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# Committee for Health

## Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday, 10 March 2022

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

**Present:**

Colm Gildernew MLA (Chairperson)

Paula Bradshaw MLA

Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

Órlaithí Flynn MLA

**Present by Video or Teleconference:**

Pam Cameron MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Gerry Carroll MLA

Alan Chambers MLA

Colin McGrath MLA

**Apologies:**

Deborah Erskine MLA

**In Attendance:**

Keith McBride (Clerk)



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Jonathan Lamont (Clerical Supervisor)

Ellen Wilson (Clerical Officer)

**In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:**

Roisin Donnelly (Assistant Clerk)

Deirdre Farry (Assistant Clerk)

The meeting commenced at 9.30 am in public session.

**1. Apologies**

As above.

**2. Joint meeting with the Disabled People's Parliament – Briefing from  
Department of Health**

The Chairperson advised that a joint session of the Committee had been arranged with Members of the Disabled People's Parliament to receive briefing from the Minister of Health and Department of Health officials.

The Chairperson advised that the session would be signed by a BSL signer and that a recording of the meeting signed by an ISL signer would be made available later.

The Committee was joined by the following Members of the Disabled People's Parliament:

Amanda Paul (in person);

David McDonald (in person);

Joanne Sansome (by video-conference);



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June Best (by video-conference); and  
Michaela Hollywood (by video-conference).

The Minister of Health, Robin Swann MLA and the following officials from the Department of Health joined the meeting by video-conference at 9.37 am:

Gearoid Cassidy, Director of Primary Care;  
Jerome Dawson, Head of Learning Disability Unit;  
Colin Dunlop, Head of Physical Sensory & Disability;  
Jim McComish, Deputy Principal, Physical Sensory & Disability Unit;  
Mark McGuicken, Director of Disability and Older People; and  
Andrew Webb, Head of Elderly and Community Care Unit.

The Minister of Health briefed the Committee on the provision of health and social care services for disabled people.

A question and answer session followed.

*The Minister of Health left the meeting at 10.21 am.*

The question and answer session continued.

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

The Chairperson thanked the Health Minister and departmental officials for their attendance.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives from the Disabled People's Parliament for their attendance.



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*The meeting was suspended at 11.12 am and resumed at 11.35 pm.*

### **3. Chairperson's Business**

- i. The Chairperson provided an update on the Committee's sponsored event to raise awareness of the work of a number of women living with a terminal cancer diagnosis which will take place in the Long Gallery on 16 March and asked Members to encourage their party colleagues to attend the event.
- ii. The Chairperson advised that he had attended a Royal College of Occupational Therapists report launch.
- iii. The Chairperson advised that the Autism Bill had completed its final stage in the Assembly.
- iv. The Chairperson advised that he had attended the British Dental Association manifesto launch.  
**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Health for its comments on access to NHS dental services, particularly in rural areas, and for an update on the continued use of fallow times between dental appointments.
- v. The Chairperson provided an update on his attendance at a Policy Forum event on mental health.

### **4. Draft Minutes**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of the meetings held on 24 February and 1 March 2022.



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## **5. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

## **6. Encompass Programme - Briefing from the Department of Health**

The following officials joined the meeting at 11.42 am:

Dan West, Chief Digital Information Officer, Department of Health; and

Dr Dermot Hughes, Senior Responsible Owner, Ulster University.

The officials provided an update on the progress of the Encompass Programme.

A question and answer session followed.

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

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

## **7. SL1 Regulation and Improvement Authority (Fees and Frequency of Inspections) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2022**

The Committee considered a proposal by the Department of Health to make a statutory rule to reduce the frequency of RQIA inspections of dental practices from once every year to a minimum of once in every 24-month period.

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



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**8. SL1 The Recovery of Health Services Charges (Amounts) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022**

The Committee considered a proposal by the Department of Health to make a statutory rule to apply an inflationary uplift to tariff levels of the scheme that provides for the collection of the costs incurred by hospitals and ambulance services in treating the casualties of road accidents.

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

**9. SL1 The Pharmaceutical Services (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022**

The Committee considered a proposal by the Department of Health to make a statutory rule to amend and omit references to the Health and Social Care Board within the Pharmaceutical Services Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1997.

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

**10. SL1 The Health and Personal Social Services (General Medical Services Contracts) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022**

The Committee considered a proposal by the Department of Health to make a statutory rule to amend the Health and Personal Social Services (General Medical Services Contracts) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2004 to broaden the list of healthcare professions permitted to prescribe in primary care as independent or supplementary prescribers.

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



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**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to seek further information from the Department of Health on: the impact of the additional responsibility of prescribing on staff workload; whether the salary paid to prescribers would be commensurate with the additional responsibility and the impact on multi-disciplinary teams.

*The meeting moved into closed session at 12.50 pm.*

### **11. Committee Legacy Report**

The Committee discussed the content it wished to see reflected in its Legacy Report and identified the items it wished to recommend the incoming Committee consider as part of its work programme.

