



Committee for Health

Minutes of Proceedings

11 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 by Video or Teleconference:

Keith McBride, Clerk

Roisin Donnelly, Assistant Clerk

Deirdre Farry, Assistant Clerk

Jonathan Lamont, Clerical Supervisor

Brendan Miskelly, Clerical Officer



The meeting commenced at 9.22 am in open session.

1. Apologies

None.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson provided an update on informal meetings that he had held with the Royal College of Surgeons; the Royal College of GPs; Podiatry representatives; and Chest Heart and Stroke NI.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2021.

4. Matters Arising

The Chairperson referred to a Memorandum from the Department of Health on the provisions for delegated legislation in the Health and Social Care Bill which was noted by the Committee at last week's meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to refer the Delegated Powers Memorandum to the Examiner of Statutory Rules and to request a report highlighting any issues which the Committee may wish to consider and seek further information from the Department.



5. Briefing from Chair of Inter-Departmental Working Group Mother and Baby Institutions

The following representatives from the Inter-Departmental Working Group (IDWG) on Mother and Baby Institutions and Magdalene Laundries joined the meeting by video-conference at 9.27 am:

Judith Gillespie, Chairperson of the IDWG; and

Eilís McDaniel, Director of Childcare & Family Policy, Department of Health.

Judith Gillespie provided an update on the work and activities of the IDWG.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Judith Gillespie and Eilís McDaniel for attending the meeting.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to place on its work programme a briefing from the Truth Recovery Design Panel on its work to shape the independent investigation and inform its terms of reference.

The meeting was suspended at 10.42 am and resumed at 10.50 am.

6. Departmental Briefing - waiting lists and waiting times

The following officials joined the meeting by video-conference at 10.51 am:

Lisa McWilliams, Director of Performance Management, Health and Social Care Board;

Paul Cavanagh, Interim Director, Planning and Commissioning, Health and Social Care Board; and



Alastair Campbell, Director of Hospital Service Reform, Department of Health.

Lisa McWilliams briefed the Committee on waiting lists and waiting times.

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 meeting.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

The Committee noted a briefing paper on waiting lists from the Royal College of Surgeons.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to place on its work programme update briefings from the Department of Health and the Royal College of Surgeons on waiting lists and waiting times.

The meeting was suspended at 12.00 pm and resumed at 12.06 pm.

7. Severe Fetal Impairment Abortion (Amendment) Bill

The Chairperson advised that the Committee had voted under the provisions in Standing Order 115(8) on the Bill sponsor's request for additional witnesses to attend the meeting and that the following Members had voted in support of this request:

AYES

Colm Gildernew

Pam Cameron

Jonathan Buckley



Alan Chambers

Cara Hunter

Carál Ní Chuilín

Agreed: The Committee was content that Paul Givan MLA be accompanied at the briefing to the Committee, on the principles of the Bill, on Thursday 11 March 2021.

The following representatives joined the meeting by video-conference at 12.07 pm:

Paul Givan MLA, Bill Sponsor;

Lynn Murray, Don't Screen Us Out Campaign; and

Heidi Crowter, Don't Screen Us Out Campaign.

Paul Givan MLA and the representatives of Don't Screen Us Out Campaign briefed the Committee on the principles of the Severe Fetal Impairment Abortion (Amendment) Bill.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Paul Givan, Lynn Murray and Heidi Crowter for attending the meeting.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

The Committee noted an Assembly RaiSe briefing paper on the Severe Fetal Impairment Abortion (Amendment) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the it would not take a position on the principles of the Bill in advance of the second stage debate.



8. SR 2021/39 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 7) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

Elaine Colgan, Chief of Staff to the Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health, joined the meeting at 1.15 pm and briefed the Committee on SR 2021/39 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 7) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 which makes provisions relating to international travel restrictions.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

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

The Chairperson thanked Elaine Colgan for attending the meeting.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health providing further information requested by the Committee relating to its consideration of travel restriction regulations.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request that the Department of Health provide regular updates relating to offences and penalties associated with breaches of the travel restriction regulations.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2021/39 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 7) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021, and had no objection to the Rule.

