



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Committee for Education

### Minutes of Proceedings

15 September 2021

**Meeting Location:** Teleconference

**Present by Video or Teleconference:**

Mr Chris Lyttle MLA (Chairperson)  
Mr Pat Sheehan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Ms Nicola Brogan MLA  
Mr Robbie Butler MLA  
Mrs Diane Dodds MLA  
Mr Harry Harvey MLA  
Mr Daniel McCrossan MLA  
Mr Justin McNulty MLA  
Mr Robin Newton MBE MLA

Ms Aoibhinn Treanor (Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Mark McQuade (Assistant Clerk)  
Mr Craig Mealey (Clerical Supervisor)  
Ms Emma Magee (Clerical Officer)



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

**Apologies:** None

The meeting commenced at 9:33am in public session

## 1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

## 2. Chairperson's Business

2.1 **Agreed:** The Committee agreed to change the order of its agenda.

Mr Sheehan joined the meeting at 9:35am.

Mrs Dodds joined the meeting at 9:35am.

2.2: Informal meeting with Dyslexia Awareness NI

The Chairperson informed the Committee that members had held an informal meeting with dyslexia awareness NI on 14 September and a note on the meeting would be distributed to members in due course.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to schedule formal briefings with Dyslexia Awareness NI and the Department of Education on this matter.

2.2 Self-isolation policy

The Committee discussed concerns about the pupil self-isolation policy, ventilation and contact tracing in schools.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Health seeking a comparison of the effectiveness of the tracing system in Northern Ireland compared to that in England, Scotland and Wales.



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

### 3. Draft Minutes

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of its meeting held on 8 September 2021.

### 4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

### 5. The Eating Disorders in the School Community – Eating Disorders Association Northern Ireland Oral Briefing

The Committee noted an Assembly Research paper on Eating disorders in Northern Ireland and a presentation from the Eating Disorders Association Northern Ireland.

The following witness joined the meeting by video conference at 9:51am:

Ms Sian Ogle, Project Worker, Eating Disorders Association

The witness briefed the Committee on the work of the Eating Disorders Association and concerns about eating disorders in the school age population.

The briefing was covered by Hansard.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the witness for the briefing.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to share the Assembly Research paper on eating disorders in Northern Ireland with the Eating Disorders Association Northern Ireland.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to share the Assembly Research paper on eating disorders in Northern Ireland with the BBC.



## Northern Ireland Assembly

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Health seeking an update on eating disorder inpatient provision in Northern Ireland. The Committee also agreed to forward the Assembly Research paper on Eating Disorders in Northern Ireland, the presentation from the Eating Disorders Association Northern Ireland and the Hansard report on the briefing to the Minister of Health.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education supporting routine training for teachers on eating disorders and asking what action was being taken under anti-bullying measures to address body image concerns.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the Assembly Research paper on Eating Disorders in Northern Ireland, the presentation from the Eating Disorders Association Northern Ireland and the Hansard report on the briefing to the Committee for Health.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to send the research paper, the Hansard report on the briefing and the Eating Disorders Association NI presentation to Pure Mental NI and the Secondary Students' Union of Northern Ireland (SSUNI) to raise awareness of eating disorders among young men.

### 6. Correspondence

6.1 The Committee noted an index of correspondence.

6.2 The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Education on revised arrangements for the identification of close contacts in Schools.

6.3 The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Education and Minister of Health on revised arrangements for the identification of close contacts in Schools.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to explore these issues with Ministers in the joint meeting with the Committee for Health.

6.4 The Committee noted correspondence from the Public Accounts Committee regarding its inquiry into the Northern Ireland Audit Office report on 'Closing the Gap' social deprivation and links to educational attainment.



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

6.5 The Committee noted a copy of a response from the Department of Education to the Committee for Infrastructure regarding the tender for home to school transport by taxi.

6.6 The Committee noted an Ulster University report 'Northern Ireland Parent Surveys: Experiences of Supporting Children's Home Learning during Covid-19'.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to arrange an oral briefing on the report.

6.7 The Committee noted a report 'Pivotal Tracker – policy priorities for Northern Ireland'.

6.8 The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from a school principal to the Minister of Education raising concerns regarding the issues facing School Principals.

6.9 The Committee noted correspondence regarding ventilation in schools.

6.10 The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding the impact of Covid-19 on GCSE pupils.

6.11 The Committee noted correspondence from the Children's Law Centre about a High Court Judgment against the South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust regarding access to respite care.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Minister of Education, the Minister of Health and the Committee for Health.

6.12 The Committee noted correspondence from the Royal College of Paediatricians and Child Health on the vaccination of 12-15 year olds.

6.13 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Education on the funding of the Standing Conference on Teacher Education, North and South (SCoTENS).

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to SCoTENS seeking its views on the funding arrangements.

6.14 The Committee noted a report from Pure Mental NI on the primary school counselling pilot.

6.15 The Committee noted correspondence about contact tracing in schools.



## Northern Ireland Assembly

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Minister of Education.

The Committee moved to closed session at 10:56am.

### 7. Forward Work Programme

The Committee discussed its priorities and forward work programme.

Mr Newton joined the meeting at 11:09am.

Mr Newton left the meeting at 11:37am.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed a motion to extend the Committee Stage of the Integrated Education Bill until 24 November 2021.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to hold an additional meeting every second Thursday to help manage legislative scrutiny.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to start Committee meetings fifteen minutes early for an effective questioning pre-meeting and to review this after 6 weeks.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed write to the Minister of Health asking him to review his diary and endeavour to brief a concurrent meeting of the Education and Health Committees, alongside the Education Minister, Chief Medical Officer and Public Health Agency within the next week and perhaps before the Education Minister's update to the Committee at its meeting of 22 September.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to prepare a press statement for issue expressing disappointment if this does not quickly eventuate.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to prioritise in scheduling of current issues briefings on governance at the General Teaching Council for Northern Ireland (GTCNI) by the Department of Education's permanent secretary; a Department of Education briefing on Physical Education in schools; a Department of Education briefing on school uniforms; cross-cutting issues with Department for the Economy; and post-primary transfer contingency plans.



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to invite the Education Minister's commitment to brief it every 4 weeks.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to seek advice on the current approach to Committee visits in light of the public health situation.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to arrange a further workshop on Committee Effectiveness techniques.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to selective schools asking what if any contingency plans for post-primary transfer they have made.

Mrs Dodds left the meeting at 12:52pm.

## **8. Any Other Business**

No other business was discussed.

## **9. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting**

The next formal Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday 22 September 2021 by video conference at 9:15am.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:55pm

**Chris Lyttle MLA**

**Chairperson, Committee for Education  
22 September 2021**