



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR HEALTH

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**Thursday, 19 November 2020
Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings**

Present: Mr Colm Gildernew (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
Mr Colin McGrath MLA*
Mr Pat Sheehan MLA*

In Attendance: Ms Éilís Haughey (Clerk)
Ms Deirdre Farry (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Jonathan Lamont (Clerical Supervisor)

**These Members attended the meeting via video-conference.*

The meeting commenced at 9.34 am in public session.

1. Apologies

None.

2. Chairperson's Business

- i. The Chairperson reminded members that the meeting would continue into the afternoon to continue consideration of evidence relating to its inquiry into the impact of COVID-19 on care homes.
- ii. The Chairperson provided an update on a meeting he had held with representatives of Niamh Louise mental health charity.
- iii. The Chairperson reminded Members that the debate on the Committee motion on COVID-19 strategy would take place on 23 November.

3. Draft Minutes

The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 12 November 2020.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Departmental Briefing: Brexit

The following Department of Health officials joined the meeting, in person, at 9.36 am:

Ms Cathy Harrison, Chief Pharmaceutical Officer;

Ms Patricia Quinn-Duffy, EU Exit Lead - Reciprocal Healthcare and Workforce Issues; and

Ms Fiona Taylor, EU Exit Lead, Medicines.

The following Department of Health officials joined the meeting via video-conference:

Mr Brendan O'Neill, Head of Information Governance; and

Ms Eimear Smyth, Head of Medicines Policy and EU Exit Transition.

Ms Pam Cameron joined the meeting at 9.39 am.

Mr Alan Chambers joined the meeting at 9.40 am.

The Chief Pharmaceutical Officer briefed the Committee on developments with regard to Brexit.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The meeting was suspended at 10.02 am due to technical difficulties with the video-conference system and resumed at 10.31 am.

The question and answer session resumed.

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

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request an updated Brexit briefing from the Chief Pharmaceutical Officer to be scheduled in December.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request briefing from the Department of Health on the development, and preparation for roll-out, of a COVID-19 vaccine.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to give further consideration to writing to the First Minister and Deputy First Minister

regarding efforts to ensure the continuity and security of medicines supply.

6. SR 2020/228 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 16) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

The following Department of Health officials joined the meeting at 11.20 am via video-conference:

Ms Gillian Hynes, Health Protection Branch; and
Mr Bryan Dooley, Health Improvement Policy Branch.

The officials briefed the Committee on six Statutory Rules relating to Coronavirus travel restrictions (agenda items 6 to 11).

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

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

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

The Committee considered SR 2020/228 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 16) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 which add the Canary Islands, Denmark, the Greek island of Mykonos and the Maldives to the list of countries and territories exempt from the 14-day self-isolation requirements. The regulations also remove Liechtenstein from the list.

Agreed: The Committee had considered SR 2020/228 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 16) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and had no objection to the Rule.

7. SR 2020/234 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 17) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered SR 2020/234 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 17) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 which: amend the passenger information which passengers arriving in NI must provide; amend the entries relevant to visiting forces and offshore workers specifying individuals who are exempt from the requirement to provide information or self-isolate; removes Cyprus and Lithuania from the list of countries and territories exempt from the 14 days' self-isolation requirements; and amends the list of specified competitions which is relevant to the exemption from the requirement to self-isolate for elite sportspersons. It also provides exemptions from self-isolation requirements for passengers who have passed through exempted areas in the 14 days prior to arrival in Northern Ireland, and provides that those who have passed through non-exempt areas must self-isolate for 14 days on arrival.

Agreed: The Committee had considered SR 2020/234 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment

No. 17) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and had no objection to the Rule.

8. SR 2020/241 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 18) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered SR 2020/241 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 18) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 which remove Denmark, Germany and Sweden from the list of countries and territories exempt from the requirement to self-isolate for 14 days after arrival in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee had considered SR 2020/241 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 18) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and had no objection to the Rule.

9. SR 2020/243 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 19) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered SR 2020/243 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 19) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 which remove exemptions from the requirement to self-isolate for people who have arrived in Northern Ireland from Denmark or who have arrived in Northern Ireland from elsewhere and, during the 14 days preceding their arrival, have been in, or transited through, Denmark. The Regulations also require people residing at the same address as Denmark arrivals, to self-isolate.

