



Committee for Health

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday 07 October 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

Jonathan Buckley MLA

Alan Chambers MLA

Órlaithí Flynn MLA

Cara Hunter MLA

Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

Apologies: None.

In Attendance:

Keith McBride (Clerk)



Brendan Miskelly (Clerical Officer)

In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:

Roisin Donnelly (Assistant Clerk)

Deirdre Farry (Assistant Clerk)

The meeting commenced at 9.31am in open session.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

2. Chairperson's Business

- i. The Chair advised Members that he attended a meeting with domiciliary and other care workers to discuss pay and working conditions.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask for a definitive date for the payment of the COVID Recognition Payment to all domiciliary and other health care workers.

- ii. The Chair welcomed the publication of the report of the Truth Recovery Design Panel into the Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask if responsibility for implementation of the report's



recommendations rests with the Department of Health, and if so, how it intends to move forward.

- iii. The Chair raised the matter of the neurology inquiry, and reminded Members that a written update and oral briefing has been requested from the Independent Neurology Inquiry.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Department, RQIA and the General Medical Council to brief the Committee on the various reviews and investigations in relation to neurology.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Minister if he will make an oral statement to the Assembly on the matter.

- iv. The Chair advised Members that he attended a session on improving engagement at the NICON Conference.
- v. The Chair acknowledged the work of Cara Hunter, MLA, in raising awareness of pituitary disorders during Pituitary Awareness Month, and invited Ms Hunter to make some comments on this issue.

Gerry Carroll joined the meeting at 9.48 am.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meetings held on 30 September 2021.



4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Severe Fetal Impairment Abortion (Amendment) Bill - Briefing from Bill sponsor

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 9.49 am.

Christopher Stalford, MLA

Lynn Murray, Don't Screen Us Out [by video conference]

The witnesses briefed the Committee on the Bill.

A question and answer session followed.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for attending.

The session was reported by Hansard.

The Committee moved to agenda item 7.

7. Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Bill - Briefing from sponsor on principles

The following witness joined the meeting at 10.47am.

Clare Bailey MLA

Ms Bailey briefed the Committee on the Bill.



A question and answer session followed.

The Chairperson thanked the Ms Bailey for attending.

The session was reported by Hansard.

The meeting was suspended at 11.30 am.

The meeting resumed at 11.37 am, in closed session.

The Committee returned to agenda item 6.

6. Severe Fetal Impairment Abortion (Amendment) Bill – Bill Clerk on scoping of SFIA Bill

The following official joined the meeting at 11.37 am.

Stephanie Mallon, Bill Clerk

The Bill Clerk briefed the Committee on scope of the Bill.

The Chairperson thanked the official for attending.

The meeting moved to public session.

8. Organ and Tissue Donation (Deemed Consent) Bill - consideration of Bill timetable and extension

The Committee considered the draft timeline of the Bill.



Agreed: The Committee agreed the Motion to extend the Committee Stage of the Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed a number of organisations it wished to invite to give oral evidence on the Bill.

The session was reported by Hansard.

9. Autism (Amendment) Bill - consideration of Bill timetable and extension

Pam Cameron, MLA, declared an interest as the Sponsor of the Bill.

The Committee considered the draft timeline of the Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Motion to extend the Committee Stage of the Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed a number of organisations and individuals it wished to invite to give oral evidence on the Bill.

The session was reported by Hansard.

10.SL1 - The Nicotine Inhaling Products (Age of Sale and Proxy Purchasing) Regulations (NI) 2021

The following officials joined the meeting at 12.27 pm to brief Committee on five SL1s (agenda items 10 – 14).

Bryan Dooley, Head of Health Improvement Policy Branch, Department of Health



Karen Oldham, Tobacco Control Lead, Health Improvement Policy Branch,
Department of Health

The officials briefed the Committee on five SL1s relating to tobacco products.

A question and answer session followed.

Alan Chambers, MLA declared an interest as a shopkeeper that sells nicotine products

The Chairperson thanked the officials for attending.

The session was reported by Hansard.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask that it give consideration to the inclusion of electronic cigarettes and vaping in the smoke free vehicle legislation.

The Committee considered SL1 - The Nicotine Inhaling Products (Age of Sale and Proxy Purchasing) Regulations (NI) 2021 which increases the minimum age of sale of nicotine inhaling products to 18, and makes it an offence for an adult to purchase a nicotine inhaling product on behalf of a child.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the proposal for the Statutory Rule.

