



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

Mike Farrar
Permanent Secretary/Accounting
Officer
Department of Health

Cc: Stuart Stevenson, DoF

Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
BELFAST
BT4 3XX
Tel: (028) 9052 1208

Email:
Committee.publicaccounts@niassembly.gov.uk

27 March 2026

Mike.Farrar@health-ni.gov.uk

Dear Mike

Public Accounts Committee Briefing Session – MoR on Access to GP in NI

The Public Accounts Committee (PAC) wishes to thank you and Mr Cassidy for attending yesterday's meeting to brief the Committee on the Memorandum of Reply on the PAC report on Access to General Practice in NI.

Following this the Committee requests a written update on the MoR to reflect yesterday's discussions and also any further update on the Neighbourhood Model of Care.

Please respond by email using the address above by **Friday, 24 April 2026**.

Yours sincerely

Daniel McCrossan
Chairperson
Public Accounts Committee



Daniel McCrossan MLA
Chairperson
Public Accounts Committee

by e-mail:
committee.publicaccounts@niassembly.gov.uk

Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
Upper Newtownards Road
BELFAST
BT4 3SQ

Tel: 028 90 520559

Email: mike.farrar@health-ni.gov.uk

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Dear Daniel

PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE BRIEFING SESSION – MoR ON ACCESS TO GP IN NI

Thank you for your letter of 27 March requesting a written update following discussions in relation to the Memorandum of Reply to the PAC report on *Access to General Practice in NI* on 26 March.

I was pleased to have the opportunity to answer members questions during the session and have provided a written update on pertinent issues as requested in the attached Appendix.

I hope that my responses on the 26th March, and the written update, will provide members with the necessary assurance that the Department is working, and will continue to work, to ensure much needed improvement for accessing general practice in NI.

Yours sincerely

MIKE FARRAR

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The information provided in this Appendix is intended to provide members with an update on progress and developments since the MoR. The information is presented in terms of themes rather than against each recommendation as some of the themes have read across more than one recommendation.

GP Contract Negotiations

- Formal negotiations with the Northern Ireland General Practice Committee of the BMA with regard the 2026/27 GMS contract commenced on the 25 March 2026.
- The Department has appointment a lead negotiator for GMS Contract Negotiations from outside the Department.
- Introduction of Access Standards are a core component of the Department ask in terms of the 2026/27 contract.

Public Engagement and Education

- 'This is Our Health' launched to engage public about what it is they need us to deliver and establish a 'something for something deal'
- To date 1,000 people have been spoken with, the objective is that 120,000 people are engaged across the course of the exercise, work will continue through 2026.
- In addition, changing behaviours by identifying instances in which the public access the wrong part of the health system and;
- Over the coming year seeking to enhance technology such as the MyCare app to facilitate the public to make informed decisions about the appropriate healthcare access point.

- Within the next year, subject to budget to make a full assessment of the viability of a 111-type triage service.

Patient Experience and Complaints

- A new complaints handling process was introduced to GP Practices from January 2026, full implementation of the process is expected to take 6 months.
- The new Complaints Process introduces a broader definition of what is a complaint, expectation on that basis is that complaint numbers will.
- GP Practices will provide monthly returns to the Department on complaints received; the Department will undertake ongoing central analysis on the complaint returns.
- Patient level experience measures are included in GP contract negotiations.

GP Vision

- Work formally commenced on the 4 March 2026 with an extensive engagement event. The event had 70 attendees, the majority being GPs at various stages of their careers. Patient representatives were also in attendance.
- A significant amount of information was generated and is currently being assessed by a reference group of stakeholder representatives
- The aim is to complete the vision for GPs within the next six months.

Neighbourhood Care Model

- Guidance issued on 31 March 2026 following engagement with stakeholders.
- Neighbourhood Care Teams will be based on the same geographical areas as each of the 17 GP Federation areas
- Development of Integrated Neighbourhood Teams (INTs) facilitated with a regional introductory session on 28 April 2026.
- Representatives from each of the 17 will be invited to a structured two-day development programme with a focus on joint planning.
- By the end of the development programme all INTs will have an agreed plan for joint working for their first 12 months.
- Shared ambition, dealing with older people's care is a priority

Multidisciplinary Teams

- Implementation of the MDT model, funded from the Transformation Fund, is progressing in line with the published plans.
- Plans are for MDT implementation to be completed across all parts of Northern Ireland by 2033. The Department will look to expedite implementation where possible, subject to funding and workforce constraints.

Workforce Planning

- The Department is undertaking restructuring to increase its capacity to deliver priority work in relation to workforce planning.

- Enhancing the Departments capability by considering Encompass and GPIP systems over next 12 months in terms of improved data provision and analysis
- GP Training places report delivered (February 2026). The report is under consideration as part of a wider consideration of training needs, in the context of funding pressures.

Contract Handbacks

- No existing data set on reasons for previous contract handbacks
- Engage both RCGP and NIGPC to take their view on reasons for contract handbacks
- No contractual requirement for GP Partners to give reasons why contracts are handed back, any change to this will require negotiation with NIGPC
- Department will explore options such as introducing the opportunity for exit interviews.

E-Prescribing

- Business case with NIO, awaiting approval.
- Process would start immediately confirmation received of funding and be fully rolled out asap with an ultimate completion date during the 2029/30 financial year.

Visit to London

- Visit organised for members of the Health Committee and the BMA to look at advanced approaches to GP access and neighbourhood development.
The visit will take place on 3rd June.