



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

**Committee for Health
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**From: Keith McBride
Clerk to the Health Committee**
Date: 21 February 2022
To: Peter McCallion, Clerk to the Finance Committee
Subject: Budget 2022-25

Peter,

The Health Committee have not yet been able to come to a position on the 2022-25 Draft Budget.

The Committee has had briefing from the Department on the draft Budget in December and have raised the draft Budget in a number of briefings with stakeholders and departmental officials. However, due to pressure in relation to legislation, including consideration of seven bills, numerous COVID regulations and a number of LCMs and Statutory Instruments, the Committee has not been able to spend as much time as it would have liked on scrutinising and taking evidence on the Department of Health's draft Budget.

The Department of Health's draft budget over the next three years is an important priority for the Committee. Therefore, over the coming weeks, the Committee will continue to take briefings on a number of issues that will help Members to come to a view on the draft Budget, including briefings on Transformation, the Cancer Strategy, recovery out of COVID and briefings from the Minister and the Permanent Secretary.

The Committee does welcome the introduction of a multi-year budget and has called for a multi-year budget for a number of years as it is only through a multi-year budget that the Transformation Agenda can be progressed.

The Committee also welcomes the commitment from the Executive that health would be the top priority and that the focus of the draft Budget has been on providing additional resources for transforming the health service and reducing waiting lists on a permanent basis. The Committee welcomes the comments by the Minister of Finance in the Assembly on 13 December 2021 when he stated:

'prioritising our health service means a proposal for other Departments to contribute 2% of their opening baseline. That contribution would provide an additional £523 million over the three years, which would form part of an overall general allocation of £1.9 billion. That could be used at the Health Minister's discretion to help to address the significant funding pressures identified. On top of that, the draft Budget would provide £120 million, £182.4 million and £255.3 million over the three-year Budget to meet in full the Health Minister's bids for elective care, cancer and mental health rebuild strategies.'

Reduction of waiting lists and the funding of elective care is a priority for the Committee and will be an issue that the Committee will recommend in its Legacy Report that the incoming committee have as a priority.

The Committee for Health will continue to consider the draft Budget at meetings in the weeks before dissolution.