



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Health

Minutes of Proceedings

22 May 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
Angela McParland, Assistant Clerk
Jonathan Lamont, Clerical Supervisor
Martina Mullin-O'Hare, Clerical Officer

The meeting commenced at 2.00pm in public session.

1. Apologies

None.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson thanked Common Youth for hosting the Committee that morning.

The Chairperson noted that Members had met with Eimear's Wish on Tuesday. Members discussed the importance of encouraging people to go online to register as a bone marrow and blood donor.

Nuala McAllister joined the meeting at 2.01pm

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to receive information on the work the Department and the Public Health Agency are taking forward on public health information to register as a bone marrow and blood donor.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to receive information on any discussions with the Department of Health in the Republic of Ireland in relation to an all-island register.

The Chairperson advised Members that he had attended a Living Wage NI event that morning which centred around bringing about a living wage for social health care and was attended by policy officials from Scotland and Wales.

3. Draft Minutes

The Committee agreed the draft Minutes of the meeting held on 15 May 2025.

4. Matters Arising

None.

5. General Medical Services Contract – Oral Briefing from the British Medical Association Northern Ireland General Practitioners Committee.

The following representatives joined the meeting at 2.03pm:

- Dr Frances O'Hagan, Chairperson, BMA NI GP Committee
- Dr Ciaran Mullan, Deputy Chairperson, BMA NI GP Committee

Diane Dodds joined the meeting at 2.05pm

The representatives briefed the Committee on the General Medical Services Contract proposals to GPs.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to receive the following information ahead of the briefing by the Minister on 29 May 2025:

- Copies of the Minutes of meetings with BMA on the General Medical Services Contract proposals to GPs, which the BMA NI GP Committee states was its submission to the Minister to his request for a breakdown of how £80m would be spent;
- Information on next steps by the Department to resolve the issue of the General Medical Services Contract proposals to GPs, as the Committee is keen for the Department and the BMA NI GP Committee to return to negotiations.
- Figures of full running costs for each of the current Trust-run practices that replaced GP practices where there was a contract hand-back, and

what the budget allocation had been for each of the GP practices that were replaced;

- In percentage terms, a comparison of the cost of locum GPs in the Trust-run practices to the cost for the GPs in the practices that became contract hand-backs;
- An explanation from the Department regarding a statement by the BMA NI GP Committee that its representatives were asked by a Department official to not promote safe working guidance; and
- The BMA NI GP Committee stated, to the Committee, that it estimates that GP practices get approximately 4.7% of the overall Health budget. Confirmation as to the percentage share that GP practices receive of the overall Health Budget, and detail of the calculations used to reach that figure.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to advise the Department that the briefing with the Minister on 29 May on June Monitoring, Budget Priorities and Legislation Framework would include questions from the Committee on issues raised in the briefing with the BMA NI GP Committee, the Minister's next steps to resolve the situation with GPs, and respite funding allocation.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Minister ahead of the briefing on 29 May 2025 that he indicate in his opening remarks the pieces of legislation that he intends to bring forward in this mandate.

6. Home Care Services – Oral Briefing from Department of Health

The following officials joined the meeting at 3.49pm:

- Mark McGuicken, Director of Disability and Older People, Department of Health;
- Ciara McKillop, Interim Director, Community Care (Mental Health and Children), Department of Health;
- Eilís McDaniel, Social Care Reform Director, Department of Health; and
- Debbie Murray, Head of Care Homes Unit, Department of Health.

The officials briefed the Committee on Home Care Services.

Linda Dillon left the meeting at 3:52pm

Nuala McAllister left the meeting at 16:24pm

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

Agreed: Officials agreed to commit to looking at ways to resolve a patient quickly regaining their care package after a hospital stay, as part of the wider reform. The Department to provide further information on progress when available.

Agreed: Officials agreed to follow up with the Committee as to whether the definition of 'unmet need' was used correctly in the collating of data, particularly in regards to the Northern Trust.

7. Correspondence

- i. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Health on Access to Palliative Care Inquiry regarding ReSPECT and DANCPR.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider further at the meeting on 5 June 2025 for its Inquiry on Access to Palliative Care Services.

- ii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Health regarding data retention.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the individual who raised the issue.

- iii. The Committee noted a Departmental response regarding the number of escalating patients at South West Acute Hospital.

- iv. The Committee considered a Departmental response regarding Protective Mother's NI.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this reply to Protective Mother's NI.

- v. The Committee noted correspondence from the All Party Group on Autism regarding meeting with the Independent Autism Reviewer. The Committee noted that the Independent Autism Reviewer will brief the Committee 23 October 2025.
- vi. The Committee considered an invite from British Medical Association NI to a roundtable event regarding medical student finance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Members would respond on an individual basis.

- vii. The Committee noted correspondence from Cancer Research UK regarding accessibility of e-cigarettes among young people and adults.
- viii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Executive Office regarding a meeting with Caleb's Cause.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to receive information on what work has been carried out in regards to the critical issue of a lack of legislation and adequate provision for Post-19 Educational Needs and Disabilities in Northern Ireland, as it pertains to the Department of Health.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write on the matter to the Department for the Economy, and the Department of Education.

- ix. Members noted correspondence from Committee for Justice regarding an informal meeting with Lady Chief Justice.

- x. The Committee considered correspondence from House of Lords Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee to the Health Minister regarding the roll out of EUDAMED.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to receive a written briefing on the impact in Northern Ireland and the Department's views .

- xi. The Committee considered correspondence from National Autistic Society Northern Ireland regarding the Forgotten Voices campaign.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask that it address the current distresses of the families from the BBCNI programme "I am Not OK" as detailed in the correspondence. The Committee to receive an update on how the Department can, as a priority, provide support to the families over the summer period.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule an informal meeting with the group in Autumn.

- xii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Public Accounts Committee requesting an update from the Department of Health on mental health services in Northern Ireland.

- xiii. The Committee considered correspondence from Queen's University Belfast regarding a regional mapping exercise on palliative care provision for those with heart failure.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider the correspondence as written evidence for the Inquiry on Access to Palliative Care Services.

- xiv. The Committee noted correspondence from Royal College of midwives regarding Meet the Midwives event on 18 June 2025.

- xv. The Committee noted correspondence from Royal College of Nursing Northern Ireland regarding the Department of Health briefing on workforce policy on 15 May 2025.
- xvi. The Committee considered correspondence from a palliative care consultant regarding the 'Regional Last Days Individual Care plan'.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Consultant to provide oral evidence on the specific issues as oral evidence for the Inquiry on Access to Palliative Care Services on 12 June 2025.

- xvii. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding home care.
- xviii. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding state abuse and how it is investigated.
- xix. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Health regarding the Cytology Review.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to receive an oral briefing on 3 July 2025 from the Department, SPPG, Southern Health and Social Care Trust and the Public Health Agency.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to receive a timeline for receiving the information it had requested on relevant individual screener data.

8. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered a draft Forward Work Programme.

The Chairperson reminded Members of the informal meeting with the Pharmaceutical Society on Tuesday 27 May at 1pm in Room 21.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft Forward Work Programme.

9. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

10. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee is scheduled to take place at 2pm on Thursday 29 May 2025.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.59pm.

Philip McGuigan MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Health

29 May 2025