



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Health

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday 22 April 2021

Meeting Location: virtual meeting

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Colm Gildernew MLA (Chairperson)

Pam Cameron MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

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

Deirdre Farry, Assistant Clerk

Roisin Donnelly, Assistant Clerk

Jonathan Lamont, Clerical Supervisor

Brendan Miskelly, Clerical Officer



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The meeting commenced at 9.32 am in open session.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

2. Chairperson's Business

- i. The Chairperson provided an update on his attendance at an online research launch event by Marie Curie and Queen's University on end of life care.
- ii. The Chairperson referred to the statement made by the Minister of Health to the Assembly on 20 April on the publication of the Neurology Recall Cohort 2 activity and outcomes Report and announcement of the Cohort 3 patient recall.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 15 April 2021.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.



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5. COVID-19 Disease Response: Ministerial update

The Minister of Health, Robin Swann MLA, and the Chief Medical Officer, Dr Michael McBride, joined the meeting by video-conference at 9.34 am.

The Minister provided an update on the Department of Health's response and planning in relation to COVID-19.

Jonathan Buckley joined the meeting at 9.40 am.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Minister agreed to provide further information on a number of issues raised.

The Chairperson thanked the Minister and Dr McBride for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

The meeting was suspended at 11.04 and resumed at 11.16 am.

6. Departmental briefing: Rebuilding Services

The following officials joined the meeting by video-conference at 11.16 am:

Peter Jakobsen, Director, Rebuilding – Surge Planning, Department of Health; and

Lisa McWilliams, Director of Performance Management, Health and Social Care Board.

The officials briefed the Committee on the Department of Health's programme of work relating to rebuilding services.

The Chairperson declared an interest as formerly being employed as a social worker and currently taking a career break and having a relative who is a nurse.



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The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The officials agreed to provide further information on a number of issues raised.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for attending the meeting.

The session was reported by Hansard.

The meeting was suspended at 12.38 pm and resumed at 12.45 pm.

**7. SR 2021/71 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2)
(Amendment No. 6) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021**

The following officials from the Department of Health joined the meeting by video-conference at 12.45 pm:

Liz Redmond, Director of Population Health; and

Marian McKeever, Health Protection Branch.

The officials briefed the Committee on five statutory rules relating to coronavirus restrictions (agenda items 7 to 11).

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The official agreed to provide further information on a number of issues raised.

The briefing was reported by Hansard.

The Committee considered SR 2021/71 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No.2) (Amendment No. 6) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 which provides: for some easements of restrictions; extends the period of review to 18 April; and removes the requirement for the regulations to expire on 31 March 2021.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2021/71 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No.2) (Amendment No. 6) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 and recommended that it be approved by the Assembly.

Paula Bradshaw left the meeting at 1.20 pm.



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8. SR 2021/91 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (Amendment No. 7) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

The Committee considered SR 2021/91 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (Amendment No. 7) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 which provides an exemption for gatherings of up to ten persons from no more than two households in relation to certain sporting activity.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2021/91 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (No. 2) (Amendment No. 7) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 and recommended that it be approved by the Assembly.

9. SR 2021/93 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

The Committee considered SR 2021/93 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 which revokes and replaces the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) No.2 Regulations 2020 and provides for the restrictions on business closures and gatherings.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer its consideration of SR 2021/93 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 until it had received the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report.

10. SR 2021/96 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Wearing of Face Coverings) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

The Committee considered SR 2021/96 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Wearing of Face Coverings) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 which requires face coverings to be worn inside a church or other premises where beliefs are practiced.



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Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2021/96 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Wearing of Face Coverings) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 and recommended that it be approved by the Assembly.

11. SR 2021/97 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 (Amendment) Regulations 2021

The Committee considered SR 2021/97 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 (Amendment) Regulations 2021 which provide for some easements of the restrictions, permits click and collect services, removes restrictions on movement, allows ten people to meet outdoors at a private dwelling and allows for the reopening of certain businesses.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer its consideration of SR 2021/97 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 until it had received the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report.

12. Committee Inquiry: COVID-19 and its impact on care homes

The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health advising that it will provide the Committee with a response to the recommendations of the Committee's inquiry into the impact of COVID-19 on Care Homes, by 19 April. The Committee further noted that this response has not yet been received.

The meeting moved into closed session at 1.36 pm.

Jonathan Buckley left the meeting at 1.36 pm.



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13. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health providing information requested by the Committee on COVID-19 indemnity arrangements.
- ii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding the role of the community and voluntary sectors in the provision of health and social care services and funding for primary care talking therapies and wellbeing hubs.
- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health providing an update on the COVID-19 Children and Young People Plan.
- iv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Health regarding SR 2021/98 The Coronavirus Act 2020 (Suspension) Order (Northern Ireland) 2021.
- v. The Committee considered correspondence from the Chairperson of the Regional Wellbeing Group requesting to brief the Committee on the work of the group.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider this request as part of its forward work programme.

- vi. The Committee noted the Examiner of Statutory Rules' Thirty-third and Thirty-fourth reports of Session 2020-2021.
- vii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Rural Community Network regarding the consultation undertaken by the Department of Health on the Mental Health Strategy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Department of Health for comment.



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viii. The Committee noted the Department of Health's COVID-19 response strategy update report.

ix. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health providing information on the HSC workforce appeal.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to give further consideration to how the workforce appeal work could contribute to the general easing of workforce pressures.

x. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health advising of the establishment of new grant funding schemes to support unpaid carers, mental health charities and cancer charities.

xi. The Committee considered correspondence from Autism NI requesting to brief the Committee on its views on the Department of Health Interim Autism Strategy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite Autism NI to brief the Committee.

14. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted its draft Forward Work Programme.

Gerry Carroll left the meeting at 1.43 pm.

15. Any Other Business

Difficulties relating to virtual meetings and the resumption of physical meetings in Parliament Building was discussed.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Clerk to explore options to improve the delivery of virtual meetings and to address the recurring technical difficulties being experienced by Members.

16. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee for Health was scheduled to take place on 29 April 2021 at 9.30 am.

The meeting was adjourned at 1.47 pm.

Colm Gildernew MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Health