



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR HEALTH

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

Thursday, 4 February 2021
Meeting held via video conference*

Present: Mr Colm Gildernew MLA (Chairperson)
Ms Pam Cameron MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Paula Bradshaw MLA
Mr Jonathan Buckley MLA
Mr Gerry Carroll MLA
Mr Alan Chambers MLA
Ms Órlaithí Flynn MLA
Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

Apologies: Ms Cara Hunter MLA

In Attendance: Mr Keith McBride (Clerk)
Ms Jean Barkley (Assistant Clerk)
Ms Roisin Donnelly (Assistant Clerk)
Mr Deirdre Farry (Assistant Clerk)
Mr Jonathan Lamont (Clerical Supervisor)
Mr Brendan Miskelly (Clerical Officer)

**Committee Members, Committee staff and witnesses attended the meeting by video-conference. Live coverage of the meeting was available through the Assembly website.*

The meeting commenced at 9.42 am in public session.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Chairperson's Business

- i. The Chairperson welcomed Ms Carál Ní Chuilín to her first meeting of the Health Committee and recorded his thanks to Mr Pat Sheehan on his contribution to the Committee and wished him well in his move to the Education Committee.

- ii. The Chairperson welcomed the new Clerk, Mr Keith McBride to the Committee and acknowledged the contribution of the previous Clerk, Ms Éilis Haughey in supporting the work of the Committee and wished her well in her new post.
- iii. The Chairperson advised Members that it was Children’s Mental Health Week.

3. Draft Minutes

The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2021.

4. Matters Arising

The Chairperson referred Members to the discussion that took place at the last meeting regarding a social media post shared by a Member of the Board of the Education Authority.

Members discussed issues relating to the social media post and a number of options to address the issues raised.

The question was put,

“That this Committee notes recent public support for the discredited, harmful and homophobic practice known as Conversion Therapy which is a severe breach of an individual’s most basic human rights, most significantly, the right to be free from torture, inhuman and degrading treatment.

Further notes that it was recently publicly promoted by a leading member of the Education Authority, with responsibility for the education, mental health and emotional well-being of young people.

This Committee condemns Conversion Therapy as it is long term deeply damaging to the mental health and emotional well-being of the LGBT+ community.

This Committee will write to the Education Committee to request that it take this issue forward with the Education Authority.”

The Committee divided: Ayes 5; Noes 2; Abstain 1.

AYES

Mr Colm Gildernew
Ms Paula Bradshaw
Mr Gerry Carroll
Ms Órlaithí Flynn
Ms Carál Ní Chuilín

NOES

Ms Pam Cameron
Mr Jonathan Buckley

ABSTAIN

Mr Alan Chambers

The Question being put, the motion was carried.

5. Food and Feed Safety and Hygiene Common Framework - Briefing from the Food Standards Agency

The following officials from the Food Standards Agency joined the meeting by video-conference at 10.09 am:

Ms Emily Miles, Chief Executive; and

Ms Maria Jennings, Northern Ireland Director.

Ms Miles briefed the Committee on the UK Common Framework on Food and Feed Safety and Hygiene and the UK Common Framework on Nutrition Labelling, Composition and Standards (agenda items 5 and 6).

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Ms Miles and Ms Jennings for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Health advising that the Committee noted the proposed Food and Feed Safety and Hygiene Common Framework, to outline the Committee's scrutiny of this matter and to request that it be kept updated on progress.

6. Nutrition Labelling, Composition and Standards Common Framework – Briefing from the Food Standards Agency

The Committee considered the UK Common Framework on Nutrition Labelling, Composition and Standards.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Health advising that the Committee noted the proposed Nutrition Labelling, Composition and Standards Common Framework, to outline the Committee's scrutiny of this matter and to request that it be kept updated on progress.

The meeting was suspended at 10:55 am and resumed at 11:12 am.

Present: Mr Colm Gildernew
Ms Pam Cameron
Ms Paula Bradshaw
Mr Jonathan Buckley
Ms Órlaithí Flynn
Ms Carál Ní Chuilín

7. SR 2021/8 The Mental Health (1986 Order) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2021

The Committee considered SR 2021/8 The Mental Health (1986 Order) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2021, which extends the period of time which must elapse for a second opinion to be required for the continued administration of medicine to detained patients from three months to six months.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health providing information requested by the Committee further to its consideration of this statutory rule at the meeting on 28 January.

