



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Health

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday 24 September 2026

Meeting Location: Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Phillip McGuigan MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Donnelly (Deputy Chairperson)
Alan Chambers MLA
Diane Dodds MLA
Órlaithí Flynn MLA
Nuala McAllister MLA
Colin McGrath MLA
Alan Robinson MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Linda Dillon MLA



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Apologies: None.

In Attendance: Keith McBride (Clerk)
Michael Doran (Senior Assistant Clerk)
Roisin Donnelly (Senior Assistant Clerk)
Shannen Lofthouse (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Aidan Kennedy (Clerical Supervisor)
Caroline Devlin (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 2.00 pm in public session.

1. Apologies

As above.

Nuala McAllister MLA joined the meeting at 2.01 pm.



2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson noted his attendance at a conference hosted by Tourette's NI. The Chairperson welcomed the work of the organisation and indicated that it would be beneficial for the Committee to engage with Tourette's NI in the future.

The Chairperson also noted his attendance at a Hospice Alliance event marking the launch of its new report, which complements the findings of the Committee for Health's Palliative Care Inquiry Report. He commended the event, describing it as informative and insightful.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meetings held on 17 September 2026.

4. Oral Briefing from the Minister of Health

The Minister for Health, Robbie Butler MLA joined the meeting at 2.03 pm along with the following Departmental officials:

- Jim Wilkinson, Deputy Secretary, Healthcare & Policy Group;
- Tracey McCaig, Chief Operating Officer, SPPG and
- Peter Toogood, Deputy Secretary, Social Care and Public Health Policy Group



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The Minister of Health and officials provided an update on a range of departmental priorities and emerging issues, including cancer services, major capital projects, winter preparedness, service reconfiguration, mental health provision, workforce pressures, and ongoing policy developments. Members discussed a number of related matters and sought clarification on several issues.

Linda Dillon MLA joined the meeting at 2.07 pm.

A question and answer session followed.

The Chairperson thanked the Minister and officials for their attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking further information and updates on the matters discussed.

5. SR 2026/156 The Tobacco Retailer (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026

The Committee considered SR 2026/156 The Tobacco Retailer (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026 that will make minor amendments to existing legislation to ensure that terminology is updated to reflect an expanded range of tobacco, vape and nicotine products in line with the *Tobacco and Vapes Act 2026*.

Alan Chambers MLA declared an interest as a tobacco retailer.



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Agreed: The Committee has considered SR 2026/156 The Tobacco Retailer (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, had no objection to the Rule.

6. Matters Arising

The Committee considered the actions arising from meeting with Neurology Justice Collective on 22 September 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Justice seeking clarification on what steps can be taken to advance inquests and secure answers for the families concerned.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Chief Constable seeking an update on the police investigation into the actions of Michael Watt.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Health to convey its serious concern that families continue to be left without answers, highlighting the significant impact this is having on their health and wellbeing, and encourage the Minister to do all he can to ensure patients and relatives can access medical records.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Health requesting that he meet with Neurology Justice Collective to discuss the concerns of affected patients and families.



7. Correspondence

- i. The Committee considered a response from the Belfast Trust regarding capital projects.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite each Health and Social Care Trust to provide evidence on their savings plans, capital expenditure and financial recovery proposals.

- ii. The Committee considered a response from the Northern Trust regarding surgical activity, length of stay and robotic surgery.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Trust to seek clarification on whether the figures provided include ambulatory patients.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to request details of the elective surgery currently undertaken at Causeway Hospital and information on any elective procedures that are planned to transfer to the site.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request an assessment of the likely impact on Altnagelvin Hospital should emergency surgery services be withdrawn from Causeway Hospital.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request an assessment of the wider workforce and recruitment implications of the potential removal of emergency surgery from Causeway Hospital.

- iii. The Committee noted a response from the Southern Trust regarding Statement on medical workforce pressures affecting maternity at Daisy Hill Hospital.
- iv. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Health with an invite from the Chief Medical Officer to the George Cross Thanksgiving Service on 27 September.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Members agreed would RSVP individually.

- v. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Health regarding a joint review with the Department of on the legal and procedural framework on trials of the facts in Northern Ireland.
- vi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Health regarding an Oral Statement from the Minister of Health on the workforce challenge at Daisy Hill Hospital.



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- vii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Assembly and Executive Review Committee regarding the handling of Westminster Statutory Instruments.
- viii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Communities regarding Pre 24 Week Pregnancy Loss.
- ix. The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Justice regarding safeguarding, accountability and justice in faith organisations.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request to be copied into a response.

- x. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Executive Office regarding Adverse Childhood Experiences.
- xi. The Committee considered correspondence from Neurology Justice Collective in relation to RQIA's September 2026 Final Deceased Patient Review.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request to be copied into a response.

- xii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Professional Standards Authority regarding a parliamentary bulletin on recent activities within the Health and Social Care sector.
- xiii. The Committee considered correspondence from Dialogue Practitioners Co-operative regarding a meeting request for 1st October.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to write Dialogue Practitioners Co-operative that due to Committee business the Committee will be unable to meet at this time.

xiv. The Committee noted correspondence from Extern regarding an update on Extern services following the relocation of their city centre premises.

xv. The Committee considered correspondence from Positive Futures regarding an invitation to visit some of those that have been supported and successfully moved from Muckamore Abbey Hospital into community based supported living.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add Positive Futures to the list of organisations to meet with Committee, depending on legislative timeframe.

xvi. The Committee considered correspondence from a group of registered nurses regarding perimenopause and menopause in Northern Ireland.

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

xvii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Professional Standards Authority regarding a periodic review of the General Chiropractic Council.



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- xviii. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding Gynaecology Waiting Times in the South Eastern Trust.
- xix. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding ADHD in Northern Ireland.
- xx. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding a request for scrutiny in relation to the Western Trust.

8. Forward Work Programme

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

9. Any Other Business

There was no other business.



10. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting was scheduled to take place on Thursday 1 October at 2.00 pm in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.55 pm.

Phillip McGuigan MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Health
1 October 2026