



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Health

Minutes of Proceedings

13 November 2025

Meeting Location: Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

Present:

- 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: Phillip McGuigan MLA

In Attendance: Keith McBride, Clerk
Shannen Lofthouse, Assistant Clerk
Angela McParland, Assistant Clerk
Jonathan Lamont, Clerical Supervisor
Noel Gallagher, Clerical Officer

The meeting commenced at 2.02pm in public session.

The Deputy Chairperson took the Chair.

1. Apologies

Philip McGuigan MLA

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson noted that a number of Members attended an on-line meeting with Ladies with Letters on Tuesday evening, regarding the Cytology Screening Reviews, and thanked Ladies with Letters for taking the time to meet with Members.

The Chairperson informed Members that he had been contacted by the Centre for Independent Living, who advised of an event scheduled to take place in Parliament Buildings on Tuesday, 18 November. The Chair further noted that the invitation to attend has been extended to all members of the Health Committee.

3. Draft Minutes

The Committee agreed the draft Minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2025.

4. Matters Arising

There were no Matters Arising.

5. Adult Protection Bill - Oral Briefing from Royal College of Nurses and The Health and Social Care Trust.

The following representatives joined the meeting at 2.06pm:

- Ms Rosaline Kelly, Senior Nurse, Professional Practice, Royal College of Nursing; and
- Ms Dolores McCormick, Associate Director for Employment Relations and Member Services, Royal College of Nursing; and
- Mr Joel McFetridge, Lead for Adult Safeguarding, Belfast Trust; and
- Ms Patricia O'Brien, Chair of the Regional ASG Nurse Group, Western Trust.

The representatives briefed the Committee in relation to the Adult Protection Bill.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their briefing.

6. Independent Autism Reviewer - Oral Briefing

Ms Ema Cubitt, Independent Autism Reviewer (IAR) joined the meeting at 2.57pm.

The IAR briefed the Committee with an overview and update of Autism Services within the Department.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the IAR for the briefing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department for detail of:

- resources provided to IAR team to fulfil role, what has been allocated this year compared to what was in anticipated budget and in the EFM from the Bill;
- the cap for the IAR work, who made decision and what is the basis for the cap;
- engagement between the Department and the IAR in relation to the request for additional resources;
- what is the remit and who is on the Oversight Board (respite care);
- in relation to the provision of information to the IAR, the Committee expects comprehensive information being provided to IAR in a timely manner to help fulfil her role; and
- on individuals moving from adolescence autism assessment waiting list to adult list, is the time credited or do they have to go back to the bottom of the list.

Linda Dillon MLA left the meeting at 4.04pm

7. Cytology Screening Review - Oral Briefing

The following officials joined the meeting at 4.04pm:

- Professor Lourda Geoghegan, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health; and
- Mr Paul Cavanagh, Director of Hospital Commissioning, SPPG; and
- Dr Joanne McClean, Director of Public Health, Public Health Agency; and
- Dr Stephen Austin, Executive Medical Director, Southern Health and Social Care Trust; and
- Ms Moira Kearney, Interim Director of Cancer and Specialist Services, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

The officials briefed the Committee in relation to the Cytology Screening Review.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Órlaithí Flynn MLA left the meeting at 4.20pm.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their briefing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it has exhausted all the questions that Members can ask and that there are still significant questions that officials were unable to answer as they were not involved in the screening process in the Trust, PHA and DoH at the time.

The Committee agreed, there are still significant gaps in information which is preventing accountability in this process and causing further harm and impact to those women involved in the process. The Committee agreed that the only way to address those gaps is through a full public inquiry with the powers to compel witnesses.

The Committee agreed to write to the Minister to request that he initiate a full public inquiry on this issue.

8. SR 2025/172 - The Health and Social Care (Exemptions from Charges, Payments and Remission of Charges) (Amendment and Transitional Provision) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025.

The Committee considered SR 2025/172 The Health and Social Care (Exemptions from Charges, Payments and Remission of Charges) (Amendment and Transitional Provision) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025.

Agreed: The Committee for Health has considered SR 2025/172 The Health and Social Care (Exemptions from Charges, Payments and Remission of Charges) (Amendment and Transitional Provision) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules Report, has no objection to the Rule.

9. Workforce Policy - Written Briefing from the Department.

The Committee noted a written briefing from the Department regarding Workforce Policy.

10. Committee Inquiry: Access to Palliative Care Services- Consideration of Report and Committee Motion.

The Clerk provided Members with an overview of the Committee's Report and its recommendations.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to finalise the report with the Clerk, by way of email, early next week.

Agreed: The Committee agreed a motion to be laid in the Business Office.

11. Correspondence

i. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding a copy of a letter to the Committee for Education.

ii. The Committee considered a response from the Department regarding Pulmonary Fibrosis NI

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this to Pulmonary Fibrosis NI for information.

iii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding Ministers attendance at meeting of 20 November 2025.

iv. The Committee considered a response from the Department regarding Department of Health commissioned places at University.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this to NISCA for information.

- v. The Committee noted a response from the Belfast Trust with regards to issues raised at previous Committee meetings.
- vi. The Committee noted correspondence from House of Lords NI Scrutiny Committee regarding the consideration of EU Proposal.
- vii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Assembly and Executive Review Committee (AERC) regarding the Assembly processes for Statutory Instruments.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to provide a response to AERC.

- viii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding a Review of Arm's Lengths Bodies.
- ix. The Committee noted correspondence from Órlaithí Flynn MLA regarding a Private Members Bill Consultation Summary Report.
- x. The Committee noted correspondence from NMC regarding a consultation on raising NMC Registration Fees.
- xi. The Committee considered correspondence from SOAS regarding RQIA Review Recommendations Implementation.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider further at meeting on 27 November at South Western Acute Hospital.

- xii. The Committee considered correspondence from Neurology Action regarding Neurology Recall Cases.

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

- xiii. The Committee noted correspondence from Protective Mother's NI regarding a consideration of a response from the Department.
- xiv. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual with regards to governance and patient- safety failings within mental health and primary care services.
- xv. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding inequality in Adult Cystic Fibrosis Care in Northern Ireland.
- xvi. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding access to NHS prescribed inadine.
- xvii. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding RQIA inaction following meeting of 21 June 2024 and correspondence of April 2025.
- xviii. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding GP online booking.

12. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered a draft Forward Work Programme. The Clerk took the Committee through upcoming visits to both the Mater Hospital and South Western Acute Hospital.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft Forward Work Programme.

13. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

14. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee was scheduled to take place in Room 29 at 2pm on 20 November.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:35pm

Phillip McGuigan MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Health

20 November 2025