



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

**COMMITTEE FOR HEALTH**

**MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

**Thursday, 28 May 2020  
Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings**

**Present:** Mr Colm Gildernew (Chairperson)  
Ms Pam Cameron MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Ms Paula Bradshaw MLA  
Mr Gerry Carroll MLA  
Mr Alan Chambers MLA  
Ms Órlaithí Flynn MLA\*  
Mr Alex Easton MLA  
Mr Colin McGrath MLA  
Mr Pat Sheehan MLA\*

**In Attendance:** Ms Éilis Haughey (Clerk)  
Mr Jonathan Lamont (Clerical Supervisor)

*\*These Members attended the meeting via telephone conferencing.*

*The meeting commenced at 10.01 am in public session.*

**1. Apologies**

None.

**2. Chairperson's Business**

The Chairperson referred to the number of written submissions that had been received in relation to SR 2020/78 The Children's Social Care (Coronavirus) (Temporary Modification of Children's Social Care) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 which was scheduled for consideration at the meeting.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the statutory rule until 11 June in order to consider the submissions in further detail.

*Mr Gerry Carroll joined the meeting at 10.02 am.*

**3. Draft Minutes**

The Committee agreed the minutes of the meetings held on 20 and 21 May 2020.

#### **4. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

#### **5. COVID-19 Disease Response – Impact of pandemic on children**

Representatives from organisations in the children and young people's sector joined the meeting via telephone conferencing at 10.04 am.

Ms Alicia Toal, Chief Executive, Voice of Young People in Care

Ms Kathleen Toner, Director, The Fostering Network NI

Ms Michele Janes, Head, Barnardo's NI

The representatives briefed the Committee on child protection and wellbeing issues arising from the COVID-19 pandemic and provided their views on SR 2020/78 The Children's Social Care (Coronavirus) (Temporary Modification of Children's Social Care) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

*The Chairperson declared an interest as formerly being employed as a social worker and currently taking a career break.*

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

The Committee noted correspondence relevant to the briefing session from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health Ireland regarding the publication of its key considerations for the reconfiguration of children's health services following the COVID-19 surge period and the publication of its guiding principles on how to safeguard the welfare of children and young people during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Committee noted that written submissions relating to SR 2020/78 The Children's Social Care (Coronavirus) (Temporary Modification of Children's Social Care) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 had been received from the following organisations:

- Barnardo's NI;
- Children's Law Centre;
- Fostering Network NI;
- NSPCC;
- NI Commissioner for Children and Young People;
- NI Human Rights Commission; and
- Voice of Young People in Care.

*The meeting was suspended at 11.35 am.*

*The meeting resumed at 11.46 am.*

**Present:** Mr Colm Gildernew (Chairperson)  
Ms Pam Cameron MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Ms Paula Bradshaw MLA  
Mr Gerry Carroll MLA  
Mr Alan Chambers MLA  
Ms Órlaithí Flynn MLA\*  
Mr Colin McGrath MLA  
Mr Pat Sheehan MLA\*

*The Committee moved to agenda item 7.*

**6. SL1 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020**

Ms Elaine Colgan, Chief of Staff to the Chief Medical Officer, Department of Health, joined the meeting via telephone conferencing at 11.47 am.

Ms Colgan briefed the Committee on the Department of Health's intention to make a Statutory Rule to introduce provisions that will require those arriving at a UK port from outside the Common Travel Area to provide contact details, arrival information and details of their onward travel arrangements. The Statutory Rule will also require all persons arriving in NI and who have been in a country other than the UK or Ireland within the previous 14 days, to self-isolate for a period of 14 days from the point at which they ended their journey from the country in question.

*Mr Colin McGrath left the meeting at 11.54 pm.*

*Mr Alex Easton joined the meeting at 12.12 pm.*

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Ms Colgan agreed to provide the Committee with further information on a number of issues raised during the question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked Ms Colgan for her attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to defer its consideration of the proposal for the Statutory Rule until it had received further information from the Department of Health.

*The meeting was suspended at 12.28 pm.*

*The meeting resumed at 1.17 pm.*

**Present:** Mr Colm Gildernew (Chairperson)  
Ms Pam Cameron MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Ms Paula Bradshaw MLA

Mr Gerry Carroll MLA  
Mr Alan Chambers MLA  
Ms Órlaithí Flynn MLA\*  
Mr Alex Easton MLA  
Mr Colin McGrath MLA  
Mr Pat Sheehan MLA\*

**7. SR 2020/82 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020**

Mr Nigel McMahon, Chief Environmental Health Officer, Department of Health, joined the meeting via telephone conferencing at 1.20 pm.

Mr McMahon briefed the Committee on the provisions of three statutory rules which amend the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 and answered Members' questions.

The Chairperson thanked Mr McMahon for his attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

The Committee noted that the three statutory rules were made under the emergency procedure provided for in the Public Health Act (Northern Ireland) 1967 and will cease to have effect if not approved by a resolution of the Assembly within 28 days. The Committee further noted that there had been no opportunity for it to consider these at policy proposal stage.

The Committee considered SR 2020/82 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Amendment No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 which provides for the opening of places of worship for marriage ceremonies for the terminally ill, the reopening of recycling centres and provides clarification of the application of the enforcement provision with regard to children.

*Agreed:* The Committee considered SR 2020/82 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Amendment No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020, and subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, recommended that it be approved by the Assembly.

