



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Health

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday, 27 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 9.32 am in public session.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

2. Chairperson's Business

- i. The Chairperson raised the issue of ongoing concerns about waiting times and referred to the Royal College of Surgeons proposed 10-step action plan for the post-pandemic recovery of surgical services in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Health to seek its views on the Royal College of Surgeons' Action Plan.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange an informal meeting with the Royal College of Surgeons.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Committee Clerk to consider terms of reference for a potential inquiry on waiting times.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Executive to indicate the Committee's concern in relation to this matter, to seek an Executive meeting on this matter and to indicate the Committee's commitment to support concentrated and concerted efforts by the Executive to address waiting lists.

- ii. The Chairperson advised that he had attended a Town Hall meeting with American Alumni on the COVID-19 response.
- iii. The Chairperson provided an update on a meeting he held with Jim Shannon MP on screening for genetic eye problems.



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- iv. The Chairperson advised that a draft committee motion to highlight carers' week had been circulated to Members.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Members would advise the Clerk of proposed amendments to the motion.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Minutes of the meeting held on 20 May 2021.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Health and Social Care Bill: Briefing from NILGA and Chairperson of Local Commissioning Groups Chairs' Forum

The following representatives joined the meeting by video-conference at 9.56 am:

Dr Nicola Herron, Chairperson, Local Commissioning Group Chairs' Forum;

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

Karen Smyth, Head of Policy and Governance, NILGA.

The representatives briefed the Committee on the Health and Social Care Bill.

A question and answer session followed.



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The Chairperson declared an interest as formerly being employed as a social worker and currently taking a career break.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for attending.

The briefing session was report by Hansard.

The meeting was suspended at 11.10 am and resumed at 11.20 am.

6. Health and Social Care Bill: Briefing from British Association of Social Workers NI, British Dental Association and Community Pharmacy NI

The following representatives joined the meeting by video-conference at 11.20 am:

Carolyn Ewart, Director, British Association of Social Workers NI;

Andy McClenaghan, Communications and Public Affairs Officer, British Association of Social Workers NI;

Gerard Greene, Chief Executive, Community Pharmacy NI;

Caroline Lappin, Chairperson, British Dental Association NI; and

Tristen Kelso, Director, British Dental Association NI.

The representatives briefed the Committee on the Health and Social Care Bill.

A question and answer session followed.

The Chairperson declared an interest as formerly being employed as a social worker and currently taking a career break.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for attending.

The briefing session was report by Hansard.

The meeting was suspended at 12.28 pm and resumed at 12.40 pm.



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7. Departmental Briefing – Inquiry into hyponatraemia-related deaths

The following Department of Health officials joined the meeting by video-conference at 12.40 pm:

Richard Pengelly, Permanent Secretary; and

Andrew Dawson, Director of Quality, Safety and Improvement.

The officials briefed the Committee on the on the work of the Department in relation to the outcome of the inquiry into hyponatraemia-related deaths.

A question and answer session followed.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for attending.

The briefing session was report by Hansard.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request written briefing on the being open framework.

The Committee agree to move to agenda item 9.

Jonathan Buckley left the meeting at 1.30 pm.

Paula Bradshaw left the meeting at 1.32 pm.

8. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health providing further information requested during his briefing with the Committee on 22 April.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request further information on a number of matters in the Minister's correspondence.



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- ii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding funding for autism services provided by the community and voluntary sector.
- iii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health on the uptake of the COVID-19 vaccination by ethnic background.
Agreed: The Committee agreed to request further information from the Department on the percentage uptake of the vaccine by ethnic background and to ask what actions are being taken to address low uptake in particular communities.
- iv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding long COVID provision and care.
- v. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding the Budget 2021/2022 position.
Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask for further budgetary information relating to addressing waiting times.
- vi. The Committee noted Examiner of Statutory Rules' Thirty-ninth Report of Session 2020-2021.
- vii. The Committee noted correspondence from RNIB NI on the provision of support for blind and partially sighted people during the pandemic.
- viii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Western Health and Social Care Trust regarding the provision of reproductive healthcare services.
Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Western HSC Trust for further detail.
- ix. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the House of Lords European Affairs Sub Committee on the Protocol on Ireland/ Northern



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Ireland to Lord Bethell, Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State regarding a regulation amending the annexes to No 852/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council on Hygiene of Foodstuffs as regards food allergen management, redistribution of food and food safety culture.

- x. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance requesting its views on the establishment of an Independent Fiscal Council for Northern Ireland and the potential role and powers for such a council.
- xi. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding the Mother and Baby Institutions.
- xii. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding the Report of the Inquiry into Hyponatremia-related Deaths.
- xiii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health providing an update on the development of proposals for a new regional model of service for separated and unaccompanied asylum seeking children.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request that it is provided with a copy of the responses from the Children's Law Centre, the NI Human Rights Commission and the NI Commissioner for Children and Young People to the Department's consultation on this matter.
- xiv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health providing notice of his intention to publish jointly with the Minister for Justice, the Private Family Law Early Resolution Action Plan.
- xv. The Committee noted correspondence from the BT Group requesting support for the launch of Hope United, a team of football players who have come together to tackle online hate.
- xvi. The Committee considered correspondence from 123 GP requesting that the Committee write to the Health Minister to ask that he includes



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commitments to the provision of counselling within the mental health strategy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Health Minister to ask that he includes a commitment to counselling within the mental health strategy.

The Committee returned to agenda item 9.

Cara Hunter left the meeting at 1.42 pm.

9. SR 2021/121 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

Elaine Colgan, Head of Health Protection Branch, Department of Health joined the meeting by video-conference at 1.42 pm and briefed the Committee on two international travel restriction regulations (agenda item 8 and additional agenda item 9).

A question and answer session followed.

The official agreed to provide further information on managed isolation.

The Chairperson thanked Elaine Colgan for attending.

The briefing session was report by Hansard.

The Committee considered SR 2021/121 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 which: amends fixed penalties in relation to a particular managed isolation offence; adds the Maldives, Nepal and Turkey to the red list of countries; adds an additional exemption for transit passengers who arrive into Northern Ireland and immediately travel directly to the Republic of Ireland; and prohibits the arrival of aircraft and vessels from the Maldives and Turkey.



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Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2021/121 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 and agreed it had no objection to the Rule.

The Committee agreed to consider an addition agenda item, SR 2021/132 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021.

10. SR 2021/132 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

The Committee considered SR 2021/132 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 which: adds a number of countries to the green list countries; excludes seafarers and inspectors and surveyors of ships who work on cruise ships from the exemptions relating to managed self-isolation for red list arrivals; and prohibits the arrival of aircraft and vessels from Turkey.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2021/132 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 and agreed it had no objection to the Rule.

11. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted its Forward Work Programme.

12. Any Other Business

There was no other business.



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13. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee for Health was scheduled to take place on 3 June 2021 at 9.30 am.

The meeting was adjourned at 1.58 pm.

Colm Gildernew MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Health