11. SL1 - The Smoke-Free (Premises, Vehicle Operators and Penalty Notices) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2021

The Committee considered SL1 - The Smoke-Free (Premises, Vehicle Operators and Penalty Notices) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2021 which requires private vehicles in Northern Ireland to be smoke-free when they are enclosed, when there is more than one person in the vehicle, and one of those present is under 18 years of age. The Rule also replaces the original forms set out in Schedules 1 and 2 of those regulations with new fixed penalty notice forms.



Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the proposal for the Statutory Rule.

12.SL1 - The Smoke-Free (Private Vehicles) Regulations (NI) 2021

The Committee considered SL1 - The Smoke-Free (Private Vehicles) Regulations (NI) 2021 which allow the use of fixed penalty notices for offences in relation to smoke-free private vehicles; and designate both the Police Service of Northern Ireland and district councils as enforcement authorities for all smoke free vehicles.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the proposal for the Statutory Rule.

13.SL1 - The Tobacco Retailer (Fixed Penalty) (Amount) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2021

The Committee considered SL1 - The Tobacco Retailer (Fixed Penalty) (Amount) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2021 which sets the amount of a fixed penalty for offences relating to the sale or proxy purchasing of products containing nicotine to £250.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the proposal for the Statutory Rule.

14.SL1 - The Tobacco Retailers (Fixed Penalty) (General) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2021

The Committee considered SL1 – The Tobacco Retailers (Fixed Penalty) (General) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2021 which includes the offence of under-age purchasing of tobacco products or proxy purchasing for those under-age of tobacco products under section 1 of the Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act (NI) 2016.



Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the proposal for the Statutory Rule.

15. Correspondence

- ii. The Committee noted the reply from the Minister of Health regarding coronavirus related statutory rules.
- iii. The Committee noted the reply from the Minister of Health regarding Justice (Sexual Offences and Trafficking Victims) Bill.
- iv. The Committee noted the report from Pivotal 'Transforming the 14- 19 education and skills system in Northern Ireland –youth voices and solutions'.
- v. The Committee considered correspondence from Amnesty International regarding Mother and Baby institutions, Magdalene Laundries and workhouses.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the correspondence.

- vi. The Committee considered the correspondence from the Department of Health regarding the delegated powers memorandum for the Adoption and Children (NI) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Examiner of Statutory Rules for comment.

- vii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Justice regarding Damages (Return on Investment) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Health for a copy of its response to the Bill.

- viii. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding the Dr Watt inquiry.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department, to ask how it intends to protect appointments for those affected by the patient recall, so that these patients are not further disadvantaged.



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- ix. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding Dr Watt inquiry.
- x. The Committee considered correspondence from ShieldUs regarding an update to the Good Law Project.
Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Department of Health for comment.
- xi. The Committee considered a further submission from Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission to the Severe Fetal Impairment Abortion (Amendment) Bill.
Agreed: The Committee agreed to include this submission in its consideration of the Bill.
- xii. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding haemoptysis following the Astra Zeneca Covid-19 vaccine.
Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Department of Health for comment.
- xiii. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding deaths of Valley Nursing Home residents.
Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Department of Health for comment.
- xiv. The Committee noted the reply from the Department of Health regarding the misuse of Pregabalin.
- xv. The Committee noted the third report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules, for the 2021-22 session.
- xvi. The Committee considered correspondence from Focus: The Identity Trust on gender identity services.
Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek an update on the provision of gender identity services.



xvii. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding use of powers under Section 44 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, in relation to its consideration of work of Michael Watt and the neurology patient recall.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Clerk to explore the options available to the Committee in this regard.

16. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted its Forward Work Programme.

17. Any Other Business

The Chair raised the matter of day care and respite services.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask for an update on what it is doing to restore full day care and respite services, and what alternative arrangements it has provided for in the interim.

Members raised the issue of improving access to GPs services.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request a briefing on the actions it is taking to improve access to GPs services.

Members discussed the current workload facing the Ambulance Service and Paramedics. There was also a discussion in relation to the winter surge.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk should schedule briefings from the Ambulance Service and the Trusts in relation to the winter surge.



18. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee for Health was scheduled to take place on Thursday, 14 October 2021 at 9.30 am.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.58 pm.

Colm Gildernew MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Health