Agreed: The Committee had considered SR 2020/243 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 19) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and had no objection to the Rule.

10. SR 2020/244 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 20) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered SR 2020/244 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 20) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 which provide that current exemptions, in terms of providing information, do not apply if that person has arrived in Northern Ireland from Denmark or has, within the period beginning with the fourteenth day before the date of their arrival in Northern Ireland, departed from, or transited through, Denmark.

Agreed: The Committee had considered SR 2020/244 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (Amendment No. 20) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and had no objection to the Rule.

11. SR 2020/247 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Travel from Denmark) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered SR 2020/247 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Travel from Denmark) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 which prohibit the arrival in Northern Ireland of vessels and aircraft travelling directly from Denmark.

Agreed: The Committee had considered SR 2020/247 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Travel from Denmark) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and had no objection to the Rule.

The meeting was suspended at 11.54 am and resumed at 12.01 pm.

12. Legislative Consent Motion: Amendment to the Medicines and Medical Devices Bill

The Committee considered the Legislative Consent Memorandum in respect of an amendment to the Medicines and Medical Devices Bill which the Department of Health laid in the Assembly on 5 November 2020.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs providing its comments on the Legislative Consent Memorandum, relating to veterinary medicine.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content to support the Minister of Health in seeking the Assembly's endorsement of the Legislative Consent Motion:

“That this Assembly endorses the principle of the extension to Northern Ireland of the provisions within the Medicines and Medical Devices Bill dealing with human medicines, veterinary medicines and information systems as amended at Committee Stage in the House of Lords.”

The Committee considered a draft report of the Committee's consideration of the Legislative Consent Memorandum.

Agreed: The Committee agreed it was content with the draft Report.

13. Correspondence

- i. The Committee considered a response from the Minister of Health to its request for information on the provision of urgent and emergency care at the Downe Hospital.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence pending the scheduled briefing on urgent and emergency care.

- ii. The Committee noted a response from the Minister of Health to its request for information on access to cannabis-based medical products.

- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health providing the NICS Administrative Guidance for EU Exit Transition Period Statutory Instruments.
- iv. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Minister of Health to the Committee for Education, confirming the attendance of officials to brief that Committee on the Covid-19 Cross-Departmental Vulnerable Children and Young People's Plan.
- v. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health providing data requested by Members, on the enforcement Coronavirus-related restriction regulations.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request that the Department of Health share these figures with the Committee on a monthly basis and provide further detail on Fixed Penalty Notices for Disorder and Community Resolution Notices.

- vi. The Committee noted the Minister of Health's written statement to the Assembly on 13 November 2020, providing a COVID-19 update.
- vii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health advising of the trialling of a new telephone clinical triage and assessment service in Emergency Departments across NI.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence pending consideration of urgent and emergency care.

- viii. The Committee considered SR 2020 No. 246 The Mental Capacity (2016 Act) (Commencement No.1) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2020, a commencement order which postpones the commencement date for the offence of unlawful detention from the 2 December 2020 to 31 May 2021.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the Commencement Order, pending further scrutiny of the implementation of the Mental Capacity Act 2016.

- ix. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual outlining concerns about the post-primary transfer test.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Committee for Education, highlighting the mental health issues raised, and to request to be kept updated on this matter.

- x. The Committee noted the Examiner of Statutory Rules' Twenty-eighth Report of Session 2019-2020.
- xi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance advising that it plans to schedule an evidence session with the NI Fire and Rescue Service in relation to the Department of Finance's consultation on the Amendment to the Building Regulations (NI) 2012.

