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Assembly

# Committee for Health

## Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday, 4 November 2021

**Meeting Location:** Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

**Present:**

Colm Gildernew MLA (Chairperson)

Gerry Carroll MLA

**Present by Video or Teleconference:**

Pam Cameron MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Paula Bradshaw MLA

Alan Chambers MLA

Deborah Erskine MLA

Órlaithí Flynn MLA

Colin McGrath MLA

Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

**In Attendance:**

Keith McBride (Clerk)

Brendan Miskelly (Clerical Supervisor)



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**In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:**

Roisin Donnelly (Assistant Clerk)

Deirdre Farry (Assistant Clerk)

Ellen Wilson (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 9.35 am in public session.

**1. Apologies**

None.

**2. Chairperson's Business**

- i. The Chairperson welcomed Deborah Erskine MLA to her first Health Committee meeting and placed on record his thanks to the outgoing Member, Jonathan Buckley MLA for his contribution to the work of the Committee.
- ii. The Chairperson advised that it was 'Ask your Pharmacist' week which aims to raise awareness on the important role pharmacists play in providing healthcare to communities.

**3. Draft Minutes**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2021.



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#### 4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

#### 5. Neurology– briefing from the General Medical Council

The following representatives from the General Medical Council joined the meeting by video-conference at 9.39 am:

Charlie Massey, Chief Executive and Registrar; and

Anthony Omo, General Counsel and Director of Fitness to Practice.

The GMC representatives briefed the Committee on its work on investigations relating to the work of Michael Watt.

A question and answer session followed.

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

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request that it is provided with the Medical Practitioners Tribunal's determination relating to the application for voluntary erasure from the Medical Register in the case of Michael Watt.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to invite the Medical Practitioners Tribunal Service to brief the Committee in relation to this matter.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the UK Parliament Health and Social Committee to highlight its concerns in relation to the voluntary erasure



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from the Medical Register in the case of Michael Watt and the lack of transparency for patients in relation to this matter.

*The meeting was suspended at 10.56 am and resumed at 11.07 am.*

## **6. Neurology – briefing from the Department of Health**

The following officials from the Department of Health joined the meeting by video-conference at 11.07 am:

Peter Jakobsen, Director, Surge Planning & Health Service Transformation;

Robbie Davis, Director, General Healthcare Policy; and

Anne-Marie Bovill, General Healthcare Policy.

The officials updated the Committee on the Department of Health's work relating to the regional review of Neurology Services and the Neurology Recall.

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

A question and answer session followed.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to enquire whether the PSNI was carrying out any ongoing investigations relating to Michael Watt.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it would request the attendance of representatives of the Independent Neurology Inquiry at a Committee meeting and if the invitation was declined once again, that the



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Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson would meet informally with the Independent Neurology Inquiry.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that written briefings and Hansards of today's evidence sessions relating to Neurology are published on the Committee's webpage.

**Agreed:** The Committee further agreed to publish the written briefing provided by the Independent Neurology Inquiry.

*The meeting moved into closed session at 12.38 pm.*

### **7. Health and Social Care Bill - Department of Health proposed amendments**

Assembly Bill Clerks, Aoibheann Baker and Claire McCanny joined the meeting at 12.38 pm.

The Bill Clerks briefed the Committee on the Department of Health's proposed amendments to the Health and Social Care Bill.

The Chairperson thanked the Bill Clerks for their attendance.

The Committee discussed the Department of Health's proposed amendments to the Health and Social Care Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content with the Department's proposed amendments and that it would not table the Committee's previously agreed amendments to the Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that an addendum to the Committee's report on the Health and Social Care Bill would be prepared to reflect its views on the Department's proposed amendments to the Bill.



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## 8. The Severe Fetal Impairment Abortion (Amendment) Bill - report deliberations

The Committee discussed the content of its report on the Severe Fetal Impairment Abortion (Amendment) Bill.

Gerry Carroll made two proposals for inclusion in the report relating to the issues of travel and the commissioning of abortion services.

The question was put on Gerry Carroll's first proposal to include the following commentary in the report:

"The Committee agreed to express its concerns about the issue of people having to travel for healthcare treatment".

The question was put.

The Committee divided: Ayes 5; Noes 2; Abstain 2.

### **Ayes**

Paula Bradshaw  
Gerry Carroll  
Órlaithí Flynn  
Colm Gildernew  
Carál Ní Chuilín

### **Noes**

Pam Cameron  
Deborah Erskine

### **Abstain**

Alan Chambers  
Colin McGrath

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to express its concern about the issue of people having to travel for healthcare treatment.

The question was put on Gerry Carroll's second proposal to include the following commentary in the report:

"The Committee agreed to call for the full implementation of commissioned services as set out in the Abortion (Northern Ireland) (No. 2) Regulations 2020."



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The question was put.

The Committee divided: Ayes 5; Noes 2; Abstain 2.

### **Ayes**

Paula Bradshaw  
Gerry Carroll  
Órlaithí Flynn  
Colm Gildernew  
Carál Ní Chuilín

### **Noes**

Pam Cameron  
Deborah Erskine

### **Abstain**

Alan Chambers  
Colin McGrath

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to include in its report its call for the full implementation of commissioned services as set out in the Abortion (Northern Ireland) (No. 2) Regulations 2020.”

