



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Health

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday, 24 March 2022

Meeting Location: Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Colm Gildernew MLA (Chairperson)

Paula Bradshaw MLA

Gerry Carroll MLA

Alan Chambers MLA

Deborah Erskine MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Pam Cameron MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Órlaithí Flynn MLA

Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

Apologies:

Colin McGrath MLA

In Attendance:

Keith McBride (Clerk)



Northern Ireland
Assembly

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

The meeting commenced at 9.16 am in public session.

**1. Briefing from the Minister of Health and the Department of Health
Permanent Secretary**

The Minister of Health, Robin Swann MLA and the Department of Health Permanent Secretary, Richard Pengelly joined the meeting by video-conference at 9.17 am.

The Minister of Health provided an update on the work streams and priorities within the Department of Health.

A question and answer session followed.

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

Gerry Carroll joined the meeting at 9.49 am.

The Chairperson thanked the Health Minister and Permanent Secretary for their attendance.

Gerry Carroll and Alan Chambers left the meeting at 10.41 am.

The meeting was suspended at 10.41 am and resumed at 10.55 am.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

2. Apologies

As above.

3. Chairperson's Business

There was no Chairperson's business.

4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meetings held on 8, 10, 15 and 22 March 2022.

5. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

6. Briefing from the Royal College of Nursing Northern Ireland

The following representatives from the Royal College of Nursing NI joined the meeting by video-conference at 10.57 am:

Rita Devlin, Director;

Fiona Devlin, Board Member; and

Andrew Doherty, Board Member.

The representatives provided an update on the issues impacting the provision of nursing services.



Northern Ireland Assembly

A question and answer session followed.

The Deputy Chairperson declared an interest as having a relative who is employed as a nurse.

Carál Ní Chuilín declared an interest as having relatives who work in community healthcare.

Alan Chambers re-joined the meeting at 11.28 am.

Alan Chambers left the meeting at 11.48 am.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Health to highlight the requirement for a whole systems review of workforce; to put on record the need to give priority to the progression of safe staffing legislation; and to request an urgent review of the impact of higher cost of living pressures on staff, particularly in relation to increased fuel costs.

Paula Bradshaw left the meeting at 11.50 am.

7. Briefing from the Health and Social Care Trusts

The following officials from the Health and Social Care Trusts joined the meeting by video-conference at 11.52 am:

Jennifer Welsh, Chief Executive, Northern HSC Trust;

Roisin Coulter, Chief Executive, South Eastern HSC Trust;

Brenda Creaney, Executive Director of Nursing, Belfast HSC Trust;

Geraldine McKay, Director of Acute Services, Western Trust; and

Heather Troughton, Executive Director of Nursing, Midwifery and AHPs, Southern HSC Trust.



Northern Ireland Assembly

The officials provided an update on the pressures in the provision of emergency care and staffing levels.

A question and answer session followed.

Pam Cameron left the meeting at 12.08 pm.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

The meeting was suspended at 12.40 pm and resumed at 12.55 pm.

Present:

Colm Gildernew MLA (Chairperson)

Paula Bradshaw MLA

Deborah Erskine MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Pam Cameron MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Órlaithí Flynn MLA

Carál Ní Chuilín MLA

8. SR 2022/109 The Health and Social Care (Family Practitioner Services Independent Appeal Panel) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022

The Committee considered SR 2022/109 The Health and Social Care (Family Practitioner Services Independent Appeal Panel) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 which provides for an independent appeal panel to be established for Family Practitioner Services.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2022/109 The Health and Social Care (Family Practitioner Services Independent Appeal Panel) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 and had no objection to the Rule.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

9. SR 2022/122 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel, Operator Liability and Information to Passengers) (Revocation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022

The Committee considered SR 2022/122 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel, Operator Liability and Information to Passengers) (Revocation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 which revokes the regulations governing international travel made in response to mitigating and managing the spread of coronavirus.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2022/122 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel, Operator Liability and Information to Passengers) (Revocation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 and had no objection to the Rule.

10. Committee Legacy Report

The Committee considered its Legacy Report for 2017 - 2022.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for its Legacy Report to be published.

11. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding the recording of deaths attributed to eating disorders and work being undertaken by the Department of Health to address the under-reporting of such deaths on a UK-wide basis.
- ii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding GP out of hours services.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

- iii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding the availability of the Novavax vaccine in the UK.

