



# Committee for Health

## Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday, 14 October 2021

**Meeting Location:** Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

**Present:**

Colm Gildernew MLA (Chairperson)

Gerry Carroll MLA

**Present by Video or Teleconference:**

Pam Cameron MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Paula Bradshaw MLA

Jonathan Buckley MLA

Alan Chambers MLA

**Apologies:**

Órlaithí Flynn MLA

Cara Hunter MLA

Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

**In Attendance:**

Keith McBride (Clerk)



Brendan Miskelly (Clerical Supervisor)

Ellen Wilson (Clerical Officer)

**In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:**

Roisin Donnelly (Assistant Clerk)

The meeting commenced at 9.34 am in public session.

**1. Apologies**

As above.

The Chairperson informed the Committee that, under Standing Order 115 (6), Órlaithí Flynn and Carál Ní Chuilín had delegated authority to him to vote on their behalf at the meeting.

**2. Chairperson's Business**

- i. The Chairperson advised Members that a Rural Women's Network event was taking place in the Long Gallery, Parliament Buildings later today and invited Members to attend the event.
- ii. The Chairperson advised that World Mental Health Day took place on 10 October and that it was Baby Loss Awareness Week.
- iii. The Chairperson referred to recent reported confirmation of the outcome of the review of radiology images as part of the Radiology Recall at the Northern Health and Social Care Trust and the identification of 66 major discrepancies.



**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask for an update on what action is being undertaken in relation to this matter.

- iv. The Chairperson advised Members that Cara Hunter MLA would be leaving the Committee and thanked Ms Hunter for her contribution to the work of the Committee.

### **3. Draft Minutes**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 7 October 2021.

### **4. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

### **5. Royal College of Nursing Briefing**

The following representatives from the Royal College of Nursing (RCN) joined the meeting by video-conference at 9:38 am:

Fiona Devlin, Chairperson;

Rita Devlin, Interim Director;

Anne Marie Marley, RCN Member; and

Connie Mitchell, RCN Member.

Rita Devlin briefed the Committee on the work of the Royal College of Nursing and the key issues for its membership.



*The Chairperson declared an interest as formerly being employed as a social worker and currently taking a career break and having a relative who is a nurse.*

*Jonathan Buckley joined the meeting at 10.07 am.*

A question and answer session followed.

The Chairperson thanked the RCN representatives for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Health to ask for a response to the issues raised by RCN; to ask for detail on Department's work on the development of safe staffing legislation; and to ask for information on the Chief Nursing Officer position.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to ask the RCN for its views on addressing the issue of violence against nurses working in community settings.

*The meeting was suspended at 10.59 am and resumed at 11.09 am.*

## **6. Legislative Consent Provisions of the Westminster Health and Social Care Bill – Departmental Briefing**

The following Department of Health and Public Health Agency officials joined the meeting by video-conference at 11.11 am:

Patricia Quinn-Duffy, Pharmaceutical Directorate, Department of Health;

Karen Simpson, Pharmaceutical Directorate, Department of Health;

David Wilson, Senior Principal, DCMO, Safety, Quality and Standards, Department of Health;

Peter Barbour, Head of Workforce Policy Development, Department of Health;



Dr Janice Bailey; Head of Research and Development, Public Health Agency; and Joan Hardy, Principal Officer, Secondary Care Directorate, Department of Health.

The officials briefed the Committee on four aspects of the Westminster Health and Social Care Bill that require the legislative consent of the NI Assembly. These relate to: international healthcare arrangements; medicines information systems; professional regulation; and the transfer of functions.

A question and answer session followed.

The officials agreed to provide the Committee with further information on a number of issues raised.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for attending.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that once the Legislative Consent Memorandum (LCM) has been laid in the Assembly by the Health Minister, the Committee would have 15 working days to report back to the Assembly on its consideration of the LCM.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it would consider the matter further when it had received the information the officials agreed to provide and the LCM had been laid in the Assembly by the Minister.