The live stream broadcasting the Committee meeting ended at 1.30 pm and the meeting continued in closed session.



9. Correspondence

- i. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding COVID-19 testing in special schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence pending the next update briefing on the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

- ii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health providing information on COVID-19 vaccinations for hospital in-patients.

- iii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding mesothelioma services.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the Minister's correspondence to the individual who raised this matter with the Committee and with Asthma UK and the British Lung Foundation.

- iv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health advising of the appointment of a Chairperson to the Southern Trust Urology Public Inquiry.

- v. The Committee considered correspondence, deferred from its last meeting, from the Minister of Health providing an update on the current pressures on mental health services due to the COVID-19 pandemic and application of the provisions of SR 2021/8 The Mental Health (1986 Order) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2021.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Health for further clarity in relation to the update provided.

- vi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health providing information on the workforce appeal campaign.

- vii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health providing an update on work relating to the reform of stroke services.



Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the Minister's letter to Chest Heart and Stroke NI.

- viii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding the Department of Health's Equality Scheme and arrangements for equality screening and impact assessments within the Department.
- ix. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding Coronavirus restriction regulations.
- x. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health advising of an extension to the consultation period on legislative options to inform the development of an Adult Protection Bill.
- xi. The Committee noted the Department of Health January Monitoring Report on the application of flexibilities provided for in the Children's Social Care (Coronavirus) (Temporary Modification of Children's Social Care) Regulations (NI) 2020.
- xii. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from RSPB to the Minister of Finance requesting the establishment of a Green Recovery Fund in Northern Ireland.
- xiii. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding the exclusion of medical students from the special recognition payment scheme.
- xiv. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Committee for Communities to the Ministers of Finance, Health and Communities asking whether consideration has been given to recognising the contribution of voluntary and community sector workers during the pandemic, similar to the special recognition payment scheme for health care workers.
- xv. The Committee noted correspondence from 123GP Campaign requesting to brief the Committee on access to counselling through GP practices and



further noted that it had agreed that an informal meeting would be held with this group.

- xvi. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from Domino's Group to the Minister of Health and the Chief Medical Officer regarding restrictions on food delivery services.
- xvii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Food Standards Agency providing further information requested by the Committee regarding SL1 The Addition of Vitamins, Minerals and Other Substances (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2021.
- xviii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Education regarding the Cross Departmental COVID-19 Vulnerable Children and Young People's Plan.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence pending further engagement with the Children's Law Centre and VOYPIC.

- xix. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding IVF treatment.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek a written update from the Department of Health on IVF services.

- xx. The Committee considered an invitation from the British Association of Music Therapy to its 2021 Conference taking place on 9 April 2021.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Members would respond directly to the invitation.

- xxi. The Committee considered an open letter from Parent Action to the Executive Office regarding access to COVID-19 vaccinations for staff in special schools.



Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence pending the next update briefing on the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

- xxii. The Committee noted correspondence from Food Standards Agency regarding the revised Food Law Code of Practice (NI) 2021.
- xxiii. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Minister for the Economy to the Committee for Finance regarding COVID-19 Business Support Schemes.
- xxiv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Health and Social Care Trust regarding COVID-19 surge planning.
- xxv. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding the treatment of long COVID.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to advise the individual of its request for information from the Department of Health regarding post-viral services.

- xxvi. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Committee for the Economy to the Minister of Health requesting an update on progress to identify organisations and groups to participate in the expanding COVID-19 testing programme.
- xxvii. The Committee noted the Examiner of Statutory Rules' Twenty-ninth Report of Session 2020-2021.

10. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted its forward work programme.

The Chairperson advised that the Department of Health is unable to brief the Committee on the Inquiry into Hyponatraemia Related Deaths Report on 15 April and



has requested that the Department provide this briefing at the meeting on 25 March instead.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask for written briefing from the Department of Health on the work of the management board on rebuilding services/transformation.

11. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

12. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next committee meeting was scheduled to take place on Thursday, 18 March 2021 at 9.30 am by video-conference.

The meeting was adjourned at 1.43 pm.

Colm Gildernew MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Health