Mr Tomas Adell, Head of Mental Health and Capacity Unit, Department of Health joined the meeting by video-conference at 11.12 am and answered Members' questions on the Rule.

Mr Jonathan Buckley left the meeting at 11.17 am.

Mr Adell agreed to provide the Committee with further information on issues raised during the question and answer session.

Mr Adell also agreed to provide the Committee with fortnightly updates on the application of the measures contained in this Rule.

The Chairperson thanked Mr Adell for his attendance.

The question and answer session was reported by Hansard.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to return to its consideration of SR 2021/8 The Mental Health (1986 Order) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2021 later in the meeting.

8. SR 2021/4 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

Ms Elaine Colgan, Chief of Staff to Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health joined the meeting via video-conference at 11.33 am.

Ms Colgan briefed the Committee on six travel restriction statutory rules (agenda items 8 to 13).

Mr Alan Chambers re-joined the meeting at 11.39 am.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Ms Colgan agreed to provide the Committee with further information on a number of issues raised during the question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Ms Colgan for her attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

The Committee considered SR 2021/4 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021, which provides for additional measures to be put in place in relation to certain countries and territories; and amends the list of countries from which travellers are exempt from self-isolation requirements.

Agreed: The Committee had considered SR 2021/4 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021, and had no objection to the Rule.

9. SR 2021/5 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

The Committee considered SR 2021/5 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021, which removes The United Arab Emirates from the list of countries and territories from which travellers are exempt from self-isolation requirements.

Agreed: The Committee had considered SR 2021/5 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021, and had no objection to the Rule.

10. SR 2021/6 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

The Committee considered SR 2021/6 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021, which amends the list of countries from which travellers are exempt from self-isolation requirements; amends the list of countries subject to additional measures; and amends the list of specified competitions relevant to the exemption from the requirement to self-isolate for elite sportspersons.

Agreed: The Committee had considered SR 2021/6 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021, and had no objection to the Rule.

11. SR 2021/9 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 4) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

The Committee considered SR 2021/9 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No.4) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021, which removes all countries and territories from the list of places from which travellers are exempt from the requirement to self-isolate; requires anyone arriving in Northern Ireland from outside the common travel area to self-isolate unless specifically exempt; and removes the exemptions relating to particular occupational groups.

Agreed: The Committee had considered SR 2021/9 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No.4) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021, and had no objection to the Rule.

Mr Jonathan Buckley re-joined the meeting at 11.57 am.

12. SR 2021/10 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel, PreDeparture Testing and Operator Liability) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

The Committee considered SR 2021/10 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel, PreDeparture Testing and Operator Liability) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021, which: introduces a requirement for persons travelling to Northern Ireland from outside the common travel area to possess a notification of a negative coronavirus test upon arrival; and introduces obligations on commercial transport operators in this regard.

Agreed: The Committee had considered SR 2021/10 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel, PreDeparture Testing and Operator Liability) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021, and had no objection to the Rule.

13. SR 2021/13 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 5) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

The Committee considered SR 2021/13 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 5) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021, which introduces a list of countries and territories from which certain aircraft and vessels are banned from arriving in Northern Ireland and makes further amendments to the list of countries subject to additional measures.

Agreed: The Committee had considered SR 2021/13 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 5) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021, and had no objection to the Rule.

The meeting was suspended at 12.04 pm and resumed at 12.10 pm.

Present: Mr Colm Gildernew (Chairperson)
Ms Pam Cameron MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Jonathan Buckley MLA
Ms Órlaithí Flynn MLA
Ms Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

14. SR 2021/8 The Mental Health (1986 Order) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2021 (continued)

The Committee returned to its consideration of SR 2021/8 The Mental Health (1986 Order) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2021.

Agreed: The Committee had considered SR 2021/8 The Mental Health (1986 Order) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2021, and subject to discussion with the Human Rights Commission, had no objection to the Rule.

15. Correspondence

- i. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding Departmental funding support for the community and voluntary sector.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request that the Department keeps the Committee informed of funding preparations with the sector.

- ii. The Committee noted a copy of the written evidence the Department of Health provided to the Committee for Communities on the Licencing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill.

- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health advising of the Secretary of State for Education's intention to lay the Special Restrictions on Adoption from Abroad (Nigeria) Order 2021 before the UK Parliament.

- iv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health responding to concerns raised by the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health on its shielding guidance for children and young people.

- v. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Health on its capital budget programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence pending future budget scrutiny.

- vi. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding the COVID-19 vaccination programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence pending the next scheduled briefing on the vaccination programme.

- vii. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual relating to the payment of the living wage for Health and Social Care staff.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence pending a response from the Minister of Health to the Chairperson on a related Assembly question.

- viii. The Committee considered correspondence from the British Dental Association regarding an underspend in General Dental Services funding.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence pending future budget scrutiny.
- ix. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding the provision of cancer services.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to raise the issue of the provision of cancer services with the Minister of Health at his next scheduled briefing with the Committee.
- x. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Executive Office providing the Terms of Reference for the Committee Overseeing EU Exit Matters.
- xi. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the British Association of Private Dentistry to the Economy Minister regarding financial support for private dentists.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence pending future budget scrutiny.
- xii. The Committee noted a British Medical Journal article on the importance of supporting self-isolation as part of the COVID-19 response.
- xiii. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from an individual to the Minister of Health regarding hospital visiting restrictions.
- xiv. The Committee considered correspondence from the Prince's Trust on the findings from the Prince's Trust Tesco Youth Index Report.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence pending future engagement on mental health issues.
- xv. The Committee considered correspondence from the British Medical Association on the eligibility criteria for the special recognition payment for qualifying health care students.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the correspondence pending a response from the Department to the Committee's request for clarity on the eligibility and criteria to be used.
- xvi. The Committee noted the Investment Strategy NI January 2021 Activity Report for the Department of Health.
- xvii. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding the adoption of an Ireland-wide strategy to eliminate COVID-19.
- xviii. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding COVID-19 vaccinations for hospital in-patients.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Department of Health for comment.

- xix. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding the All Party Parliamentary Group on First Do No Harm, which has been established to raise awareness and build support for the recommendations in the Report of the Independent Medicines and Medical Devices Safety Review.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence pending future engagement on the Cumberlege Report.

- xx. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from an individual to the Minister of Health regarding the provision of health care and access to medical records relating to a family member.

- xxi. The Committee considered a copy of correspondence from Ms Linda Dillon MLA to the Minister of Health regarding the protection of Mother and Baby Homes records.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence pending further engagement with the Department of Health and the Independent Working Group on this issue.

- xxii. The Committee considered a copy of correspondence from the Speaker of the Assembly to the First and deputy First Ministers and the Health Minister regarding the timing of debates on Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence pending the briefing session with the Minister on 11 February.

- xxiii. The Committee considered a response from the Executive Office to the Committee's request that it give urgent consideration to correspondence from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists on abortion services.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence pending the briefing session with the Minister on 11 February.

- xxiv. The Committee noted the Examiner of Statutory Rules' Twenty-second Report of Session 2020-2021.

Ms Paula Bradshaw and Mr Alan Chambers re-joined the meeting at 12.14 pm.

16. Forward Work Programme

The Chairperson referred to correspondence from the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Health in relation to a joint virtual session with the two Chief Medical Officers, and advised that the Committee team would liaise with the Joint Committee to identify a suitable date for the session.

The Chairperson advised that the Head of the COVID-19 Vaccine Programme had indicated she was content to provide the Committee with the requested monthly update briefing, with the first session scheduled to take place on 25 February.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request an update from the Department of Health on its request that it is provided with the daily vaccine data summary.

The Committee noted its Forward Work Programme.

17. Any Other Business

- i. A Member referred to the recent death of Captain Sir Tom Moore.

Agreed: The Committee agreed it wished to register its sympathy to the family of Captain Sir Tom Moore who passed away in recent days and also wished to acknowledge and place on record its grateful thanks for the vast sums of money that Captain Sir Tom Moore raised for NHS charities.

- ii. Members discussed a number of issues of ongoing concern.

The Chairperson advised that these issues could be raised at the briefing with the Health Minister on 11 February and that the Minister would be given notice of the issues raised in advance of that briefing.

18. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next committee meeting was scheduled to take place on Thursday, 11 February 2021, at 9.30 am.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.27 pm.

Signed: _____
Chairperson

Date: _____