



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Committee for Health

## Minutes of Proceedings

**12 June 2025**

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

**Present:**

Philip McGuigan MLA (Chairperson)

Danny Donnelly MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Alan Chambers MLA

Diane Dodds MLA

Órlaithí Flynn MLA

Colin McGrath MLA

Alan Robinson MLA

**Apologies:**

Linda Dillon MLA

Nuala McAllister MLA

**In Attendance:** Keith McBride, Clerk  
Angela McParland. Assistant Clerk  
Jonathan Lamont, Clerical Supervisor  
Martina Mullin-O'Hare, Clerical Officer

The meeting commenced at 2.01pm in public session.

### **1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Linda Dillon and Nuala McAllister.

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

The Chairperson referred to the small forum hosted by the Committee that morning for the Committee's Inquiry on Access to Palliative Care Services. The Chairperson thanked those who attended the forum to share their experiences of providing care to family members who were in their last days and in need of palliative care services. The Chairperson advised that an audio recording and official report of the forum will be made available on the Committee's web pages shortly and the testimonies and discussions from the forum will be an important component of the Committee's evidence gathered for the Inquiry.

### **3. Draft Minutes**

The Committee agreed the draft Minutes of the meeting held on 5 June 2025.

### **4. Matters Arising**

None.

## **5. Committee Inquiry: Access to Palliative Care Services - Macmillan Cancer Support and a Southern Health and Social Care Trust Palliative Medicine Consultant**

The following representatives joined the meeting at 2.02pm:

- Christine Campbell, Member of the Macmillan Cancer Experience Panel, Macmillan Cancer Support;
- Sarah Christie, Nation Lead & External Affairs Manager NI, Macmillan Cancer Support; and
- Dr Sarah Cousins, Palliative Medicine Consultant, Southern Health and Social Care Trust.

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

*Órlaithí Flynn joined the meeting at 2.07pm*

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their evidence to the Inquiry.

The evidence session was reported by Hansard.

## **6. Investigation Report on the Royal Victoria Hospital Cardiac Unit – Oral Briefing from the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust**

The following official joined the meeting at 3.03pm:

- Ciaran Mulgrew, Chairperson, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT);
- Maureen Edwards, interim Chief Executive, BHSCT;
- Chris Hagan, Medical Director, BHSCT; and
- Tara Clinton, Director of Surgery, BHSCT.

The officials briefed the Committee on the Royal Victoria Hospital Cardiac Unit.

*Alan Chambers joined the meeting at 3.22pm*

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

## **7. Written Ministerial Statement on Belfast health and Social Care Trust Cardiac Unit – Oral Briefing by the Department of Health**

The following officials joined the meeting at 4.48pm:

- Tracey McCaig, Chief Operating Officer, Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG), Department of Health (DoH); and
- Lisa McWilliams, Director of Strategic Performance, SPPG, DoH.

The officials briefed the Committee on the implications for the BHSCT of the recent Written Ministerial Statement following the Review of the Royal Victoria Hospital Cardiac Unit.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

*Órlaithí Flynn left the meeting at 5.17pm*

**Agreed:** The Committee to be given regular written updates by SPPG on the BHSCT intervention action plan.

## **8. Legislative Consent Memorandum on the Rare Cancers Bill – Oral Briefing from the Department of Health**

The following officials joined the meeting at 5.22pm:

- Karen Simpson, Head of Medicines Legislation Unit, DoH;
- Sean Curley, Principal Pharmaceutical Officer, DoH; and
- Dr Rhonda Campbell, Assistant Director, Health and Social Care Research & Development Division, Public Health Agency (PHA).

The officials briefed the Committee on the Legislative Consent Memorandum (LCM) on the Rare Cancers Bill LCM, laid on Tuesday 3 June 2025.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed it is content with the LCM as laid. The Committee agreed to consider its draft report at the next meeting.

## **9. Draft SI The Human Medicines (Amendments relating to Hub and Spoke Dispensing etc.) Regulations 2025**

The Committee considered the draft Statutory Instrument The Human Medicines (Amendments relating to Hub and Spoke Dispensing etc.) Regulations 2025.

**Agreed:** The Committee has considered draft SI The Human Medicines (Amendments relating to Hub and Spoke Dispensing etc.) Regulations 2025 and recommends that it be affirmed by the Assembly.