## 7. The Adoption and Children Bill

The Committee noted that the call for evidence on the Adoption and Children Bill closed on 8 October 2021 and that 16 responses have been received from the following:

- Action for Children
- Adoption UK
- Barnardos NI
- British Association of Social Workers NI
- Evangelical Alliance



- Family Care Adoption Services – Life Story Project
- Family Care Adoption Services – Young Advocates Group
- Family Routes
- Fostering Network NI
- Home for Good
- Health and Social Care Board/ Health and Social Care Trusts
- NI Commissioner for Children and Young People
- NI Human Rights Commission
- NSPCC
- VOYPIC
- An individual

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to invite the organisations who provided written submissions to provide further oral evidence and asked the Clerk to schedule these evidence sessions into the forward work programme.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it would seek an extension to the committee stage of the Children and Adoption Bill until 28 January 2022.

## **8. The Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Bill**

The Committee considered its management of the committee stage of the Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the call for evidence for the Bill and a three-week period for receipt of written submissions.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to invite written submissions from the organisations that provided views on the Severe Fetal Impairment Abortion (Amendment) Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request written submissions from the Department of Health, Department of Justice, Committee for Justice, Health and Social Care Trusts and the PSNI.



**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request a RaISe briefing paper on the Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Bill to include information on national and international examples.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to refer the Bill to the Examiner of Statutory Rules for delegated powers advice.

The Chairperson referred to the Autism Bill.

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

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to refer the Autism Bill to the Examiner of Statutory Rules for delegated powers advice.

## **9. SR 2021/274 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Wearing of Face Coverings) (Amendment No. 6) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021**

The following departmental officials joined the meeting by video-conference at 12.24 pm:

Elaine Colgan, Head of Health Protection Branch 2, Department of Health;

Richard Duffin, Health Protection Branch 2, Department of Health; and

Peter Luney, Deputy Director, Covid Recovery & Strategy, The Executive Office.

The officials briefed the Committee on two general coronavirus restriction regulations.

A question and answer session followed.

The officials agreed to provide the Committee with further information on a number of issues raised.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for attending.



The briefing session was report by Hansard.

The Committee considered SR 2021/274 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Wearing of Face Coverings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 (Amendment No. 6) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 which provides that a person is exempt from the requirement to wear a face covering in a relevant place while actively consuming food and drink (including intoxicating liquor).

**Agreed:** The Committee considered SR 2021/274 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Wearing of Face Coverings) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 (Amendment No. 6) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 and recommended that it be approved by the Assembly.

#### **10. SR 2021/276 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 (Amendment No. 16) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021**

The Committee considered The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 (Amendment No. 16) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 which removes social distancing requirement for persons seated at a performance, recording or rehearsal.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to defer its consideration of The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 (Amendment No. 16) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 until it had received the further information it had requested from the departmental officials.



**11. SR 2021/262 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel, Operator Liability and Information to Passengers) (Amendment No. 6) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021**

The following officials from the Department of Health joined the meeting by video-conference at 12.52 pm:

Carol Picton-Lynas, Head of Health Protection Branch 3; and

Debra Sharpe, Deputy Head of Health Protection Branch 3.

The officials briefed the Committee on two travel restrictions regulations.

A question and answer session followed.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for attending.

The briefing session was report by Hansard.

The Committee considered SR 2021/262 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel, Operator Liability and Information to Passengers) (Amendment No. 6) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 which: make changes relating to cruise ship travel; makes omissions from the Red List of Countries; amends the criteria concerning amber list arrivals; amends the requirement to book and undertake tests (mandatory testing after arrival in NI) in consequence of the dissolution of Public Health England and the establishment of the UK Health Security Agency; amends the prohibition on arrival of aircraft and vessels to omit Turkey; and adds a defence for travel operators.

**Agreed:** The Committee considered SR 2021/262 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel, Operator Liability and Information to Passengers) (Amendment No. 6) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 and had no objection to the Rule.



