



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Health

Minutes of Proceedings

05 June 2025

Meeting Location: Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present: Philip McGuigan MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Donnelly MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Diane Dodds MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Alan Chambers MLA
Linda Dillon MLA
Nuala McAllister MLA
Colin McGrath MLA
Alan Robinson MLA

Apologies: Órlaithí Flynn MLA

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

The meeting commenced at 2.03pm in public session.

1. Apologies

Órlaithí Flynn MLA.

2. Committee Inquiry: Access to Palliative Care Services - Oral evidence by Compassionate Communities Northern Ireland, Northern Health and Social Care Trust, and Cruse Bereavement Support Northern Ireland

The following representatives joined the meeting at 2.03pm:

- Sharon Williams, Project Manager, Compassionate Communities Northern Ireland,
- Fiona Gilmour, Macmillan Service Improvement Lead Palliative Care, Northern Health and Social Care Trust, and
- Thelma Abernethy, Head of Cruse Bereavement Support Northern Ireland.

The Chairperson welcomed the representatives and thanked them and their organisations for their contributions to the Inquiry to date.

The representatives briefed the Committee on Access to Palliative Care.

Nuala McAllister joined the meeting at 2.13pm

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

The evidence session was reported by Hansard.

Members agreed that providing death, dying, and bereavement support services in the community and in schools is an important part of the public health messaging for palliative care services in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Education Authority (EA) regarding a National Lottery funded Programme carried out by Cruse Bereavement Support in schools working alongside Education Authority Critical Incident Teams, to receive information on work to mainstream the Programme and ensure it is equally accessible to all schools.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to also write to the Minister for Education to advise that the Committee had written to the EA and to seek his view on the matter.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister on the importance of public health messaging for palliative care services in Northern Ireland and public health messaging commitments in the Department's Advance Care Planning policy, and to ask that he work closely with the Minister for Education to improve equitable access for important bereavement services in schools across Northern Ireland.

[Extract]