



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Health

Minutes of Proceedings

2 October 2025

Meeting Location: Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present:

- Philip McGuigan MLA (Chairperson)
- Danny Donnelly MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
- Linda Dillon MLA
- Órlaithí Flynn MLA
- Nuala McAllister MLA
- Colin McGrath MLA
- Alan Robinson MLA

Joining Remotely: Alan Chambers MLA

Apologies: Diane Dodds MLA

In Attendance: Keith McBride, Clerk
Shannen Lofthouse, Assistant Clerk
Angela McParland, Assistant Clerk
Jonathan Lamont, Clerical Supervisor
Noel Gallagher, Clerical Officer

The meeting commenced at 2.02pm in public session.

1. Apologies

Diane Dodds MLA

2. Chairperson's Business

None.

3. Draft Minutes

The Committee agreed the draft Minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2025.

4. Matters Arising

None.

5. Oral Briefing- Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority

The following representatives joined the meeting at 2.03pm:

- Ms Briege Donaghy, Chief Executive, Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority; and
- Ms Christine Collins, Chairperson, Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority.

The representatives briefed the Committee on the work of the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking details of current work to regulate non-surgical cosmetic surgery, including pop-up, high street, and online providers operating without registration.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek clarification from the Department on whether legislation on non-surgical cosmetic surgery is being considered.

6. Review of Emergency General Surgery and South West Acute Hospital- Written Briefing from the Department.

The Committee considered a written briefing regarding Emergency General Surgery in South West Acute Hospital.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department requesting details of the challenges involved in achieving 100% direct bed transfer.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request information on the number of private ambulances currently in use, the total cost incurred to date for their use, and clarification on whether these ambulances operate on a 24/7 basis or are deployed only under specific criteria.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to send a copy of the written briefing to RQIA and SOAS for information.

7. SR 2025/158 Recovery Health Service Charges

The Committee considered SR 2025/158 The Recovery of Health Services Charges (Amounts) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland).

Agreed: The Committee has considered SR 2025/158 The Recovery of Health Services Charges (Amounts) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland), and has no objection to the Rule.

8. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted a response from the Department with regards to a ban on energy drinks.
- ii. The Committee noted a response from the Department with regards to an update on the Safeguarding Vulnerable Groups Order 2007 through the Crime and Policing Bill.
- iii. The Committee noted a response from the Department with regards to Homecare Services Packages.
- iv. The Committee noted a response from the Department with regards to Sugar Tax.
- v. The Committee noted a response from the Department with regards to the introduction of a proposed Minimum Unit Pricing Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the matter to NI Alcohol and Drugs Alliance for comment.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule an oral briefing from the Department, specifically on the evidence gathered and the reasons for introducing the draft Bill.

- vi. The Committee noted a response from the Department with regards to Mental Health Strategy.
- vii. The Committee noted a response from the Department with regards to Fostering Network.

- viii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department with an update on the Tobacco and Vapes Bill.
 - ix. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department with regards to the Public Consultation on a draft revised Code of Practice to the Mental Health (Northern Ireland) Order 1986.
 - x. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Justice to the Department of Health in relation to Mental Health Courts.
 - xi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Economy with regards to Day Opportunities for Post 19 SEND.
 - xii. The Committee noted correspondence regarding Analysis of 2025-26 Outturn and Forecast Outturn.
 - xiii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Education with regards to Cubbie and the challenges in the health system faced by neurodiverse children.
 - xiv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Examiner of Statutory Rules with regards to the 45th Report.
 - xv. The Committee considered correspondence from the Oireachtas Joint Committee on the Implementation of the Good Friday Agreement.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed that the Clerk would liaise with the Oireachtas Committee to arrange a meeting.
- xvi. The Committee noted correspondence from the GP Federation with regards to GP Contracts.

- xvii. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding continuing health care assessments.
- xviii. The Committee noted correspondence from SOAS regarding the suspension of Emergency Surgery in South West Acute Hospital.

Colin McGrath MLA joined the meeting at 3.17pm

9. Forward Work Plan

The Committee considered a draft Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft Forward Work Programme.

The Committee adjourned at 3.25pm

The Committee resumed at 3.30pm

10. Oral Briefing from The Department- Briefing with Permanent Secretary

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting at 3.31pm:

- Mr Mike Farrar, Permanent Secretary; and
- Mr Jim Wilkinson, Deputy Secretary, Healthcare & Policy Group; and
- Ms Tracey McCaig, Chief Operating Officer Strategic Planning & Performance Group.

Alan Robinson MLA returned 3.32pm

Nuala McAllister MLA returned at 3.44pm

The officials briefed the Committee on its work in relation to the Departmental Business Plan.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

Alan Chambers MLA left the meeting at 4.49pm

Órlaithí Flynn MLA left the meeting at 4.55pm

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request the following:

- Details of spending on the 14 capital projects, including current stage, spend to date and committed spend;
- A breakdown on how potential cost savings of £300m may be delivered;
- An update on the Neighbourhood Model of Care;
- A written update on ref SS5, including a delivery timeline; and
- A written briefing on improving access to mental health support in community settings.

11. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

12. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee was scheduled to take place at in Room 29 at 2.00pm on 9 October 2025.

The meeting was adjourned at 5.16pm.

Phillip McGuigan MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Health

9 October 2025

