



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Committee for Health

### Minutes of Proceedings

**22 January 2026**

**Meeting Location:** Room 29, Parliament Buildings

**Present:**

Phillip McGuigan MLA (Chairperson)

Danny Donnelly MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Alan Chambers MLA

Linda Dillon MLA

Diane Dodds MLA

Órlaithí Flynn MLA

Nuala McAllister MLA

Colin McGrath MLA

Alan Robinson MLA.

**Apologies:**

None.

**In Attendance:** Keith McBride, Clerk  
Roisin Donnelly, Senior Assistant Clerk  
Michael Doran, Senior Assistant Clerk  
Shannen Lofthouse, Assistant Clerk  
Angela McParland, Assistant Clerk  
Jonathan Lamont, Clerical Supervisor

The meeting commenced at 2.01pm in public session.

## **1. Apologies**

None.

## **2. Chairperson's Business**

The Chair explained that the briefing from the Interim Protection Board and SPPG on the Adult Protection Bill had been rescheduled due to illness.

The Chair welcomed the opening of the new Palliative Care Hub in the Belfast Trust, launched in the Long Gallery yesterday, and commended the Trust for its work on the hub, noting that it will provide much-needed support for families navigating the system.

**Agreed:** The Committee write to the Department to ask whether engagement is taking place in other Trusts in relation to Palliative Care Hubs.

The Chair reported on a meeting with Young Lives vs Cancer and visits to their facilities at College Green, Amy's House and also noted Paul's House on the Falls Road, which provide respite and support for families whose loved ones are undergoing cancer treatment. The Chair congratulated the organisation on its work.

### **3. Draft Minutes**

The Committee agreed the draft Minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2026.

### **4. Matters Arising**

The Chair reminded Members that an urgent Oral Briefing with Independent Health Care Providers will take place at 10.00am on Tuesday 27 January in Room 21. The session is scheduled to last one hour and will provide an opportunity to hear directly from providers affected by issues relating to community care.

The Chair further reminded Members that, as requested by the Committee, the Permanent Secretary is scheduled to brief the Committee on patient flow and community care on Thursday 5 February.

### **5. Adult Protection Bill- Correspondence on Bill**

The Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk briefed the Committee on correspondence received from the Department regarding the BMA and RCGP's stance on the Bill, along with the Department's feedback on the evidence submitted by both organisations. The Clerk also summarised some of the evidence the Committee has heard to date from the General Medical Council, and it was highlighted that the Department disagreed with some of the potential amendments proposed by the organisations.

The Clerk informed the Committee that correspondence had been sent to the Committee for Justice and that a response had been received. The Committee for Justice advised that the Department for Justice will seek further views from the PSNI, Harbour Police, the Probation Board, the PPS and the Policing Board. The Clerk also noted that the PSNI and the Policing Board have already submitted evidence.

*Nuala McAllister MLA joined the meeting at 2.14pm.*

*Diane Dodds MLA joined the meeting at 2.16pm.*

## **6. Adult Protection Bill- Oral Briefing from the Department and SPPG.**

This item was deferred due to illness and will be rescheduled.

## **7. Adult Protection Bill- Action for Muckamore**

The following representatives joined the meeting at 2.17pm:

- Ms Catherine Fox, Representative, Action for Muckamore; and
- Mr Glynn Brown, Representative, Action for Muckamore

The representatives briefed the Committee on the Adult Protection Bill.

*Alan Chambers MLA joined the meeting at 2.18pm*

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their briefing.

## **8. Oral Briefing from the Department- Hospital Car Parking.**

The following representatives joined the meeting at 3.46pm:

- Mr Paul Montgomery, Infrastructure Investment Director, Department of Health;
- Ms Anne-Marie Smyth, Head of Management Services Unit, Department of Health;
- Mr Jeff Thompson, Assistant Director, Facilities and Support Services, South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust;
- Ms Olga O'Neill, Executive Director, Nursing, Midwifery, User Experience & AHP, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust; and

- Ms Clare McMahon, Co-Director for Patient and Client Support Services, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

The representatives briefed the Committee on the Hospital Car Parking.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their briefing.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request data outlining car parking charges for each South Eastern Trust site for staff and public, including a regional comparison.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request detail of the extra costs for each Trust relating to the implementation of ANPR.

