



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Health

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday, 30 April 2026

Meeting Location: Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Phillip McGuigan MLA (Chairperson)

Danny Donnelly MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Alan Chambers MLA

Diane Dodds MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Linda Dillon MLA

Órlaithí Flynn MLA

Nuala McAllister MLA

Colin McGrath MLA

Alan Robinson MLA



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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)
Caroline Devlin (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 2.01 pm in public session.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson welcomed the publication of the Independent Autism Reviewer Report.

The Chairperson also highlighted that it is Bowel Cancer Awareness Month and the need for adequate screening provision in Northern Ireland.

The Chairperson advised that he and the Deputy Chairperson visited the needle exchange service with Extern in Belfast City Centre and that Extern will be writing to the Committee in relation to the service.



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The Chairperson thanked the Department for its engagement at the “This Is Our Health” meeting with Members on Tuesday and encouraged Members to get involved in the roll-out of the programme.

The Chairperson also welcomed the Minister’s Written Statement regarding the Mother and Baby Unit project.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department requesting a definitive timeline and cost for the Mother and Baby Unit project, outline the oversight arrangements for the construction phase .The Committee also agreed to request further information on the reasons why interim measures were not able to be put in place and to outline how mothers will be supported until the opening of the new unit.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 23 April 2026.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5. SL1 - The Jam and Similar Products (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026

The Committee considered a proposal by the Food Standards Agency to make a statutory rule to provide for updated compositional requirements for jelly and extra jelly.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to note receipt of the SL1 and proposed statutory rule and that these will be published on the Assembly website and social media as part of the call for views on the proposal.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the SL1 will be scheduled for consideration at the meeting on 21 May and the officials will not be needed to brief at this time.

6. Oral Briefing from NICCY: Mental Health Research Report

The following representatives from NICCY joined the meeting at 2.10 pm:

- Mr Chris Quinn, Commissioner for Children and Young People; and
- Leah Rea, Policy and Research Officer; and
- Elodie Bloomer, Youth Panel Member

Alan Chambers MLA joined the meeting at 2.10 pm.

Diane Dodds MLA joined the meeting at 2.23 pm.

Órlaithí Flynn MLA left the meeting at 3.14 pm

The representatives briefed the Committee on the Mental Health Research Report.

A question and answer session followed.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward a copy of Elodie Bloomer's opening statement to both the Department of Health and the Department of Education for comment.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Education to request an outline of how the Department intends to embed mental health and well-being within the education curriculum.



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7. Written Briefing from the Department of Health: Implementation of Maternity Services Review

The Committee considered a written briefing from the Department of Health on the Implementation of Maternity Services Review.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward to the Royal College of Midwives for comment.

8. Correspondence

8.1 Correspondence Index

The Committee noted the correspondence index.

8.2 Capital Projects Costs

The Committee noted a response from the Department of Health regarding an oral briefing from Belfast Trust on capital costs projects.

8.3 Older Peoples Parliament

The Committee noted a response from the Department to RaISe in relation to Older People's Parliament 2024 Recommendations and Department Actions.

8.4 Psychiatry of Old Age Service

The Committee considered a response from the Department of Health regarding the Belfast Trust's Psychiatry of Old Age Service.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward to the Royal College of Psychiatrists for comment.



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8.5 Independent Health and Care Providers

The Committee considered a response from the Department of Health to Independent Health and Care Providers regarding homecare, the Real Living Wage and the wider sustainability of the adult social care sector.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking information as to what is being done to assist care workers following the significant rise in fuel costs, particularly those care workers in rural areas.

8.6 Outcome of public consultation on childcare sector

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Health regarding the outcome of the public consultation on key issues for the childcare sector.

8.7 Youth Assembly

The Committee considered a response from Youth Assembly with a request for involvement in any relevant legislation scrutiny.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk would respond to this request.

8.8 Committee for Finance

The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding the Outturn forecast Outturn March 2026.

8.9 Committee for Education

The Committee considered a response from the Committee for Education regarding Special School Summer Schemes.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Committee for Education and request to be copied into the response from the Education Minister.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Health to request to be copied into the its response to the Education Committee.

8.10 Committee for the Executive Office

The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Executive Office to the Department regarding the New Foundations Pilot Scheme.

8.11 Committee for the Executive Office

The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Executive Office to the Department regarding Programme for Government and Programme for Government Delivery Unit.

8.12 Committee for the Executive Office

The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Executive Office to the Department regarding the work of the Commissioner for Survivors of Institutional Childhood Abuse.

8.13 Committee for Finance

The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding the Marriage and Civil Partnership Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk will respond with a nil response.

8.14 Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee

The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee regarding simplifying and reducing the burden of the rules on medical devices and in vitro diagnostic medical devices.



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8.15 Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee

The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee regarding the Tobacco and Vapes Bill.

8.16 British Medical Association

The Committee noted correspondence from the British Medical Association regarding the announcement of hospital doctors to be balloted for industrial action.

8.17 Cancer Research UK

The Committee considered correspondence from Cancer Research UK regarding the Cancer in the UK: Northern Ireland Overview 2026 Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule an oral briefing with Cancer Research UK.

8.18 Independent Autism Reviewer for Northern Ireland

The Committee noted correspondence from the Independent Autism Reviewer for Northern Ireland regarding their first annual report.

8.19 Caleb's Cause

The Committee noted correspondence from Caleb's Cause regarding a response to the Minister of Health.

8.20 Strategic Investment Board - Investing Activity Report

The Committee noted correspondence from the Strategic Investment Board regarding their Investing Activity Report for April 2026.



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8.22 Individual

The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding the Belfast Trust's review of incidents and safeguarding at Muckamore.

8.23 Individual

The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding learning disability supported living schemes.

8.24 Individual

The Committee noted correspondence from an individual with a copy of a letter to Patient Client Council regarding maladministration and management failure.

8.25 Individual

The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding continuing healthcare.

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

8.26 Individual

The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding record integrity, data obstruction and governance concerns in relation to the neurology recall.

8.27 Individual

The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding a RQIA review into children's social care services.

8.28 Individual



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The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding a complaint to South Eastern and Social Care Trust.

8.29 Written Ministerial Statement- Tobacco and Vapes Bill

The Committee noted a written statement from the Minister of Health regarding the Tobacco and Vapes Bill.

8.30 Update on Mother and Baby Unit

The Committee noted correspondence and a written statement from the Minister of Health regarding the Mother and Baby Unit project.

Diane Dodds MLA left the meeting at 4.11 pm

The Committee agreed to move to closed session at 4.11 pm

9. Formal Response from the Department for Health- Committee Inquiry: Access to Palliative Care Services

The Clerk took Members through the Department of Health's response on the Committee Inquiry. The Clerk advised a summary paper will be tabled next week for Members' consideration.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share the Department's response with the Hospice's who gave evidence to the Committee.

10. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed a draft Forward Work Programme.

11. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

12. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting was scheduled to take place at 7 May at 2.00 pm in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.17 pm.

Phillip McGuigan MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Health
7 May 2026