- xii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Executive Office advising that it has requested written evidence from Michael Gove MP, Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and Minister for the Cabinet Office, on issues relating to the UK's future relationship with the European Union.
- xiii. The Committee considered a report to the Minister of Health on discharge patterns from HSC hospitals during early 2020 and any link with COVID-19 infections in care homes.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to consider this report as part of its inquiry into the Impact of COVID-19 on Care Homes.
- xiv. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding delayed discharge from hospital.
- xv. The Committee considered correspondence from NI Chest Heart and Stroke regarding the impact of COVID-19 on the community and voluntary sector.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to seek an update from the Department of Health on funding for this sector.
- xvi. The Committee considered an invitation from the Law Centre NI to attend a roundtable discussion on the implications of a change to the special benefit rules for people with a terminal illness, to take place on 25 November.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that Members would advise the Clerk if they wished to attend this event.
- xvii. The Committee considered an invitation from the Carers' Coalition to attend a roundtable discussion on carers' rights during and beyond the pandemic, to take place on 26 November.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that Members would reply individually to the Carers' Coalition invitation.
- xviii. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from Belfast Health and Social Care Trust to an individual, regarding pay equity.
- xix. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding homeopathic treatments.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note this correspondence pending further consideration, at its strategic planning meeting in January 2021, of a request from the Faculty of Homeopathy to brief the Committee.
- xx. The Committee considered an update from Department of Health on dental services.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed, in light of the detailed update provided, that it would defer its planned briefing session

with the Chief Dental Officer on 3 December 2020, until the New Year.

- xxi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Health advising of UK Statutory Instrument, The Control of Mercury (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020, which falls to the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for scrutiny and will ensure that current EU regulations will be operable as ‘retained EU law’, after the end of the transition period, and ensure compliance with the Ireland/Ni Protocol.

14. SR 2020/235 The Children's Social Care (Coronavirus) (Temporary Modification of Children’s Social Care) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

The following Department of Health officials joined the meeting at 12.12 pm:

Ms Eilís McDaniels, Director of Childcare & Family Policy; and

Ms Deirdre Mahon, Director of Women, Children and Executive Director of Social Work, Western Health and Social Care Trust.

Ms McDaniels briefed the Committee on SR 2020/235 The Children's Social Care (Coronavirus) (Temporary Modification of Children’s Social Care) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

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

Ms McDaniels agreed to provide the Committee with a copy of her speaking notes and further information on issues raised during the question and answer session with Members.

Ms McDaniels also confirmed that the Department would continue to implement its monthly monitoring arrangements on the extent to which the flexibility provided by the Regulations is being applied by the HSCTs and other relevant children’s services providers; and to continue to share these monthly monitoring reports with the Committee.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

The Committee noted briefing submissions on the Statutory Rule that had been received from:

- Barnardo’s;
- BASW NI;
- Children’s Law Centre;
- Fostering Network;
- NIHRC;
- NICCY;
- NI Guardian Ad Litem Agency;
- NSPCC; and
- VOYPIC.

The Chairperson thanked the stakeholders that had provided submissions to inform the Committee's consideration of the Statutory Rule.

The Committee noted the Department of Health's Monitoring Report on the implementation of the Regulations for October 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request that the Department of Health revoke the Regulations at the earliest opportunity if they are found to be no longer necessary, and that any future proposal to extend the temporary modifications be considered on a measure-by-measure basis.

Agreed: The Committee had considered SR 2020/235 The Children's Social Care (Coronavirus) (Temporary Modification of Children's Social Care) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and had no objection to the Rule.

15. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted its forward work programme.

The Committee considered a list of academics that could provide briefing on international find, test, trace, isolate and support systems (FTTIS).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek briefing from these academics to inform the Committee's consideration of this matter.

16. Any Other Business

Members discussed reports of the clamping of vehicles owned by health care workers on HSC Trust sites.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Health to express its concerns about this matter and to copy the letter to all HSC Trusts.

17. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next committee meeting was scheduled to take place on Thursday, 26 November 2020, at 9.30 am, in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was suspended at 1.25 pm and resumed at 2.15 pm in Room 21 in closed session.

Present: Mr Colm Gildernew (Chairperson)
Ms Pam Cameron MLA (Deputy Chairperson)*
Mr Jonathan Buckley MLA
Mr Alan Chambers MLA
Mr Pat Sheehan MLA*

**These Members attended the meeting via telephone-conference.*

18. Committee Inquiry: Impact of COVID-19 on Care Homes: consideration of evidence

The Committee continued its consideration of the evidence it had received in relation to the Inquiry into the impact of COVID-19 on care homes and discussed possible findings and recommendations.

Mr Alan Chambers left the meeting at 3.45 pm.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.02 pm.

Signed: _____
Chairperson

Date: _____