



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Health

Minutes of Proceedings

26 June 2025

Meeting Location: Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Philip 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
Shannen Lofthouse, Assistant Clerk
Angela McParland, Assistant Clerk
Jonathan Lamont, Clerical Supervisor
Martina Mullin-O'Hare, Clerical Officer

The meeting commenced at 2.02pm in public session.

1. Apologies

No apologies were received.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson advised Members that he and the Deputy Chairperson had met with Peter McBride on Tuesday 24 June 2025 regarding the Review of the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT) and that a formal meeting will take place in the Autumn.

The Chairperson thanked the Ulster Hospital for hosting the Committee to view the Encompass system in operation. The Chairperson stated the visit had been very informative for Members.

Alan Chambers joined the meeting at 2.03pm

3. Draft Minutes

The Committee agreed the draft Minutes of the meeting held on 19 June 2025.

4. Matters Arising

None.

5. SL1 on Breakfast Directives – Oral Evidence from the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland

The following representatives joined the meeting at 2.06pm:

- Richard Annett, Food Standards Lead, Food Standards Agency (FSA) in Northern Ireland; and
- Sharon Gilmore, Head of Standards and Dietary Health, FSA in Northern Ireland.

The officials provided oral evidence to the Committee on an SL1 on Breakfast Directives.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their briefing.

The evidence session was reported by Hansard.

Órlaithí Flynn joined the meeting at 2.07pm

The Chairperson asked if Members were content with the merits of the policy and that the Statutory Rule is made.

The Committee divided on whether it was content with the merits of the policy and that the Statutory Rule was made. The following votes were recorded:

AYES

Philip McGuigan
Danny Donnelly
Linda Dillon
Órlaithí Flynn
Colin McGrath

NOES

Alan Chambers
Diane Dodds
Alan Robinson

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the merits of the policy and that the Food Standards Agency in Northern Ireland make the Statutory Rule.

6. Committee Inquiry: Access to Palliative Care Services – Northern Ireland Palliative Care Pharmacists Group

The following representative joined the meeting at 2.16pm:

- Peter Armstrong, Chairperson, Northern Ireland Palliative Care Pharmacists Group.

The representative briefed the Committee on access to palliative care services.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Nuala McAllister joined the meeting at 2.43pm

The Chairperson thanked Mr Armstrong for attending.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

7. Departmental Briefing: Encompass

The Chairperson thanked the staff at the Ulster Hospital again for hosting the Committee that morning and thanked the South Eastern Trust and the Encompass Regional Programme for providing very informative presentations on Encompass.

The following officials joined the meeting at 2.50pm:

Dr Paul Rice, Chief Digital Information Officer, Department of Health (DoH); and

Dr Dermot Hughes, Senior Responsible Owner, Encompass, DoH.

The officials provided an update to the Committee on Encompass.

The presentation included a question and answer session.

Diane Dodds left the meeting at 3.09pm

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

The evidence session was reported by Hansard.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to host an event in Parliament Buildings to encourage sign up to the My Care patient portal.

8. Committee Inquiry: Access to Palliative Care Services – Department of Health, and Palliative Care in Partnership (PCiP) Programme

The following officials joined the meeting at 3.58pm:

- Michael O'Neill, Interim Director of Quality, Safety & Improvement, DoH;
- Sally Convery, Palliative & End of Life Care Nurse Consultant, Public Health Agency (PHA); and
- Diane Walker, Macmillan Palliative Care Transformational Lead for Northern Ireland, Palliative Care in Partnership Programme Manager, Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG), DoH.

The officials briefed the Committee on access to palliative care services.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for attending.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to receive a written briefing from the Department providing further information on Advanced Care Planning as a priority in the current Winter Preparedness Planning.

9. Legislative Consent Motion on UK Mental Health Bill – consideration of the Committee's Report

The Committee considered its Report on the LCM on the UK Mental Health Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Report in full and agreed that the Report be published along with the Appendices on the Assembly web pages.

10. Written Briefing: Department of Health – Respite Services / Short Breaks

The Committee considered a written briefing from the Department on respite services / short breaks. The Committee noted that summer break is a time when families can face a crisis in their roles as carers.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to receive further information on the role and remit of the Children with Disabilities Oversight Board.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request an update over summer recess from the Department in relation to Lindsay House.

11. Written Briefing: Department of Health – Review of Emergency General Surgery at South West Acute Hospital

The Committee considered a written briefing from the Department on the Review of emergency general surgery at South West Acute Hospital.