## **10. Departmental Written Briefing - General Dental Services Reform**

The Committee noted the written briefing from the Department on General Dental Services Reform.

## **11. Correspondence**

- i. The Committee considered a response from the Department regarding the cervical screening programme.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the response to Ladies with Letters and to write to the Department to receive further information to the statement within the response that PHA advised that the data provided by the Southern Trust to RCPATH was calculated in a different way to that used for the national standard, to include an explanation as to why or how this different approach happened.

- ii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance on the Deaths, Still-Births and Baby Loss Bill.
- iii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Justice regarding the Department of Justice and Department of Health 'Improving Health within Criminal Justice Strategy' Action Plan Progress Report and a request for a concurrent meeting in the next Assembly session.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to schedule a concurrent meeting with the Committee for Justice for the next Assembly session.

- iv. The Committee considered responses to the Committee in regard to Caleb's Cause from the Minister of the Economy and the Minister of Health.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the responses to the Committee from both Ministers show progress is being made on the issue of post-19 special educational needs for pupils in Northern Ireland and paid tribute to the work of Caleb's Cause.

- v. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Health and Social Care to the Northern Ireland Affairs Scrutiny Committee regarding the rollout of EUDAMED.
- vi. The Committee considered correspondence from Fermanagh and Omagh District Council regarding Central Government Policy.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to schedule an informal meeting with Fermanagh and Omagh District Council.

- vii. The Committee noted correspondence from Committee for Finance regarding March Outturn and Forecast Outturn.
- viii. The Committee noted correspondence from Protective Mothers regarding a reply from Department of Health.

- ix. Members considered correspondence from Parents for PEGS NI regarding peg surgery.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence from Parents for PEGs to the Department requesting clarification and information on points relating to paediatric PEG surgery services for children in Northern Ireland, for the Committee to receive a response from the Department providing information on the points raised in the correspondence.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to receive its position in regard to Northern Ireland not having a paediatric consultant with specific qualifications in this field and whether a second opinion should be sought from the consultant based in England who is qualified in this field and who has a working relationship currently with the BHSCT.

- x. The Committee considered correspondence from VOYPIC regarding the United and Unique event on 20 June 2025.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that Members would rsvp directly.

- xi. The Committee noted correspondence from Assembly Executive Review Committee regarding call for evidence on Cross-Cutting Executive Strategies.
- xii. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding DoH policy on data retention.
- xiii. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding the Office of the Police Ombudsman.
- xiv. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding a press article on the progress of the court-ordered review of their nephew.

- xv. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding the Severe Adverse Incidents (SAI) public consultation.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to note the correspondence as part of its upcoming consideration of the review of the SAI Framework.

- xvi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Health regarding the Adult Protection Bill.

- xvii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department regarding the Draft Fostering Minimum Standards consultation.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing with the Department once the consultation period has concluded.

- xviii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Health providing further information on EUDAMED.

- xix. The Committee considered a response from the Department regarding the scoping exercise on the palliative care services sector.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to consider the response further in its deliberations for its Report for the Inquiry on Access to palliative Care Services.

- xx. The Committee considered a response from the Department regarding issues raised by National Autistic Society Northern Ireland.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to National Autistic Society.



- xxi. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department regarding Draft Human Medicines (Authorisation by Pharmacists and Supervision by Pharmacy Technicians) Order 2025.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing for 3 July 2025.

- xxii. The Committee noted the correspondence from the Speaker's Office regarding the 'Make Pancreatic Cancer Detection a Health Priority' Public Petition.

- xxiii. The Committee considered the request from Gambling With Lives to meet with the Committee.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to schedule an informal meeting.

- xxiv. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding the lack of post-19 support for adults with complex learning difficulties.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Committee for Economy.

- xxv. The Committee considered correspondence providing the Committee with further information on the South Eastern Trust following the informal meeting on SAI on 3 June 2025.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to note the correspondence as part of its upcoming consideration of the review of the SAI Framework and Adult Protection Bill.

## **12. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee considered a draft Forward Work Programme.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the draft Forward Work Programme.

**13. Any Other Business**

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

The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled to take place at 2pm on Thursday 19 June 2025.

The meeting was adjourned at 5.38pm.

**Philip McGuigan MLA**

**Chairperson, Committee for Health**

**19 June 2025**