



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Committee for Health

## Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday, 3 June 2021

**Meeting Location:** virtual meeting

**Present by Video or Teleconference:**

Colm Gildernew MLA  
Pam Cameron MLA  
Paula Bradshaw MLA  
Jonathan Buckley MLA  
Gerry Carroll MLA  
Alan Chambers MLA  
Órlaithí Flynn MLA  
Cara Hunter MLA  
Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

**In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:**

Keith McBride (Clerk)  
Roisin Donnelly (Assistant Clerk)  
Deirdre Farry (Assistant Clerk)  
Jonathan Lamont (Clerical Supervisor)  
Brendan Miskelly (Clerical Officer)



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The meeting commenced at 9.33 am in public session.

### **1. Apologies**

There were no apologies.

### **2. Chairperson's Business**

- i. The Chairperson advised that he had attended a meeting with Future Minds about mental health and young people.
- ii. The Chairperson advised that he had also attended an informal meeting with the Pharmaceutical Society.

### **3. Draft Minutes**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 27 May 2021.

### **4. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

### **5. Departmental briefing: June Monitoring**

The following officials from the Department of Health joined the meeting by video-conference at 9.35 am:



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Brigitte Worth, Director of Finance;  
Preeti Miller, Director of Investment;  
Ciara Dolan, Director of Transformation; and  
Annette Palmer, Head of Financial Management Unit.

The officials briefed the Committee on June Monitoring.

*Pam Cameron joined the meeting at 9.49 am.*

*Cara Hunter joined the meeting at 10.10 am.*

A question and answer session followed.

The officials agreed to provide the Committee with further information on a number of issues.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for attending.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request a detailed breakdown of the figures presented in the Department's briefing paper.

*The meeting was suspended at 10.44 am and resumed at 10.55 am.*



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**6. Briefing from the NI Human Rights Commission – Access to Reproductive Healthcare Services and the Severe Fetal Impairment Abortion (Amendment) Bill**

The following representatives from the NI Human Rights Commission joined the meeting by video-conference at 10:56 am:

Les Allamby, Chief Commissioner;

Dr David Russell, Chief Executive; and

Rhyannon Blythe, Director, Legal, Research & Investigations, Advice to Government.

The representatives briefed the Committee on the NIHRC Monitoring Report on Reproductive Healthcare Provision in Northern Ireland and on the NIHRC submission on the Severe Fetal Impairment Abortion (Amendment) Bill.

A question and answer session followed.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for attending.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

*The meeting was suspended at 12.01 pm and resumed at 12.10 pm.*

**7. Severe Fetal Impairment (Amendment) Abortion (Amendment) Bill: Briefing from Amnesty International UK and Informing Choices NI**

The following representatives from Amnesty International UK and Informing Choices NI joined the meeting by video-conference at 12:11 pm:

Grainne Teggart, Northern Ireland Campaigner, Amnesty International UK; and

Ruairi Rowan, Director of Advocacy & Policy, Informing Choices NI.



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The representatives briefed the Committee on their joint submission on the Severe Fetal Impairment Abortion (Amendment) Bill.

*Pam Cameron left the meeting at 12.19 pm.*

A question and answer session followed.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for attending.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

*Pam Cameron re-joined the meeting at 1.13 pm.*

**8. SR 2021/130 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 (Amendment No. 4) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021**

The following departmental officials joined the meeting by video-conference at 1.14 pm.

Nigel McMahon, Chief Environmental Health Officer, Department of Health;

Alasdair MacInnes, Head of Health Protection 1, Department of Health;

Jane Holmes, COVID Recovery, The Executive Office; and

Marian McKeever, Deputy Principal, Department of Health.

The officials briefed the Committee on three coronavirus restriction statutory rules. (agenda items 8 to 10).

A question and answer session followed.



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The officials agreed to provide the Committee with further information on a number of issues.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for attending.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

The Committee considered SR 2021/130 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 (Amendment No. 4) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 which makes provision for the easement of coronavirus-related restrictions including those relating to sport and hospitality.

**Agreed:** The Committee considered SR 2021/130 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 (Amendment No. 4) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 and recommended that it be approved by the Assembly.

**9. SR 2021/131 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Wearing of Face Coverings) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021**

The Committee considered SR 2021/131 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Wearing of Face Coverings) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 which requires members of the public to wear face coverings whilst inside an enclosed public area, except in certain limited cases.

**Agreed:** The Committee considered SR 2021/131 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Wearing of Face Coverings) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 and recommended that it be approved by the Assembly.

*The Committee agreed to consider an addition agenda item, SR 2021/141 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 (Amendment No. 5) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021.*



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**10. SR 2021/141 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 (Amendment No. 5) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021**

The Committee considered SR 2021/141 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 (Amendment No. 5) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 which removes restrictions on indoor sporting events, subject to risk assessment in certain cases, and makes a number of technical changes.

**Agreed:** The Committee considered SR 2021/141 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 (Amendment No. 5) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, recommended that it be approved by the Assembly.

**11. Correspondence**

- i. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health responding to information requested by Members during his briefing with the Committee on 4 March 2021.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to remind the Department of Health of its powers, under Section 44(1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Assembly Standing Orders to require the provision of documents.

- ii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health providing an advance copy of the Integrated Care System Draft Framework.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to schedule briefing from the Department on this matter.



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- iii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health responding to the issues raised by the Committee following its informal stakeholder meeting with cancer charities and support groups.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the Minister's correspondence to the organisations that attended the informal stakeholder event.

- iv. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding support for people who need to self-isolate.

- v. The Committee noted the publication of the ARINS report analysing the policy and political decision making for COVID-19 on the island of Ireland.

- vi. The Committee noted correspondence from the National Children's Bureau regarding the 'Our Minds Our Future' project and providing a copy of the mental health charter.

- vii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Children's Law Centre regarding the consultation on the establishment of a Regional Care and Justice campus.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to return to this issue in a planned joint meeting with the Committee for Justice.

- viii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Royal College of General Practitioners NI on access to services.

- ix. The Committee noted a submission from the Centre for Bioethical Reform Northern Ireland on the Severe Fetal Impairment Abortion (Amendment) Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to publish the CBRNI submission on its webpage and to forward the submission to the Bill Sponsor to request a response to the issues raised.





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- x. The Committee noted the Examiner of Statutory Rules' Fortieth Report of Session 2020 – 2021.
- xi. The Committee considered correspondence on behalf of Mr Aidan O'Brien in relation to the terms of reference for the forthcoming inquiry into urology services in the Southern HSCT.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request an update from the Department of Health on this matter.

- xii. The Committee noted correspondence from Great Victoria Street Baptist Church on the face covering requirements in places of worship.
- xiii. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding the closure of Valley Nursing Home in Clogher.
- xiv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Clerking and Member Support Office regarding social media training.

### **12. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee noted its forward work programme.

*Paula Bradshaw left the meeting at 1.54 pm.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to schedule an informal meeting to discuss its forward work programme.

### **13. Any Other Business**

- i. A Member referred to information provided by the Department of Health Permanent Secretary during the departmental briefing on the inquiry into hyponatraemia-related deaths that took place on 27 May.



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**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Health for clarification relating to the employment of the Chief Scientific Advisor.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Health for an update on the terms of reference for the independent neurology inquiry.

- ii. The Committee put on record its appreciation for the work carried out by military personnel in assisting the COVID-19 response including working in the Nightingale Facility and vaccination centres.

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

The next meeting of the Committee for Health was scheduled to take place on 10 June 2021 at 9.30am.

The meeting was adjourned at 2.00 pm.

**Colm Gildernew MLA**  
**Chairperson, Committee for Health**