Agreed: The Committee was encouraged by the increase of direct admissions from 25% to 79% however this reflects that there is still a large number not getting direct access. The Committee agreed to write to the Department to receive the actual number of patients these percentages relate to.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note its upcoming visit to the South West acute Hospital to take place following summer recess.

12. Adult Protection Bill

The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee Clerk on the Adult protection Bill and the Clerk spoke to this.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the suggested timetable for Committee consideration of the Bill and that the Clerk prepare a draft motion to extend, for the Committee to agree at next week's meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to issue a call for evidence on the clauses of the Bill, subject to it passing second stage, and that the call for evidence would end on 26 September 2025.

Agreed: The Committee agreed a list of stakeholders to invite submissions to the Committee's call for evidence, and further consider how to engage with those families that were affected in Dunmurry Manor and Muckamore.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to place an advert in the local newspapers advising of the call for evidence.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the delegated powers memorandum to the Examiner of Statutory Rules for consideration

13. The Draft Human Medicines (Authorisation by Pharmacists and Supervision by Pharmacy Technicians) Order 2025

The Committee noted the Draft Human Medicines (Authorisation by Pharmacists and Supervision by Pharmacy Technicians) Order 2025.

14. Correspondence

- i. The Committee considered a response from the Minister on bereavement services provided in schools

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the response as part of its evidence gathering for the Committee's Inquiry on Access to Palliative Care Services.

Nuala McAllister left the meeting at 4.53pm

- ii. The Committee considered a response from the Minister to the Chairperson's letter conveying the Committee's concerns following a meeting with families on 5 June 2025 who are involved in the complaints process and the serious adverse incidents reporting process of Trusts, the Committee had asked that he meet with the families as a matter of urgency.

Agreed: The Committee agreed it was disappointed that the Minister declined a meeting with the families citing the consideration stage of the Public Consultation as his reason and agreed to write to urge the Minister to

reconsider his decision and seek an explanation as to why the Minister deems the consultation period an inappropriate time to consult with the families.

- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual on Post-19 provision for adults with complex needs. The Committee noted the event hosted by the Chairperson in Parliament Buildings on the issue earlier that week and noted the Committee had written the week before to the Department seeking information on a range of areas in relation to the issue, including cross Executive working, following a statement by the Minister of the Economy.
- iv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding the Inspection Report on Royal Victoria Hospital Cardiac Unit.
- v. The Committee considered the Terms of Reference for Level 5 Intervention of BHSCT.
- vi. The Committee noted a response from the BHSCT on a fire safety audit in the Royal Victoria Hospital.
- vii. The Committee noted correspondence from Patient Client Council regarding BHSCT Cardiac Unit patient information.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to receive updates in terms of Peter McBride's consultation and a briefing in the Autumn and the Committee, and Members on an individual basis, would refer staff and correspondence on the issue to Peter McBride.

Agreed: The Committee considered correspondence from an individual on the BHSCT Cardiac Unit and agreed to forward the correspondence to Peter McBride.

- viii. The Committee considered a Young Carers event held that morning in Parliament Buildings.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department on the issues raised at the event that are relevant to the Department of Health.

- ix. The Committee considered correspondence from Versus Arthritis requesting to present to Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule an informal meeting with Versus Arthritis.

- x. The Committee considered correspondence from Diabetes UK requesting to present to Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule an informal meeting with Diabetes UK.

- xi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health to an individual regarding the BHSCCT.

- xii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Health regarding the recent briefing from Royal College Paediatrics and Child Health.

- xiii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department on the Regional Obesity Management Services.

- xiv. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department regarding Home Care Services

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek further information on the timeline for action.

- xv. The Committee considered correspondence from Education Authority regarding bereavement support in schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include this correspondence as part of the Inquiry.

- xvi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Justice regarding child contact centres.
- xvii. The Committee noted correspondence from Committee for Economy regarding Post 19 support.
- xviii. The Committee considered correspondence from a number of individuals regarding Caleb's Cause and Post 19 support. The Committee noted that the Committee for Economy would provide a reply to each individual.
- xix. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding Urology Services Inquiry.
- xx. The Committee noted the report from Pivotal on Policy Delivery in Northern Ireland.

15. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered a draft Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft 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 is scheduled to take place at 2pm on Thursday 03 July 2025.

The meeting was adjourned at 5.01pm.

Philip McGuigan MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Health

03 July 2025