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to consider the draft Bill report at its meeting on 11 November.

*The meeting moved to public session at 12.52 pm.*

## **9. Legislative Consent Provisions of the Westminster Health and Social Care Bill**

The Committee noted that Legislative Consent Memorandums had been laid in the Assembly by the Minister of Health relating to three aspects of the Westminster Health and Social Care Bill that require the legislative consent of the NI Assembly. These relate to: international healthcare arrangements; medicines and medical devices information systems; and healthcare professional regulation systems.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Health providing further information requested by the Committee in relation to this matter.



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As there were no further issues raised, the Chairperson advised that a report on the Committee's consideration of the LCMs would be drafted for consideration at next week's meeting.

### 10. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health providing the Department's views on the Autism Bill and further noted that a briefing from departmental officials had been scheduled in the forward work programme.
- ii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding the updated policy on continuing healthcare.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the Minister's correspondence to the individual who had raised this matter with the Committee.

- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding the three-year budget setting process and providing detail on the rationale for capital bids submitted to the Department of Finance as part of the Budget 2022-2025 process.
- iv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding responsibility for the implementation of the recommendations within the report of the Truth Recovery Design Panel on Mother and Baby Homes, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses.
- v. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health advising of his written statement in the Assembly on winter preparedness and the publication of the HSC Trusts' Winter and Surge Delivery Plans.
- vi. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Minister of Health to Professor David Healey on medicines use and medicine safety.





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- vii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health advising that he has given consent on technical amendments to the Human Medicines 2012 in relation to EU Exit that are to be taken forward by the Statutory Instrument Human Medicines (Amendment etc) (EU Exit) (No.2) Regulations 2021.
- viii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health advising that there is to be a UK-wide consultation on proposed changes to the amendments to the Human Medicines Regulations 2012.
- ix. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding COVID testing platforms.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the Minister's correspondence to the individual who had raised this matter with the Committee.

- x. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health in relation to the Independent Neurology Inquiry, patient recall and recall-patient appointments.
- xi. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding the Independent Neurology Inquiry.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department of Health for a response to the issues raised.

- xii. The Committee noted correspondence from the National Children's Bureau providing its report on the impact of COVID-19 on children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities in Northern Ireland.
- xiii. The Committee noted correspondence from the NI Commissioner for Children and Young People regarding the publication of the NICCY report, 'More than a Number – A Rights Based Review of Child Health in Northern Ireland'.
- xiv. The Committee noted correspondence from The Royal College of Paediatric and Child Health Ireland regarding its response to the NICCY report, 'More than a Number – A Rights Based Review of Child Health in Northern Ireland'.



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- xv. The Committee considered an invitation to attend an online event on 11 November 2021, 'In Conversation with Professor Andrew Heyn', hosted by Professor Richard English, Director of the Mitchell Institute.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that Members would respond to the invitation individually.

- xvi. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding the Committee's consideration of matters relating to the Neurology Recall.

- xvii. The Committee considered a copy of correspondence from an individual to the Chief Nursing Officer regarding the banding of district nursing sisters in the South Eastern Trust.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department of Health for a response to the issues raised.

- xviii. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding a briefing session with departmental officials on 18 June 2020.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department of Health for a response to the issues raised.

- xix. The Committee noted correspondence from the Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists regarding communication access training.

- xx. The Committee considered correspondence from the Public Health Agency regarding advice provided to care homes on residents being able to leave care homes for activities.

**Agree:** The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to Care Home Advice and Support NI.



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- xxi. The Committee noted a meeting invitation to meet with a pharmaceutical company to discuss health policy issues concerning the prevention of cardiovascular disease.
- xxii. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding the COVID-19 vaccine booster.
- xxiii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Royal College of Nursing regarding incidences of verbal and physical abuse and aggression against nursing staff in community settings.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department of Health for a response to the issues raised.

- xxiv. The Committee noted the Investment Strategy NI activity report for the Department of Health.
- xxv. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding the Northern Health and Social Care Trust and mental health oversight.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department of Health for a response to the issues raised.

## 11. Forward Work Programme

The Committee agreed its Forward Work Programme.

The Chairperson reminded Members that the meeting on 11 November would be held fully virtually to accommodate a Remembrance Service being held in the Senate Chamber.

The Chairperson advised that an informal session on the adoption process has been scheduled to take place on Friday, 12 November to assist the Committee in its consideration of the Adoption and Children Bill.



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**12. Any Other Business**

Carál Ní Chuilín advised of a potential amendment to the Adoption and Children Bill relating to safeguarding against the deletion of adoption records.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Health whether it has given consideration to drafting such an amendment.

**13. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting**

The next meeting of the Committee for Health was scheduled to take place at 12.45 pm on Tuesday, 9 November 2021.

The meeting was adjourned at 1.02 pm.

**Colm Gildernew MLA**

**Chairperson, Committee for Health**