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## **12. SR 2021/278 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel, Operator Liability and Information to Passengers) (Amendment No. 7) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021**

The Committee considered SR 2021/278 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel, Operator Liability and Information to Passengers) (Amendment No. 7) Regulations (Northern Ireland) which: creates a new category of “eligible arrival” travellers who are exempt from the need to comply with the obligation to have proof of a negative test on arrival, to take a “day 8 test” or to self-isolate; makes amendments to the existing categories of travellers as a consequence of the new framework on non-eligible and eligible non-red list arrivals; and changes the nature of the medical evidence that travellers from red list countries and territories must provide if they seek exemption from the obligation to quarantine in designated accommodation. The SR also relieves operators of the obligation to check evidence of vaccination where a traveller’s Passenger Locator Form has had appropriate evidence uploaded to it; and changes the information that operators must give to passengers to reflect the changes made by these Regulations.

**Agreed:** The Committee considered SR 2021/278 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel, Operator Liability and Information to Passengers) (Amendment No. 7) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 and had no objection to the Rule.

*The meeting moved into closed session at 1.08 pm.*

## **13. The Severe Fetal Impairment Abortion (Amendment) Bill - informal deliberations**

The Committee considered the written and oral evidence it had received on the Severe Fetal Impairment Abortion (Amendment) Bill.



- Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it would complete the clause by clause consideration of the Bill at its next meeting.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed that Members would bring any proposals and views they wished to see reflected in the Committee's report on the Bill for discussion at its next meeting.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed that the Clerk would explore the implications for the Bill as a result of the High Court judgement in the judicial review case brought by the NI Human Rights Commission.

*The meeting moved to public session at 1.18 pm.*

#### **14. Correspondence**

- i. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding progress on the implementation of the new regional Mental Health Crisis Service.
- ii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health providing an update on the recruitment for a Consultant Psychiatrist post at the Brakenburn Clinic.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Health that it is kept updated on this matter.
- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding vaccination of persons with immunosuppression.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the Minister's correspondence to the individual who raised this matter with the Committee.
- iv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding the disparity between pay rates for vaccinators.



- Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the Minister's correspondence to the individual who raised this matter with the Committee.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed to seek further information from the Department of Health on the availability of vaccinators for further vaccine roll-outs.
- v. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding vaccination uptake levels in ethnic groups.
- vi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health providing the briefing on the resource budget position provided to the Department of Finance as part of the preparations for Budget 2022-25.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing with departmental officials in relation to this matter.
- vii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health providing a copy of its submission to the Committee for Justice on the Damages (Return for Investment) Bill.
- viii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding access to testing and diagnosis for Paediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorder Associated with Streptococcal Infections.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the Minister's correspondence to the individual who raised this matter with the Committee.
- ix. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding the regulation of community mental health services.
- x. The Committee noted a request from an individual to meet the Committee to discuss the essure sterilisation device.



- xi. The Committee considered a copy of correspondence from the Chairpersons' Liaison Group to the First Minister and deputy First Minister on information for proposals for new or amended EU law.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to note this correspondence pending reply from the First Minister and deputy First Minister to the Chairpersons' Liaison Group.

- xii. The Committee considered a request from the Stroke Association NI that the Committee sponsor a motion for Assembly debate on progressing Stroke Reform in NI.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to consider this matter further following receipt of further information from a Member.

- xiii. The Committee noted correspondence from PPE Solutions Global Ltd regarding a COVID testing platform.

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

- xiv. The Committee noted correspondence from the RQIA advising of the publication of its report of the Review of Services for Vulnerable Persons Detained in Northern Ireland Prisons, commissioned jointly by Minister Swann and Minister Long.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to ask for further written briefing on this matter and in relation to the Iveagh Centre.

- xv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Office for Statistics Regulation on the publication of its review - Improving health and social care statistics: lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic.

- xvi. The Committee noted an invitation from Novo Nordisk to a roundtable event on obesity.



- xvii. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding the regulation of mental healthcare services in NI.
- xviii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding continuing healthcare.
- xix. The Committee considered correspondence from the Independent Neurology Inquiry offering to provide written briefing on the work of the panel and to meet with the Committee Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that the Clerk would contact the Inquiry Panel to discuss arrangements for meeting the Committee.

- xx. The Committee considered correspondence from CHASNI regarding restrictions for residents who reside in care homes.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Public Health Agency in relation to this matter.

## **15. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee agreed its Forward Work Programme.

## **16. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

## **17. 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 21 October 2021.



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The meeting was adjourned at 1.30 pm.

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