*The meeting moved into public session at 1.00 pm.*

### **12. Correspondence**

- i. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding the Chief Medical Officer and Chief Nursing Officer posts within the Department of Health.
- ii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health providing an update on the development of proposals for a new regional model of service for separated and unaccompanied asylum seeking children.
- iii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health advising of the publication of an update on the implementation of the Elective Care Framework.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to seek further information on the Elective Care Framework.



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- iv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding the recruitment, appointment and role of the lay members of the Family Practitioner Services Independent Appeal Panel.
- v. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding the additional funding package for care homes and the increase in tariff paid.
- vi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding the publication of the Evidence Paper as part of the review into safeguarding and care at the former Dunmurry Manor Care Home.
- vii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health on the Hospital Parking Charges Bill.
- viii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health providing information requested on the Future Planning Model.
- ix. The Committee noted correspondence from the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust advising of a consultation on temporary changes to urgent and emergency care services at Lagan Valley Hospital.
- x. The Committee noted correspondence from the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust and the Western Health and Social Care Trust providing information requested by the Committee following the attendance of Trust officials at the Committee meeting on 10 February 2022.
- xi. The Committee considered correspondence the Committee for the Economy providing a copy of the Women's Policy Group Feminist Recovery Plan.

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





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- xii. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Committee for Finance to the Department of Health regarding the Coronavirus Act 2020 (Northern Ireland) 2022.
- xiii. The Committee noted the Examiner of Statutory Rules' Sixteenth, Seventeenth and Eighteenth Reports of the 2021-2022 session.
- xiv. The Committee noted a call for views on the NI Human Rights Commission Draft Strategic Plan for 2022-2025.
- xv. The Committee noted the NI Human Rights Commission E Newsletter for February 2022.
- xvi. The Committee considered the NIAO report on the Covid-19 pandemic supply and procurement of PPE to local healthcare providers.  
  
**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the report to the Department of Health for a response to the issues raised.
- xvii. The Committee noted the NI Fiscal Council report on stakeholder engagement and future work programme.
- xviii. The Committee noted the Strategic Investment Board Investing Activity Report for the Department of Health.
- xix. The Committee noted the Criminal Justice Inspection NI unannounced inspection report on Magilligan Prison.
- xx. The Committee noted a request from the Society of Occupational Medicine to brief the Committee on occupational health issues.
- xxi. The Committee noted correspondence from the British Dietetic Association on the role of dietitians in health care reform.



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- xxii. The Committee noted a request from the Chest, Heart and Stroke Association to hold a session on Long Covid services.
- xxiii. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding the Adoption and Children Bill.
- xxiv. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding community mental health services at the Northern Health and Social Care Trust.
- xxv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health advising that the report on the review of the social work workforce was being considered by the DOH Programme Board and would be shared with the Committee when approved for publication.
- xxvi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding the special recognition payment for carers who are employed through direct payments.
- xxvii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health advising of his intention to table an amendment at Further Consideration Stage of the Hospital Parking Charges Bill to extend the length of time available to the Department and the HSCTs to implement the Bill.
- xxviii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health advising of the transitional arrangements for health and social care planning in 2022/23.
- xxix. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding the commencement of provisions of the Health and Social Care Act 2022.
- xxx. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health advising of his Department's intention to make amendments to the HSC Trust Establishment Orders to facilitate the exercise of social care and children functions to be commenced at the same point as the HSCB closes.



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xxxi. The Committee considered correspondence from the Royal College of Nursing regarding the current pressures being experienced by emergency departments across Northern Ireland and highlighting safety concerns.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request urgent briefing from the Department of Health and the Health and Social Care Trusts on the issues raised in the RCN's correspondence.

xxxii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Kingsbridge Healthcare Group regarding the COVID recognition payment for health care staff employed by independent providers.

xxxiii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Chairperson of the Independent Living Fund Stakeholder Group regarding efforts to have the Fund opened to new applications.

xxxiv. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding the closure of the Valley Nursing Home in Clogher.

xxxv. The Committee noted a call for evidence relating to the Independent Review of Invest NI.

xxxvi. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Committee for Justice to the Minister of Health regarding challenges on obtaining timely information from GPs and the HSCTs to support applications to the Troubles Permanent Disablement Payment Scheme.

### 13. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted its Forward Work Programme.

Paula Bradshaw recorded her disappointment that the Committee did not receive briefing from the Department of Health on the provision of abortion services.



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**14. Any Other Business**

- i. Carál Ní Chuilín raised concerns regarding the delay in the publication of the report of the Independent Neurology Inquiry and a number of reports for which the RQIA has responsibility.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to seek clarity regarding the publication of these reports.

- ii. Alan Chambers outlined to the Committee his reasons for seeking accelerated passage for his Private Members Bill, the Preservation of Documents (Historical Institutions) Bill.

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

The next meeting of the Committee for Health was scheduled to take place at 12.30 pm on Tuesday, 15 March 2022.

The meeting was adjourned at 1.17 pm.

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