



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Health

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday 15 October 2026

Meeting Location: Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present: Phillip McGuigan MLA (Chairperson)
Nuala McAllister MLA
Colin McGrath MLA
Alan Robinson MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Danny Donnelly (Deputy Chairperson)
Alan Chambers MLA
Diane Dodds MLA
Órlaithí Flynn MLA
Nuala McAllister MLA

Apologies: None

In Attendance: Keith McBride (Clerk)
Michael Doran (Senior Assistant Clerk)



Northern Ireland Assembly

Shannen Lofthouse (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Aidan Kennedy (Clerical Supervisor)

Caroline Devlin (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 2.05 pm in public session.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson updated Members on a visit to the Leukaemia & Lymphoma NI facilities at the City Hospital, including discussions with clinicians and researchers on clinical trials and the development of CAR T-cell therapy in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange an informal engagement session with the Department, SPPG, clinicians and families on the provision of CAR T-cell therapy in Northern Ireland.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 8 October 2026.

4. Matters Arising

The Chairperson reminded Members of the informal meeting with NI Covid Families for Justice on 13th October 2026. As the meeting did not have quorum, the Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking an update on progress towards Patient Care Partner legislation.

Diane Dodds MLA joined the meeting at 2.08 pm.

5. SR 2026/163 The Recovery of Health Services Charges (Amounts) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026

The Committee considered SR 2026/163 The Recovery of Health Services Charges (Amounts) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026. The SR will increase charges recovered from those who pay compensation in cases where an injured person receives treatment in a hospital or from ambulance services.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Agreed: The Committee has considered SR 2026/163 The Recovery of Health Services Charges (Amounts) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026 and had no objection to the Rule.

6. Oral Briefing from the Southern Trust and SPPG – Maternity Services, Savings Plans and Winter Preparedness

The following Trust representatives and Departmental officials joined the meeting at 2.18 pm:

- Mr Steve Spoerry, Chief Executive, Southern Trust;
- Mr Colm McCafferty, Deputy Chief Executive, Southern Trust;
- Dr Beverley Adams, Medical Director, Integrated Maternity and Women's Health, Southern Trust;
- Ms Tracey McCaig, Chief Operating Officer, SPPG; and
- Dr Joanne McClean, Director of Public Health, PHA.

Officials briefed the Committee and provided an update on maternity services at Daisy Hill Hospital.

Alan Chambers MLA joined the meeting at 2.27 pm.

Linda Dillon MLA joined the meeting at 2.44 pm.

Órlaithí Flynn MLA joined the meeting at 2.51pm.

Colin McGrath MLA left the meeting at 4.06 pm.



Northern Ireland Assembly

Ms Tracey McCaig, Dr Joanne McClean and Dr Beverly Adams left the meeting at 4.04 pm.

The following Trust representatives joined the meeting at 4.04 pm.

- Ms Catherine Marks, Director of Finance, Southern Trust;
- Ms Elaine Wilson, Director of Planning, Performance and Informatics, Southern Trust; and
- Ms Grace Hamilton, Chief Director for Nursing, Southern Trust.

A question and answer session followed in relation to savings plans and winter preparedness.

Alan Chambers MLA left the meeting at 4.43 pm.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department on a number of issues discussed.

7. Written Briefing from the Pharmaceutical Society Northern Ireland – Performance Update

The Committee considered a written briefing from the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland providing a six-month performance update.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to organise an informal meeting with Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland in the coming months.



8. Correspondence

- i. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Health regarding the regional 24-7 thrombectomy service.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward to request a written update in February from the Department on the operation of the thrombectomy service.

- ii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Health regarding clarification on how perimenopause and menopause will be addressed within Northern Ireland's forthcoming Women's Health Action Plan.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister regarding shortages in Hormone Replacement Therapy medication and request what action is being taken to address the shortages and what information is being communicated to GP's and Pharmacies.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward to Registered Nurses Group for information.

- iii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Health regarding concerns raised by representatives of the Neurology Justice Collective.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward to Neurology Justice Collective

- iv. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Health on the potential health and cost benefits of medicinal cannabis.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward to Burn Pit Lounge for information.

