



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Committee for Health

## Minutes of Proceedings

18 March 2021

**Meeting Location:** virtual meeting

**Present by Video or Teleconference:**

Colm Gildernew MLA (Chairperson)

Pam Cameron MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Paula Bradshaw MLA

Jonathan Buckley MLA

Gerry Carroll MLA

Alan Chambers MLA

Órlaithí Flynn MLA

Cara Hunter MLA

Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

**In Attendance:**

Keith McBride, Clerk

Roisin Donnelly, Assistant Clerk

Deirdre Farry, Assistant Clerk

Jonathan Lamont, Clerical Supervisor

Brendan Miskelly, Clerical Officer



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The meeting commenced at 9.30 am in open session.

### **1. Apologies**

There were no apologies.

### **2. Chairperson's Business**

There was no Chairperson's business.

### **3. Draft Minutes**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2021.

### **4. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

*The meeting was momentarily suspended due to technical difficulties with video-conference sound.*



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## **5. Departmental Briefing: update on vaccination programme**

Patricia Donnelly, Head of COVID-19 Vaccination Programme, Department of Health joined the meeting by video-conference at 9.35 am and provided an update on the progress of the vaccination programme.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

*Carál Ní Chuilín declared an interest as having relatives who work in the education sector.*

The Chairperson thanked Patricia Donnelly for attending the meeting.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

*The meeting was suspended at 10.34 am and resumed at 10.41 am.*

## **6. Briefing from the Interim Mental Health Champion**

The following officials joined the meeting by video-conference at 10.41 am:

Professor Siobhan O'Neill, Interim Mental Health Champion; and

Peter Cash, Senior Policy Officer, Office of the Mental Health Champion.

Professor O'Neill provided an update on the work of the office of the Mental Health Champion and on the development of a trauma informed recovery plan.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

*The Chairperson declared an interest as formerly being employed as a social worker and currently taking a career break.*

The Chairperson thanked the officials for attending the meeting.

The briefing was reported by Hansard.



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**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Health and the Community and Voluntary Sector for further information on funding for primary care talking therapies and well-being hubs and further information on the role of the community and voluntary sector in supporting the health and social care sector throughout the pandemic.

*The meeting was suspended at 12.06 pm and resumed at 12.21 pm.*

**Present by Video or Teleconference:**

Colm Gildernew MLA (Chairperson)

Pam Cameron MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Paula Bradshaw MLA

Alan Chambers MLA

Órlaithí Flynn MLA

Cara Hunter MLA

Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

**7. SR 2021/46 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No.2) (Amendment No.5) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021**

Liz Redmond, Director of Population Health, Department of Health, joined the meeting by video-conference at 12.22 pm and briefed the Committee on the provisions of SR 2021/46 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No.2) (Amendment No.5) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Liz Redmond for attending the meeting.

The briefing was reported by Hansard.

The Committee considered SR 2021/46 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No.2) (Amendment No.5) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 which:



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extends the review period for coronavirus restrictions; permits click and collect for some non-essential retail businesses within specified conditions; enables the use of Nightingale Courts; increases the limit on outdoor gatherings from 6 to 10 people, from no more than 2 households, for the purpose of socialising which is not a sporting event; and permits a customer's carer to accompany them to collect a Motability vehicle.

**Agreed:** The Committee considered SR 2021/46 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No.2) (Amendment No.5) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021, and recommended that it be approved by the Assembly.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to advise the Department of the issues raised by Members during the briefing session relating to the coronavirus restriction regulations.

### 8. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding when the Department seeks the views of the NI Human Rights Commission.
- ii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health advising that the emergency provisions of the Coronavirus Act 2020 relating to the Mental Health Order will be suspended and the amendments relating to second opinions will be reversed.
- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health confirming that his Department will provide an update on the implementation of the Autism Interim Strategy and the role of the Autism Forum to the Committee.
- iv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health providing information on the Distance Awareness Scheme and the contact tracing service.



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- v. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health providing information it had requested relating to the Cross-Departmental Vulnerable Children and Young People Plan.
- vi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding additional financial support for Department of Health core grant funded organisations.
- vii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding guidance for people who are shielding.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the Minister's correspondence to ShieldusNI for information.

- viii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Chief Nursing Officer providing information requested by Members at the briefing session on workforce issues that took place on 25 February.
- ix. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding COVID-19 restrictions relating to the closure of automated and self-service car washes.
- x. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding COVID-19 restrictions relating to the operation of swimming clubs.
- xi. The Committee noted the General Medical Council's Report to the Northern Ireland Assembly 2020.
- xii. The Committee noted correspondence from Hillmount regarding COVID-19 restrictions relating to the closure of garden centre retailers.
- xiii. The Committee considered a copy of correspondence from an individual to the Minister of Health and the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust regarding complaints relating to health care provision.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to advise the individual of the Committee's ongoing scrutiny relating to waiting times.



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- xiv. The Committee considered correspondence from the Chartered Society of Physiotherapy NI regarding waiting times.  
**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Department of Health for comment.
- xv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Chairperson's Liaison Group regarding Committee consideration of legislation.
- xvi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Speaker's Office advising that the public petition 'Urgent Provision of a Detox and Centre of Excellence for Addiction for the Derry City and Strabane District Council Area' was laid in the Assembly on 8 March by Karen Mullan MLA.
- xvii. The Committee noted an update from the Minister of Health on the application of the emergency provisions contained in the Mental Health (1986 Order) (Amendment) Order (NI) 2021.
- xviii. The Committee noted the Examiner of Statutory Rules' Thirtieth Report of Session 2020-2021.

### **9. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee noted its Forward Work Programme.

### **10. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.



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### **11. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting**

The next meeting of the Committee for Health was scheduled to take place on 25 March 2021 at 9.30 am by video-conference.

*The meeting moved into closed session at 1.04 pm.*

### **12. Severe Fetal Impairment Abortion (Amendment) Bill**

Stephanie Mallon, Bill Clerk for the SFIA Bill, and Aoibheann Baker, Bill Clerk for the HSC Bill joined the meeting at 1.07 pm and provided briefing on the role of the Bill Clerk in supporting the Committee's scrutiny of Bills during Committee Stage.

*Jonathan Buckley joined the meeting at 1.14 pm.*

The Chairperson thanked Stephanie Mallon and Aoibheann Baker for attending the meeting.

*Cara Hunter left the meeting at 1:44 pm.*

The Committee considered its management of the committee stage of the SFIA Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the call for evidence for the Bill and a seven-week period for receipt of written submissions.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to advise the Clerk of additions to the stakeholder list of organisations that would be invited to provide a written submission.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to return to its consideration of a timetable for Committee Stage at its next meeting.

### **13. Health and Social Care Bill**

The Committee considered its management of the committee stage of the HSC Bill.





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- Agreed:** The Committee agreed the call for evidence for the Bill and a five-week period for receipt of written submissions.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed to advise the Clerk of additions to the stakeholder list of organisations that would be invited to provide a written submission.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed to return to its consideration of a timetable for Committee Stage at its next meeting.

*The meeting was adjourned at 1.56 pm.*

**Colm Gildernew MLA**  
**Chairperson, Committee for Health**