



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Committee for Health

## Minutes of Proceedings

Tuesday, 11 January 2022

**Meeting Location:** Virtual Meeting

**Present by Video or Teleconference:**

Colm Gildernew MLA (Chairperson)

Pam Cameron MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Gerry Carroll MLA

Alan Chambers MLA

Deborah Erskine MLA

Órlaithí Flynn MLA

Colin McGrath MLA

Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

**Apologies:** Paula Bradshaw MLA

**In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:**

Keith McBride (Clerk)

Roisin Donnelly (Assistant Clerk)

Deirdre Farry (Assistant Clerk)

Ellen Wilson (Clerical Officer)



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The meeting commenced at 12.32 pm in public session.

**1. Apologies** As above.

**2. Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Bill  
– Evidence from the Police Service of  
Northern Ireland**

Chief Superintendent, Melanie Jones, Head of Criminal Justice, Community Safety Department, PSNI joined the meeting by video-conference at 12:34 pm.

Chief Superintendent Jones briefed the Committee on the Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Bill.

A question and answer session followed.

*Deborah Erskine joined the meeting at 1.00 pm.*

*Colin McGrath left the meeting at 1.00 pm.*

The Chairperson thanked Chief Superintendent Jones for her attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to ask the PSNI for further information relating to the PSNI's attendance at clinics and further detail on existing legalisation applicable to the policing of protests.

**3. Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Bill – Bill Sponsor**

The Bill Sponsor, Clare Bailey MLA and Áine Grogan, Constituency Officer and Researcher joined the meeting by video-conference at 1:13 pm.

The Bill Sponsor provided a response to issues raised during the Committee's consideration of evidence on the Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Bill.



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A question and answer session followed.

The Chairperson thanked the Bill Sponsor for her attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Health and Social Care Trusts providing further information on the costs relating to the relocation of EMA services and the provision of security measures at Trust premises as a result of protests.

*The meeting was suspended at 1:28 pm and resumed at 1: 41 pm.*

### **Present by Video or Teleconference:**

Colm Gildernew MLA (Chairperson)

Pam Cameron MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Alan Chambers MLA

Deborah Erskine MLA

Órlaithí Flynn MLA

Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

### **4. Autism (Amendment) Bill – Clause by Clause Consideration**

The Committee commenced its formal clause by clause consideration of the Autism (Amendment) Bill.

Bill Clerks, Dr Kathryn Aiken and Phil Pateman joined the meeting by videoconference at 12.41 pm.



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The Deputy Chairperson declared her interest as being the Bill Sponsor for the Autism Bill.

*The meeting moved into closed session at 1.47 pm.*

The Committee discussed the proposed amendments relating to the independence of the autism reviewer and the Bill Clerks provided clarity on the proposed amendments relating to Clause 5.

*The meeting moved into public session at 1.52 pm.*

*Colin McGrath joined the meeting at 1.52 pm. **Clause***

### **1: Autism strategy: consultations and data**

The Committee considered Clause 1 as drafted.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content with Clause 1 as drafted.

### **Clause 2: Additional components of autism strategy**

The Committee considered its proposed amendments to Clause 2.

#### Amendment 1

*Clause 2, page 1, line 17*

*After 'autism' insert 'support and'*



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Amendment 2

*Clause 2, Page 2, Line 7*

*At end insert '(ca) physical health,'*

Amendment 3

*Clause 2, Page 2, Line 9, at*

*end insert - '(f) housing.''*

Amendment 4

*Clause 2, Page 2, Line 9 at*

*end insert-*

*'(4E) The autism strategy must set out how the Department will reduce waiting times for autism assessment and treatment services provided by HSC trusts.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content with the amendments as drafted.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content with Clause 2 as amended.

**Clause 3: Methodology of the autism strategy**

The Committee considered its proposed amendments to Clause 3.

Amendment 1

*Clause 3, Page 2, Line 17*



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*After 'multidisciplinary' insert 'and cross-departmental'*

Amendment 2

Clause 3, page 2, line 18

*Leave out subsection (4) and insert-*

*'(4) The autism strategy must set out how consistency of practice is to be achieved across –*

*a. HSC trusts, and*

*b. education services.'*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content with the amendments as drafted.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content with Clause 3 as amended.

**Clause 4: Annual autism funding reports**

The Committee considered Clause 4 as drafted.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content with Clause 4 as drafted.

**Clause 5: Annual autism funding reports**

The Committee considered its proposed amendment to Clause 5.

*Clause 5, page 3, line 16, at end insert-*

*'(1a) The autism reviewer must not be a person employed by a Northern Ireland department.*

*(1b) The autism reviewer is not subject to the direction or control of the Northern Ireland departments.*



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*(1c) But this is subject to the requirement under this section for the Department to pay the autism reviewer's expenses and allowances.'*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content with the amendment as drafted.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content with Clause 3 as amended.

### **Clause 6: Interpretation**

The Committee considered Clause 6 as drafted.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content with Clause 6 as drafted.

### **Clause 7: Commencement**

The Committee considered Clause 7 as drafted.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content with Clause 7 as drafted.

### **Clause 8: Short title**

The Committee considered Clause 8 as drafted.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content with Clause 8 as drafted.

### **Long Title**

The Committee considered the Long Title as drafted.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content with the Long Title as drafted.

The Chairperson advised that the formal clause by clause scrutiny of the Autism (Amendment) Bill had concluded.

The clause by clause consideration of the Bill was reported by Hansard.

*The Bill Clerks left the meeting at 2.00 pm.*



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*The Committee moved into closed session at 2.00 pm.*

**5. Autism (Amendment) Bill – Consideration of Draft Report**

The Committee discussed the content it wished to see reflected in its draft report on the Autism (Amendment) Bill.

The Deputy Chairperson declared her interest as being the Bill Sponsor for the Autism Bill.

The Clerk advised that a draft report would be circulated to Members for formal consideration and agreement at the meeting on 13 January 2022.

**6. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting**

The next meeting of the Committee for Health was scheduled to take place at 9.30 am on Thursday, 13 January 2022.

The meeting was adjourned at 2.16 pm.

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