- v. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Health regarding details on announcement date and age for bowel cancer screening.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request a written update in February from Department on phased extension.

- vi. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Health regarding Trust responses regarding winter surge planning and Mental Health beds.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister seeking his assessment of the psychiatry workforce in both in-patient and community services, particularly in the Southern and Western Trusts.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

- vii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Health regarding HIV awareness, reducing stigma and encouraging Testing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward to Positive Life NI.

- viii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Health regarding a review of RQIA.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request to receive a copy of the final report when available.

- ix. The Committee considered correspondence from the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust regarding families with children with complex needs.

Agreed: To forward the correspondence to the National Autistic Society for comment.

- x. The Committee considered responses from the Northern Health, Southern, South Eastern, Western and Belfast Trust regarding children's services in Northern Ireland.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward to Barnardo's and Action for Children for comment.

- xi. The Committee considered correspondence from the Southern Health and Social Care Trust regarding independent Health and Care Providers

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward to Independent Health and Care Providers, alongside responses from the other Trusts.

- xii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust regarding children with complex needs.

Agreed: To forward the correspondence to the National Autistic Society for comment.

- xiii. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence to the Department of Health from the Committee for Communities regarding the Housing (Amendment) Bill.

- xiv. The Committee noted three items of correspondence from the Committee for Infrastructure regarding the Display of Flags and Emblems Bill, the Tree Protection Bill and the Harbours Bill.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

- xv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Examiner for Statutory Rules regarding the 75th Report.
- xvi. The Committee noted two items of correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding Contract Agency Workers and Jades Law.
- xvii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Speaker's Office regarding a public petition on CAR T-cell therapy.
- xviii. The Committee considered correspondence from RQIA regarding its response to the Neurology Justice Collective on issues raised during the group's informal meeting with the Committee on 22 September.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward to Neurology Justice Collective for information.

- xix. The Committee noted correspondence from the UK Statistics Authority regarding adult smoking statistics published by the Office for National Statistics.
- xx. The Committee considered correspondence from SHE Women's Health regarding its Forum Outcomes and Recommendations.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward to the Department for comment.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

- xxi. The Committee considered correspondence Save Our Acute Services regarding a request for information.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward information to Save Our Acute Services.

- xxii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Lobular Moonshot Project regarding a request to meet with the Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to respond to advise that, due to current Committee business, a meeting would not be possible at this time.

- xxiii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Royal College of Nursing regarding a notification of industrial action ballot.

- xxiv. The Committee noted correspondence from the British Heart Foundation regarding and invitation to the 'NI Hearts Need More' Report Launch.

- xxv. The Committee considered correspondence from Lumifide regarding maternal assessment.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward to the Department for comment.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

- xxvi. The Committee noted correspondence from Novartis Pharmaceuticals regarding an invite to a newborn screening for SMA event.
- xxvii. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding a complaint on ADHD support.
- xxviii. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual, including a copy of correspondence to the Northern and Belfast Health and Social Care Trust Boards regarding a vulnerable adult.
- xxix. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding matters relating to River House Care Home.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust requesting an update on Serious Adverse Incident progress.

- xxx. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding an adult with a learning disability at the Innishfree Unit, Knockbracken.
- xxxi. The Committee noted correspondence from incredABLE regarding the future provision of its services.

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



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to RQIA seeking clarification on issues relating to the registration of IncredAbles short-break services and interim provision for the service.

- xxxii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding an update on Safe Staffing legislation.
- xxxiii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding an update on Duty of Candour legislation.

Órlaithí Flynn MLA left the meeting at 4.51 pm.

Linda Dillon MLA left the meeting at 4.56 pm.

9. Any Other Business

There was no other business.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

10. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting was scheduled to take place on Thursday 22 October at 2.00 pm in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The Committee moved into closed session at 4.58 pm.

11. Forward Work Programme

The Clerk took Members through the Forward Work Programme and outlined the proposed plan for forthcoming Committee business.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to the draft forward work plan.

The meeting was adjourned at 5.10 pm.

Phillip McGuigan MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Health
22 October 2026