**8. SR 2020/84 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020**

The Committee considered SR 2020/84 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 which provides for the opening of a place of worship for acts of private worship, 'drive-in' church services, outdoor activities, and for up to six people who are not members of the same household to participate in an outdoor gathering.

*Agreed:* The Committee considered SR 2020/84 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020, and subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, recommended that it be approved by the Assembly.

**9. SR 2020/86 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Amendment No. 4) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020**

The Committee considered SR 2020/86 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Amendment No. 4) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 which provides for the staging of 'drive-in' events such as live concerts, theatre performances and films.

*Agreed:* The Committee considered SR 2020/86 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (Amendment No. 4) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020, and subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, recommended that it be approved by the Assembly.

*The meeting was suspended at 2.02 pm.*

*The meeting resumed at 2.11 pm.*

**10. The Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill – stakeholder briefing**

Representatives from organisations dealing with domestic abuse joined the meeting via telephone conferencing at 2.11 pm.

Ms Sonya McMullan, Regional Services Manager, Women's Aid Federation NI

Mr Neil Anderson, National Head of Service, NSPCC NI

Ms Rhonda Lusty, Men's Advisory Project NI

The representatives briefed the Committee on the health-related aspects of the Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

*The Chairperson declared an interest as formerly being employed as a social worker and currently taking a career break.*

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

**11. The Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill – Department of Health and Department of Justice briefing**

Officials from the Department of Health and Department of Justice joined the meeting at 3.25 pm.

Ms Lisa Trueman, Adult Safeguarding Unit, Department of Health

Ms Veronica Holland, Head of Victims & Witnesses of Crime, Department of Justice

Ms Trueman briefed the Committee on the health and social care aspects of the Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Ms Trueman agreed to provide the Committee with further information on a number of issues raised during the question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

The Committee noted the following papers relevant to the briefing session:

- RaISe briefing note on the health and social care aspects of the Bill; and
- Copy of correspondence from the Minister of Health to the Committee for Justice on the Bill.

*The meeting was suspended at 4.08 pm.*

*The meeting resumed at 4.15 pm.*

## **12. The Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill – Committee deliberations**

The Committee considered the health-related aspects of the Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill.

*The meeting moved into closed session at 4.23 pm.*

*The meeting moved into public session at 4.47 pm.*

The Chairperson advised Members that a draft report reflecting the Committee's deliberations and views on the Domestic Abuse and Family Proceedings Bill would be prepared for consideration at the meeting of 4 June.

## **13. Correspondence**

- i. The Committee considered a response from the Minister of Health to the Committee's request for information on the procurement and distribution of PPE in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Health for further information in relation to NERVTAG recommendation.

- ii. The Committee considered a response from the Minister of Health to issues raised by the College of Paramedics in relation to aerosol-generating procedures and the use of PPE.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward the Minister's response to the College of Paramedics.

- iii. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding care homes.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to advise the individual of the recent briefing sessions during which the issues raised in his correspondence were discussed.

- iv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Health regarding RQIA inspections of care homes.

- v. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding support for self-employed health care professionals.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department of Finance.

- vi. The Committee noted, pending further scrutiny, correspondence from the Royal College of Nursing regarding the Safe at Home Model.

- vii. The Committee noted, pending further scrutiny, correspondence from UNISON regarding the NI Care Home live-in proposal.

- viii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding the provision of abortion services in Northern Ireland.

The Chairperson proposed: That the Committee note the Minister's correspondence pending further consideration of abortion services at a future date.

The Committee divided: Ayes 8; Noes 1

**AYES**

Mr Colm Gildernew  
Ms Pam Cameron  
Ms Paula Bradshaw  
Mr Alan Chambers  
Ms Órlaithí Flynn  
Mr Alex Easton  
Mr Colin McGrath  
Mr Pat Sheehan

**NOES**

Mr Gerry Carroll

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to note the Minister's correspondence pending further consideration of abortion services at a future date.

- ix. The Committee noted, pending the next briefing session with the Minister, a response from the Minister of Health to the Committee's request for information on the contract with Randox Laboratories.

- x. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding Clifton Nursing Home.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to respond to the individual to advise of the recent actions taken in relation to this matter and to advise that the issue of care homes remains on the Committee's agenda.

- xi. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding the reopening of large stores.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to refer the individual to their local council which is responsible for the enforcement of the regulations.

- xii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Association of British Pharmaceutical Industry outlining its priorities in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- xiii. The Committee considered a copy of correspondence from Diabetes UK NI to the Minister of Health regarding the publication of the number of COVID-19 deaths by health condition in Northern Ireland.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Health to request an update on the Department's consideration of this matter and its implications for shielding.

#### **14. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee noted its Forward Work Programme.

The Committee considered a list of international witnesses who could be invited to take part in the next COVID-19 expert panel session scheduled to take place in June; and further details of the proposed panel of representatives of SAGE to be held in early July.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it was content with the list of experts to be invited to participate in the next expert panel session and the proposed approach to the Joint Chairs of SAGE and the Chair of NERVTAG.

#### **15. Any Other Business**

A problem with the sound quality in the Senate Chamber was raised and the Chairperson advised that Committee staff would raise the problem with the relevant department.

#### **16. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting**

The next committee meeting was scheduled to take place on Wednesday 3 June 2020, at 12.00 pm in the Senate, Parliament Buildings.

*The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 5.16 pm.*

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
*Chairperson*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_