



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Committee for Health

## Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday, 6 May 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 by Video or Teleconference:**

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 9.33 am in open session.*

### **1. Apologies**

There were no apologies.

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

- i. The Chairperson drew Members' attention to a European Citizens' Initiative campaign, 'No Profit on Pandemic' to promote wider access to COVID-19 vaccines.

*Alan Chambers joined the meeting at 9.37 am.*

- ii. The Chairperson provided an update on a meeting he attended with Birth Mothers and their Children for Justice NI.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Health and the Chairperson of the IDWG on Mother and Baby Homes, Magdalene Laundries and Historical Clerical Child Abuse, for a response to the issues raised at the meeting.

### **3. Draft Minutes**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 29 April 2021.

### **4. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.



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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 9.40 am and provided an update on the progress of the vaccination programme.

*Jonathan Buckley joined the meeting at 9.47 am.*

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Patricia Donnelly for attending the meeting.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

*The meeting was suspended at 10.43 am and resumed at 10.50 am.*

**Present by Video or Teleconference:**

Colm Gildernew MLA (Chairperson)

Pam Cameron MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Paula Bradshaw MLA

Gerry Carroll MLA

Alan Chambers MLA

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**6. Departmental briefing: Health Inequalities**

The following officials from the Department of Health joined the meeting by video-conference at 10.50 am.



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Gary Maxwell, Head of Health Development Policy Branch;

Bill Stewart, Principal Statistician; and

Caolan Laverty, Deputy Principal Statistician.

The officials briefed the Committee on the Department of Health's 'Health Inequalities Annual Report 2021'.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The officials agreed to provide further information on a number of issues raised.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for attending.

The session was reported by Hansard.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Health and the Public Health Agency for detail on actions and funding to reduce health inequalities.

*The meeting was suspended at 12.17 pm and resumed at 12.26 pm.*

### **7. SR 2021/99 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021**

The following officials joined the meeting by video-conference at 12.26 pm:

Elaine Colgan, Head of Health Protection Branch, Department of Health;

Debra Sharpe, International Travel Lead, Department of Health; and

Karen Pearson, Director of Covid Strategy and Recovery, The Executive Office.

The officials briefed the committee on three international travel restriction regulations (agenda items 7, 8 and 9).

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.



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The Chairperson thanked the officials for attending.

The session was reported by Hansard.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health providing detail on SR 2021/99 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021.

The Committee considered SR 2021/99 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 which consolidated the Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and subsequent amendments, and introduced new provisions for travellers to NI with regards to mandatory post-arrival testing and the requirement to enter managed isolation for arrivals from red list countries.

**Agreed:** The Committee considered SR 2021/99 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 and agreed it had no objection to the Rule.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request briefing from the Chief Medical Officer on cross border co-operation on the COVID-19 response.

### **8. SR 2021/102 The Health Protection (Coronavirus International Travel, Operator Liability and Information to Passengers) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021**

The Committee considered SR 2021/102 The Health Protection (Coronavirus International Travel, Operator Liability and Information to Passengers) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 which requires those arriving from outside the Common Travel Area to complete a Passenger Locator Form and possess proof of a negative test result, places certain requirements on operators to provide advice to passengers, and makes breaches of these provisions an offence.

**Agreed:** The Committee considered SR 2021/102 The Health Protection (Coronavirus International Travel, Operator Liability and Information to Passengers) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 and had no objection to the Rule.



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**9. SR 2021/108 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021**

The Committee considered SR 2021/108 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 which added India to the Red List of countries in Schedule 3, and revoked the Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 11) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 and the Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel, Operator Liability and Public Health Advice) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021.

**Agreed:** The Committee considered SR 2021/108 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 and had no objection to the Rule.

**10. SR 2021/109 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 (Amendment No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021**

Nigel McMahon, Chief Environmental Health Officer, Department of Health joined the meeting by video-conference at 12.10 pm and briefed the Committee on two statutory rules which provide for some easements of coronavirus related restrictions (agenda item 10 and additional agenda item 11).

The Committee considered SR 2021/109 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 (Amendment No.2) (Northern Ireland) 2021 which provides for easement of restrictions from 23 April and 30 April 2021.

**Agreed:** The Committee considered SR 2021/109 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 (Amendment No.2) (Northern Ireland) 2021 and recommend that it be approved by the Assembly.



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*The Committee agreed to consider an additional agenda item next.*

**11.SR 2021/117 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 (Amendment No.3) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021**

The Committee considered SR 2021/117 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 (Amendment No.3) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 which makes provisions relating to the carrying out of certain educational activities and for seating at hospitality premises.

**Agreed:** The Committee considered SR 2021/117 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 (Amendment No.3) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 and, recommend that it be approved by the Assembly.

*The meeting lost its live broadcasting feed at 1.32 pm and moved into closed session.*

**12.SL1 Public Health Notifiable Diseases Order (NI) 2020 – inclusion of Hepatitis C**

The Committee considered a proposal by the Department of Health to make a statutory rule to make Hepatitis C a notifiable disease so that medical practitioners will be required to share patient information with the Public Health Agency if they become aware, or have reasonable grounds for suspecting, that a person they are attending has Hepatitis C.

The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Health providing information requested by the Committee relating to its consideration of the proposed Rule.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content with the proposal for the Statutory Rule.



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### 13. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health providing information requested by the Committee on the use of powers in the Coronavirus Act 2020.
- ii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding the vaccination programme workforce.
- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding the publication of the progress report for 2020-2021 for the Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse Strategy.
- iv. The Committee considered two items of correspondence from the Minister of Health responding to issues raised by ShieldUs NI.  
**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the Minister's correspondence to ShieldUs NI for its information.
- v. The Committee noted the Investment Strategy NI April 2021 Investing Activity Report for the Department of Health.
- vi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust providing detail of all reports that have been commissioned by the Trust into issues arising from the work of Neurologist, Dr Michael Watt.
- vii. The Committee noted written briefing from the Minister of Health on commissioning to assist the Committee's consideration of the HSC Bill.
- viii. The Committee noted that a written submission from Lisburn Reformed Presbyterian Church and sixteen written submissions from individuals on the Severe Fetal Impairment Abortion (Amendment) Bill had been received.
- ix. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health responding to the Committee's request for an early return to the normal scrutiny process for subordinate legislation.



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- x. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding a request for recognition for the contribution of dental care practitioners throughout the pandemic.
- xi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health responding to the Committee's request for clarity around the relaxation of restrictions to allow outdoor hospitality to reopen.
- xii. The Committee noted the Examiner of Statutory Rules' Thirty-sixth and Thirty-seventh Reports of Session 2020-2021.

*Gerry Carroll left the meeting at 1.38 pm.*

#### **14. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee noted its Forward Work Programme.

#### **15. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

#### **16. Date, Time and Place of next meeting**

The next meeting of the Committee for Health was scheduled to take place on 13 May 2021 at 9.30 am.



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### **17. Health and Social Care Bill – consideration of written evidence**

The Committee noted that nine written submissions had been received on the Health and Social Care Bill from the following organisations:

- British Association of Social Workers NI
- British Dental Association NI
- Chartered Society of Physiotherapy NI
- Community Pharmacy NI
- NI Local Government Association
- Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority
- Royal College of General Practitioners NI
- Royal College of Nursing NI
- Southern Health and Social Care Trust

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Health to respond to the issues raised in the written submissions received.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that the Clerk will schedule in organisations to give oral evidence on the Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to invite the Chairs of the Local Commissioning Groups to brief the Committee on the Bill.

*The meeting was adjourned at 1.42 pm.*

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