its Review on Waiting Times and its Review of supported living for older people in the context of Transforming Your Care.



Committee members during the visit to the Niamh Louise Foundation, Dungannon

Primary Legislation

Tobacco Retailers Bill

The Committee completed its scrutiny of the Tobacco Retailers Bill on 9 October 2013. As a result of the Committee's scrutiny, the Department agreed to make a significant number of amendments. These amendments will strengthen the sanctions contained in the legislation in relation to retailers who sell tobacco to under 18s, by lowering the threshold for and duration of banning orders. In addition, the amendments resulted in illicit tobacco offences being included as relevant offences for the purpose of the Bill, and the creation of the offence of proxy purchasing as a deterrent against adults purchasing tobacco for under 18s.

The Health & Social Care (Amendment) Bill

The Committee completed its scrutiny of the Health & Social Care (Amendment) Bill on 4 December 2013. The Committee considered seven written submissions. No amendments were proposed to the Bill by the Department or the Committee.

Food Hygiene Ratings Bill

The Committee undertook pre-introductory scrutiny of the Food Hygiene Ratings Bill. This Bill is being developed by the Food Standards Agency and will make it compulsory for food businesses to display their food hygiene ratings. The Bill is expected to be introduced in autumn 2014.

Bill to amend the Health and Personal Social Services Act (Northern Ireland) 2001

The Committee undertook pre-introductory scrutiny of proposed legislation to amend the Health and Personal Social Services Act (NI) 2001. The amendments relate to the Northern Ireland Social Care Council which is responsible for the regulation of the social work and social care workforces in Northern Ireland, and for the regulation of professional training courses for social workers. The amendments will modernise the council's model of regulation and extend its powers to formally recognise social workers' learning achievements. The Bill is expected to be introduced in autumn 2014.

Other proposed Bills

The Committee also took evidence on proposals for primary legislation in relation to the following:

- Organ donation (Private Member's Bill)
- Adoption and Children Bill
- Mental Capacity Bill

Legislative Consent Motion – Standardised packaging of tobacco

On 29 January 2014 the Committee published its report on the legislative consent motion proposed by the Department in relation to the Westminster government's Children and Families Bill. The aspect of the Bill which required a legislative consent motion was an amendment tabled by the Secretary of State for Health to make regulations on the standardised packaging of tobacco on a UK-wide basis.

After taking evidence from the Department, the Committee came to the view that this would be the most efficient mechanism for introducing legislation on standardised packaging of tobacco in Northern Ireland. It therefore agreed to support the Department in seeking the Assembly's endorsement of the legislative consent motion. The Assembly agreed the motion on 3 February 2014.



Committee members visiting the Queens University, Belfast Centre for Cancer Research and Cell Biology

Subordinate legislation

The Committee considered 35 proposals for subordinate legislation and approved 36 Statutory Rules.

The Committee considered secondary legislation regarding the implementation of an EU Directive on cross border healthcare and changes to overseas visitors' access to free healthcare in Northern Ireland. It took evidence from the Department, the HSC Board, the British Medical Association, and the Law Centre NI on the relevant issues.

The Committee agreed that it was content with the Department's policy proposals in terms of how it intended to implement the EU Directive and subsequently approved

the Statutory Rules. However, in relation to the proposals on overseas visitors' access, the Committee agreed to request that the draft Provision of Health Services to Persons Not Ordinarily Resident Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013 be amended to provide free secondary healthcare services for all failed asylum seekers. In addition, the Committee agreed to seek a written commitment from the Department to explore the issue of free access to primary care for failed asylum seekers further through consultation with the relevant stakeholders. The outcome was that in January 2014, the Department committed to engaging further with the Law Centre NI and other key stakeholders before considering whether to introduce the policy changes proposed by the Committee. The Committee expects the Department to bring forward proposed regulations in autumn 2014.

Budget Scrutiny

The Committee held seven evidence sessions on budgetary matters and covered issues including the Departmental bids made under the monitoring rounds, 2014-2015 budgetary pressures, and the resources required to progress Programme for Government Delivery Plans.

Policy Scrutiny

Review of Transforming Your Care (TYC) – health inequalities and learning disability



Committee stakeholder event with learning disability groups/charities, people with learning disabilities, families and carers

From September 2013 to January 2014, the Committee carried out a piece of work to examine the TYC Strategic Implementation Plan in relation to learning disabilities. In particular, the Committee investigated how effective the future service model plan for learning disability will be in terms of tackling health inequalities suffered by that section of the population. The Committee gathered evidence by holding a stakeholder event which included learning disability groups/charities, people with learning disabilities, and families and carers. The Committee produced a report making eight recommendations. The Department accepted six of these recommendations which were around issues such as ensuring equal access to annual GP check-ups, better training for GPs on the need to make reasonable adjustments for people with learning

disabilities, and more involvement of people with a learning disability and their carers in terms of developing health promotion messages.