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

- iv. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Minister of Health to Paula Bradshaw MLA regarding the Adoption and Children Bill.

- v. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding the launch of a consultation on the regulation of pharmacy technicians.

- vi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding the launch of the review of urgent and emergency care.

- vii. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Committee for the Executive Office to the Department of Health requesting information on work being undertaken by the Department in relation to EU proposal for the approval of new medicines.

- viii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Executive Office providing a summary report of its stakeholder event in relation to the Violence Against Women and Girls Strategy.

- ix. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding the impact of cost of living and energy prices on the elderly.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Department of Health to ask that officials respond directly to the individual on this matter.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

- x. The Committee noted correspondence from the Identity Trust providing information regarding the NHS Gender Dysphoria National Referral Support Service and the Regional Gender Identity Clinic.
- xi. The Committee notes the Examiner of Statutory Rules 19th, 20th 21st and 22nd Reports of Session 2021-2022.
- xii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Justice regarding access to information for people with sensory impairments.
- xiii. The Committee noted SR 2022/102 The Health and Social Care (2022 Act) (Commencement) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022.
- xiv. The Committee noted SR 2022/103 The Health and Social Care Trusts (Establishment) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2022.
- xv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Health advising of the launch of a consultation on a proposed statutory instrument for Hub and Spoke Dispensing.
- xvi. The Committee considered a copy of correspondence from an individual to the Minister of Health regarding engagement with clinically extremely vulnerable patients and families.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Department of Health to ask that officials respond directly to the individual on this matter.
- xvii. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding long COVID.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Department of Health to ask that officials respond directly to the individual on this matter.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

- xviii. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the House of Lords European Affairs Sub-Committee on the Protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland to the UK Minister of State for Health on issues relating to the supply of medicines in Northern Ireland.
- xix. The Committee considered a copy of correspondence from an individual to the Northern HSC Trust regarding the assessment and treatment of a former patient.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Department of Health to ask that officials respond directly to the individual on this matter.
- xx. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding proposals for the development of a step-down facility.
- xxi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health advising of the publication of the NI Cancer Strategy.
- xxii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health on the launch of a UK-wide consultation on proposals to amend the Branded Health Service Medicine (Costs) Regulations 2018.
- xxiii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding the impact of the removal of the requirement to wear face covering in public places.
- xxiv. The Committee noted the UK-wide statutory instrument, The Human Medicines (Coronavirus and Influenza) (Amendment) Regulations 2022 which came into effect on 18 March 2022.
- xxv. The Committee noted the UK-wide statutory instrument, The Human Medicines (Amendments Relating to the Early Access to Medicines Scheme) Regulations 2022 which came into effect on 18 March 2022.



Northern Ireland Assembly

- xxvi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Health providing the consultation papers relating to the regulation of pharmacy technicians.
- xxvii. The Committee considered a proposal by the Department of Health to make a statutory rule to allow Ukrainian visitors who are lawfully in the United Kingdom and unable to return home to access publically funded healthcare in Northern Ireland without charge.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the proposal for the statutory rule.

- xxviii. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding the SWAH Neonatal and Maternity services.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Department of Health to ask that officials respond directly to the individual on this matter.

- xxix. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding isolation rules for people with learning disabilities attending day care centres.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Department of Health to ask that officials respond directly to the individual on this matter.

12. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted its Forward Work Programme.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

13. Any Other Business

- i. Carál Ní Chuilín proposed that the Committee write to the Department of Health to advise: *“That this Committee regrets the resignation of the First Minister and the resulting inability of the Executive to agree a multi-year budget to allow long term planning, tackle waiting lists, fund cancer and mental health services and transform health and social care.”*

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Health as proposed.

- ii. Carál Ní Chuilín recorded thanks from individuals and families affected by the Neurology Inquiries for the support they have received from the Committee.
- iii. The Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and Committee Members recorded their thanks to the current and previous Health Committee Clerks, the Committee support team, wider Assembly Secretariat and party support staff for their work and support since January 2020.
- iv. The Chairperson, Deputy Chairperson and Committee Members also acknowledged the positive and cooperative approach adopted by Members during the Committee’s tenure.

14. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The Committee noted that this was the last meeting of the current Assembly mandate.

The Committee agreed that the minutes of the final meeting would be approved by the Chairperson on behalf of the Committee and published on the Committee webpage.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

The meeting was adjourned at 1.25 pm.

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