



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Education

Minutes of Proceedings

9 June 2021

Meeting Location: Teleconference

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Mr Chris Lyttle MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Pat Sheehan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Maurice Bradley MLA
Ms Nicola Brogan MLA
Mr Robbie Butler MLA
Mr William Humphrey MBE MLA
Mr Daniel McCrossan MLA
Mr Justin McNulty MLA
Mr Robin Newton MBE MLA

Apologies: None

In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:

Ms Aoibhinn Treanor (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Mark McQuade (Assistant Clerk)
Mr Craig Mealey (Clerical Supervisor)



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Ms Emma Magee (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 9:37am in public session

1. Apologies

Apologies recorded above.

2. Chairperson's Business

2.1 Informal Meeting with Parenting NI.

The Committee noted a record of an informal meeting with Parenting NI on the impact of the covid-19 pandemic on parental mental health.

2.2 Committee input on Freedom of Information (Fol) matters during summer recess

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content to delegate authority to the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson during summer recess to submit views on the releasing or withholding of information in any non-routine / contentious Fol requests received.

Mr Sheehan joined the meeting at 9:40am

2.3 Final Report of the Expert Panel on Educational Underachievement

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Education apologising for the delay in error, in providing the Committee with a copy of the Final Report of the Expert Panel on Educational Underachievement

2.4 Education Minister

The Committee noted the announcement of the change of Minister of Education.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the outgoing Minister of Education thanking him for his service.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the incoming Minister of Education inviting her to brief the Committee at her earliest convenience.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 2 June 2021.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Voluntary Sector Outdoor Centres - Oral Briefing by The Uniform Youth Work Hub

The Committee noted a briefing paper from Scouts NI and a paper from the Assembly Research and Information Service 'Physical Activity and the Wellbeing of Children and Young People'.

The following witnesses joined the meeting by video conference at 9:41am:

Mr Jonathan Gracey, Chief Executive, Scouts NI

Ms Claire Flowers, Chief Executive, Girlguiding Ulster

The witnesses briefed the Committee on issues facing voluntary outdoor centres due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The briefing was covered by Hansard.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Mr Lyttle made a declaration of interest that his daughter was a girl guide.

Mr Newton joined the meeting at 9:56am.



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Mr Butler made a declaration of Interest that he is an officer in the Boys Brigade.

Mr Humphrey made a declaration of interest that he is president of the North & West Belfast Scouting council.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Uniform Youth Work Hub thanking it for the briefing and asking it to:

- Respond indicating how the Department and EA could help its member organisations with pandemic recovery and development of volunteers;
- Provide the Committee with copies of the 'Girls Attitude Survey 2020' and the 'Back in Lockdown' report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Health and the Chief Medical Officer seeking clarity on the date on which voluntary organisations will be able to reopen residential centres and allow camping.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority:

- Asking what information was available on the impact on Child Mental Health due to the Covid-19 pandemic;
- Asking for an update on its new funding scheme and what it can do to make its funding more accessible by voluntary sector outdoor centres; and
- Asking what provision could be made to resource voluntary organisations via training and development to reach out to vulnerable children in particular.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department for Communities indicating the willingness of uniform organisations to participate in the development of outreach policy for looked after children.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Women's Caucus and the Committee for Justice indicating Girlguiding Ulster's willingness to arrange focus groups on safety and sexual violence.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for the briefing.



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6. Children and Young People Emotional Health and Wellbeing in Education Strategy/Provision of Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services - Oral Briefing by the Department of Education, Department of Health and the Education Authority

The Committee noted a briefing paper from the Department of Education.

The following witnesses joined the meeting by video conference at 11:06am:

Mr Ricky Irwin, Director, Inclusion and Wellbeing, Department of Education Mrs Angela Kane, Head of Pupil Support Team, Department of Education Mr Gavin Quinn, Official, Department of Health

Mr Paul Millar, Social Care Commissioning Lead for Emotional Health and CAMHS, Health and Social Care Board

Ms Geraldine Teague, Lead Allied Health Professions Consultant, Health and Social Care Board

Ms Shauna Collinson, Interim Assistant Director of Pupil Inclusion, Wellbeing and Protection, Education Authority

Ms Nicola Topping, Head of Support Services for Pupil Wellbeing, Education Authority

The witnesses briefed the Committee.