Review of waiting times for elective care

In January 2014 the Committee began a review into waiting times for elective care. The purpose of the review was to assess the effectiveness of the Department's current approach to reducing waiting times, and to identify effective approaches which have been used in other countries/regions which could be applied in Northern Ireland. The Committee undertook this piece of working by hearing from expert witnesses who have carried out research into waiting times across Europe and further afield. In addition, the Committee heard from government officials from Portugal and Scotland on policies which are operating in these countries. The Committee will produce its report and recommendations in autumn in 2014. However, during the course of the review the Department has shifted its position in relation to the possible introduction of Referral to Treatment Time (RTT) targets, and in June 2014 advised the Committee that the Minister viewed a move to RTT as "highly desirable".

Review of supported living options for older people in the context of Transforming Your Care (TYC)

In January 2014 the Committee began a review into supported living options for older people in the context of TYC. The purpose of the review was to consider the structure and availability of supported living, and its capacity to meet the policy objective set out in TYC of reducing the need for statutory residential homes. The Committee will produce its report and recommendations in autumn in 2014. However, during the course of the review the Committee has discovered there is a lack of clarity around the definition of supported living, and as a result the Department agreed in April 2014 to formally review the definition, so that it is more in line with the vision set out in TYC.

Performance Scrutiny

In February 2013 the Committee raised the issue of cancelled appointments with the Department, after it discovered that during 2011/2012 approximately 180,000 outpatient appointments were cancelled by hospitals. When the Committee held took evidence from the Health and Social Care Board and the Health and Social Care Trusts, it discovered that the figures on cancelled appointments were not robustly recorded. The Board admitted that different Trusts recorded the reasons for cancellations in different ways, that it was not possible to know how many cancellations were truly cancelled appointments as opposed to the patient being seen by another doctor, and that it was not possible to ascertain the number of cancelled appointments which negatively impacted on the patient's health.

As a result of the Committee's work, the Department asked the Trusts to establish a short life working group to consider how information on cancelled appointments could be better collected and analysed. During the summer of 2013, the group produced an implementation plan to improve the availability of information on cancelled appointments. In November 2013 the Committee continued its scrutiny of this issue and was not satisfied that the new data collection provided enough meaningful information. As a result, the Department agreed that in terms of drawing up the service specification for a replacement Patient Administration System, detailed consideration will be given to how cancelled appointments can be recorded and

monitored. The Department also agreed to change its data collection methodology, in order to provide more detailed information on the reasons why hospitals cancelled appointments, and the impact of delays on patients.

Engagement - Informal meetings and stakeholder events

The Committee met with 28 organisations through informal meetings and a stakeholder event which was held in April 2014.

Committee motions

The Committee brought forward a motion on its report on health inequalities experienced by people with a learning disability. The motion called on the Minister to use the opportunities associated with Transforming Your Care to prioritise and tackle this issue, and was agreed by the Assembly.

Key priorities of the next session

The key priorities for the next session will be:

- Transforming Your Care – outcomes framework and workforce planning
- Departmental Budget and spending proposals for 2015/2016
- Committee stage of the Food Hygiene Ratings Bill
- Committee stage of a Bill to amend the Health and Personal Social Services Act (Northern Ireland) 2001

Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Expenditure for the period 1 September 2013 to 31 August 2014

| Budget area | Details | Expenditure |
|---|---|--------------------|
| Committee travel - committee members and staff travel and subsistence in relation to visits and meetings outside Parliament Buildings | Includes the cost of 4 committee visits to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Emergency Department and Acute Medical Unit at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Belfast; • Cedar Court supported living facility, Downpatrick; • The Pavilions model for elderly care, Lisburn; and • Queens University Belfast Centre for Cancer Research and Cell Biology; Includes the cost of 2 committee meetings held outside Parliament Buildings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Niamh Louise Foundation, Dungannon • Magee College, Derry/Londonderry | £1,184.17 |
| Printing of committee reports | The Health & Social Care (Amendment) Bill The Tobacco Retailers Bill | £ 760.30 |
| Advertising – the cost of public notices relating to committee inquiries, the committee stage of Bills and meetings held outside Parliament Buildings | The Health & Social Care (Amendment) Bill | £ 624.64 |
| Consultancy support - the cost of specialist advisers appointed by the committee and commissioned research, also the cost of drafting Standing Orders | N/A | £0.00 |
| General expenses | Cost of refreshments for committee meetings, working lunches, seminars, room hire, witness expenses, gifts provided by the committee during visits and conference fees for members. | £3,792.39 |
| Total Expenditure | | £ 6,361.50 |