*Alan Chambers MLA left the meeting at 4.27pm.*

## **9. SR- 2026/5 The Breakfast Foods (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026**

The Committee considered SR 2026/5 The Breakfast Foods (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026.

**Agreed:** The Committee for Health has considered SR 2026/5 The Breakfast Foods (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules Report, has no objection to the Rule.

## **10. Written Briefing from the Department- Waiting Lists: Red Flag Cancer Lists, PEGS Surgery**

The Committee noted a written briefing from the Department regarding Waiting Lists for Cancer and PEGS Surgery.

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

- A full breakdown of how waiting list data is recorded, including all classifications used for recording reasons why a patient is removed from a list.
- A detailed breakdown of waiting lists for each condition, including all tumour-related lists, numbers awaiting each procedure, waiting times for each list, and reasons for delays at each stage of the pathway.
- Figures on breast cancer waiting lists relating to quality of service, with an explanation of regional variations and details of the outcomes where targets are not achieved.
- Confirmation on whether the Committee can receive monthly updates on waiting list figures to support its scrutiny role.
- Information on patient outcomes to understand the impact of delayed diagnosis and treatment for red flag cancer patients due to long waiting lists.
- A more detailed assessment explaining the increase in overall waiting list numbers where demand is outstripping capacity.
- An explanation of the rationale for redirecting £73.5m of waiting list funding to the wider budget.
- Sight of a detailed, specific strategic plan to reduce red flag cancer waiting times, separate to the Elective Care Plan.
- A comprehensive overview of paediatric waiting lists across all pathways, including first consultant appointment onwards.

## 11. Correspondence

- i. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department regarding Eimear's Wish and Stem Cell Donation.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward this to Eimear's Wish for comment.

- ii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding December Monitoring Round queries.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to Department to seek a further breakdown in relation to the outlined savings.

- iii. The Committee considered correspondence from NICCY with a request to brief the Committee on Children's Mental Health.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to schedule an oral briefing with the Commissioner.

- iv. The Committee considered correspondence from Lidl with an invite to 'Celebrating Local Suppliers and Communities' Event.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed Members are to respond on an individual basis.

- v. The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding Multi Year Budget 2026-30.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to consider a response to the Finance Committee following a Departmental briefing on 19 February.

- vi. The Committee considered correspondence from Western Health and Social Care Trust.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request clarification of the expected date for a new Chief Executive for WHSCT to be formally appointed, and clarification on whether the former Chief Executive is continuing in the role until that time.

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

- vii. The Committee noted correspondence from Youth Assembly regarding the Big Youth Survey Report 2025.

- viii. The Committee considered correspondence from Western Health and Social Care Trust regarding CAWT HSC Partnership- Impact on Fermanagh.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward to Save Our Acute Services for comment.

- ix. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding adult safeguarding processes in the Belfast Trust.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to consider further at 5<sup>th</sup> February briefing with Belfast Trust CEO and Chair.

- x. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding changing places in hospitals.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to invite the individual to the Committee event on Complex Needs/Respite co-hosted with the Independent Autism Reviewer.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department requesting information on availability across all hospital sites, as well as clarification on policy across Trusts.



- xi. The Committee considered a response from an individual regarding poverty of young care home residents.

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

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed consider along with the Committee's request from the meeting on 15 January for further information.

- xii. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding urgent concerns regarding adult ADHD services and shared care in Northern Ireland.

- xiii. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding urgent inequality in access to Abiraterone.

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

- xiv. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding Judicial Review.

- xv. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department regarding chemotherapy delays at Laurel House.

- xvi. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department regarding violence and aggression against staff in HSC.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department requesting an urgent response to the information requested on 20 November 2025.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request further information on where the incidents are occurring (e.g. EDs) and further information on the number of prosecutions that had been brought forward relating to the instances of abuse.

## **12. Forward Work Programme**

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

## **13. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

## **14. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting**

The next meeting of the Committee was scheduled to take place in Room 21 at 10am on 27 January.

*The meeting was adjourned at 4.56pm.*

**Phillip McGuigan MLA**

**Chairperson, Committee for Health**

**29 January 2025**