The briefing was covered by Hansard.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Mr Newton left the meeting at 11:58am.

Mr Bradley left the meeting at 12:09pm.

Mr Humphrey left the meeting at 12:21pm.

Mr McCrossan left the meeting at 12:24pm.

The Chairperson thanked the witness for the briefing.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education welcoming co-operation across departments and seeking:

- Clarity on the line of command in terms of accountability for waiting lists for counselling and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS);
- An update on indicators and measurements for success for the strategy when these have been finalised;
- A breakdown of how funding for CAMHS services is spent;
- Further information on services for treating eating disorders and their impact on application of resource;
- The inclusion of an additional theme of parental wellbeing in the strategy;
- Analysis of the increase in statistics for looked after children due to the pandemic, and of differences in approach to these children in NI compared to that in neighbouring jurisdictions; and
- An update on the Department's response to the recommendations in the 'Elephant in the Room' report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority seeking:

- information on the confidentiality of services dealing with children and young people; and
- Information on the capacity of CAMHS.

7. Correspondence

7.1 The Committee noted an index of correspondence.

7.2 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education providing further information regarding Relationship and Sexuality Education (RSE).

7.3 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education providing further information on planned activities for the school summer programme.

7.4 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding Special Educational Needs Numeracy Support and School Transition.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the response to the correspondent who raised these issues with the Committee.

7.5 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education regarding the impact of Covid-19 on Children and Young People and providing further information on the Primary School Counselling Pilot.

7.6 The Committee noted a response from NICCY regarding the impact of Covid-19 on Children and Young People.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing from NICCY following publication of its report on impact of Covid-19 on Children and Young People.

7.7 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Communities regarding physical literacy and physical exercise in schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to respond setting out the work it had carried out and providing relevant papers.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education:

- Indicating its position that every child should have access to the recommended hours of Physical Education (PE) each week and asking what action the Department took as a result of the Assembly motion which called for the recommended hours of PE to be made mandatory; and
- seeking up to date data on the number of hours spent in PE in schools per week across all age groups.

7.8 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding the monthly forecast outturn data for March 2021.

7.9 The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the All Party Group on Autism to the Minister of Education regarding mandatory autism teacher training.

7.10 The Committee noted correspondence from CCMS regarding oversubscription for admission to St. Bernard's Primary School, Belfast.

7.11 The Committee noted correspondence from NIPSA regarding the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI).



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Minister, seeking an urgent response on the issues raised about GTCNI.

7.12 The Committee noted correspondence from the Head of Science, St Malachy's High School regarding changes to arrangements for assessing GCSE Science in 2021-22.

7.13 The Committee noted correspondence from the Head of Science, Coleraine College regarding changes to arrangements for assessing GCSE Science in 2021-22.

7.14 The Committee noted correspondence from the Head of Science, All Saints College regarding changes to arrangements for assessing GCSE Science in 2021-22.

7.15 The Committee noted correspondence from the Heads of Science, Omagh Academy regarding changes to arrangements for assessing GCSE Science in 2021-22.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Education and CCEA forwarding items 7.12 – 7.15 and seeking a response to the issues raised.

7.16 The Committee noted an invitation from the Duke of Edinburgh Award to the Duke of Edinburgh Centenary Event on 10 June 2021.

7.17 The Committee noted a response about delivery of Speech and Language and Occupational Therapy Services.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Joint Health Education Oversight Group established by the Public Health Agency for a response to issues raised in the correspondence.

7.18 The Committee noted a copy of correspondence to the Minister on private music tuition.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education asking to be copied into the Minister's response.

7.19 The Committee noted the Investing Activity Report for Department of Education for May 2021.



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8. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its forward work programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed its forward work programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange an additional briefing on Voluntary Outdoor Centres from non-uniformed organisations.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Post-Primary Transfer Consortium (PPTC) and the Association of Quality Education (AQE) to brief it on post-primary transfer arrangements for next year.

9. Any Other Business

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange an oral briefing on Eating Disorders.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Principal of St. Patrick's College, Dungannon to commend the school's welcoming approach to newcomer children.

10. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next formal Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday 16 June 2021 by video conference at 9:00am.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:15pm

Chris Lyttle MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Education
16 June 2021