



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR HEALTH

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**Thursday, 9 April 2020
Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings**

Present: Mr Colm Gildernew (Chairperson)
Ms Pam Cameron MLA (Deputy Chairperson)*
Ms Paula Bradshaw MLA*
Mr Gerry Carroll MLA
Mr Alan Chambers MLA
Ms Órlaithí Flynn MLA*
Mr Alex Easton MLA
Mr Colin McGrath MLA*
Mr Pat Sheehan MLA*

In Attendance: Ms Éilis Haughey (Clerk)
Mr Jonathan Lamont (Clerical Supervisor)

**These Members attended the meeting via telephone conferencing.*

The meeting commenced at 10.03 am in public session.

1. Apologies

None.

2. Chairperson's Business

There was no Chairperson's business.

3. COVID-19 Disease Response – Department of Health Briefing

The following officials from the Department of Health joined the meeting via telephone conferencing at 10.06 am:

Mr Sean Holland, Chief Social Worker, Department of Health

Mr Mark Lee, Director of Mental Health, Disability and Older People, Department of Health

A question and answer session took place on issues around the provision of social care as a result of COVID-19.

Mr Alex Easton joined the meeting at 10.28 am.

Mr Holland agreed to provide the Committee with further information on a number of issues raised by Members during the question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Mr Holland and Mr Lee for their attendance.

The meeting was suspended at 11.15 am.

The meeting resumed at 11.25 am.

4. COVID-19 Disease Response – Southern Health and Social Care Trust Briefing

Mr Shane Devlin, Chief Executive, Southern Health and Social Care Trust joined the meeting via telephone conferencing at 11.25 am.

Mr Devlin briefed the Committee on the Southern Health and Social Care Trust's planning and response in relation to COVID-19.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Mr Devlin agreed to provide the Committee with further information on a number of issues raised by Members during the question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Mr Devlin for his attendance.

5. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Committee for Justice to the Department of Health regarding SR 2020/55 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020.
- ii. The Committee considered four items of correspondence from individuals requesting information on meetings of the Health Committee during Easter recess and noted the Chairperson's response to those individuals, which confirmed the date of the next meeting and advised that meetings were being kept under review in light of the establishment of the Assembly Ad Hoc Committee on the COVID-19 Response.
- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health to the Speaker providing notice of his intention to make a statement to the Ad Hoc Committee on the COVID-19 Response on Wednesday, 15 April 2020.
- iv. The Committee considered correspondence from the NI Human Rights Commission regarding access to abortion services in Northern Ireland during the current COVID-19 crisis.

The Committee discussed access to abortion services and the implementation of the abortion regulations and a number of Members made proposals regarding writing to the Minister of Health on this matter.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence from the NI Human Rights Commission to the Department of Health and to the Executive Office for comment.

The question was put that this Committee write to the Minister of Health and urge him to put in place abortion services as have been legislated for.

The Committee divided: Ayes 5; Noes 3

AYES

Ms Paula Bradshaw
Mr Gerry Carroll
Ms Órlaithí Flynn
Mr Colm Gildernew
Mr Pat Sheehan

NOES

Ms Pam Cameron
Mr Alan Chambers
Mr Alex Easton

Agreed: The Committee agreed write to the Minister of Health and urge him to put in place abortion services as have been legislated for.

6. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

7. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted its Forward Work Programme.

8. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next committee meeting was scheduled to take place on Thursday, 16 April 2020, at 10.00 am in a room within Parliament Buildings to be confirmed.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12.17 pm.

Signed: _____
Chairperson

Date: _____