



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Committee for Health

## Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday, 29 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 9.31 am in open session.

### 1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

### 2. Chairperson's Business

- i. The Chairperson referred to reports of concerning waiting list figures in relation to accessing Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS) and assessments.

**Agreed:** The Committee agree to ask Department of Health for an update on waiting lists for CAMHS.

- ii. The Chairperson provided an update on a meeting he held with the Community Development and Health Network to discuss health inequalities.

### 3. Draft Minutes

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 22 April 2021.

### 4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.



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## 5. Departmental briefing: Budget 2021-2022

The following officials from the Department of Health joined the meeting by video-conference at 9.38 am:

Brigitte Worth, Director of Finance;

David Keenan, Head of Financial Planning;

Ciara Dolan, Director of Transformation; and

Preeta Miller, Director of Infrastructure Investment.

The officials briefed the Committee on the Department of Health budget for 2021-2022.

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 session was reported by Hansard.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that the Clerk would draft a response to the Committee for Finance for inclusion in its report on the Budget.

*The meeting was suspended at 11.00 am and resumed at 11.10 am.*

*Jonathan Buckley joined the meeting at 11.10 am.*

## 6. Health and Social Care Bill: Briefing from Health and Social Care Board

Leslie Drew, Chairperson, and Sharon Gallagher, Chief Executive, Health and Social Care Board joined the meeting by video conference at 11.10 am.



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The HSCB officials briefed the Committee on the Health and Social Care Bill.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for attending.

The session was reported by Hansard.

*The Committee agreed to move to agenda item 9.*

**9. SR 2021/101 The Mental Health (1986 Order) (Amendment No.2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2021**

The Committee considered SR 2021/101 The Mental Health (1986 Order) (Amendment No. 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2021 which varies the length of the period of time that has to elapse for a second opinion to be required for the continued administration of medicine to detained patients from six to three months.

**Agreed:** The Committee considered SR 2021/101 The Mental Health (1986 Order) (Amendment No.2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2021 and had no objection to the Rule.

*The Committee returned to agenda item 7.*

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

Liz Redmond, Director of Population Health and Marian McKeever, Health Protection Branch, Department of Health, joined the meeting by telephone-conference at 12.02 pm and answered Members' questions on the two coronavirus restriction regulations listed on the Agenda.



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The Committee considered SR 2021/93 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 which consolidates coronavirus restrictions legislation.

The Committee notes the Examiner of Statutory Rules report on this rule which drew attention to clarifications to the drafting that the Department has confirmed will be made at the earliest opportunity.

**Agreed:** The Committee considered SR 2021/93 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 and recommend that it be approved by the Assembly.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Health and the Executive Office to ask for clarity on the easement of regulations that allow the reopening of outdoor hospitality premises from 30 April.

### **8. 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 considered SR 2021/97 The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 (Amendment) Regulations 2021 and recommend that it be approved by the Assembly.

*The meeting was suspended at 12.34 pm and resumed at 12.45 pm.*



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## 10. Committee Inquiry on the impact of COVID-19 on Care Homes – Department of Health Response

The Committee considered a response from the Minister of Health to its Inquiry Report on the Impact of COVID-19 on care homes.

The Committee noted that the Department has accepted, partially accepted, or accepted in principle, 52 of the Committee's recommendations, and that two of Committee's recommendations relating to testing and discharge had not been accepted by the Department.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing from the Department of Health on its response to the Committee's inquiry report recommendations.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to monitor the implementation of the recommendations accepted by the Department of Health.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to publish the Minister's response on its webpage.

## 11. Correspondence

- i. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding the outcome of the consultation on the establishment of a Regional Care and Justice Campus for children and young people. The Committee also considered a request from Committee for Justice to hold a joint briefing from officials on this work.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that the Clerk would liaise with the Justice Committee to identify possible dates for a joint briefing.

- ii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health regarding funding for community and voluntary sector organisations.



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- Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the Minister's correspondence to Sólás and Kids Together who had raised this issue with the Committee.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request further information from the Department of Health on funding for autism services provided by the community and voluntary sector.
- iii. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Minister of Health to the Committee for Communities regarding the safe opening of sport and physical recreation for young people.
- iv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health providing detail requested by the Committee on the NI Contact Tracing Service workforce.
- v. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health on the Damages (Return on Investment) Bill.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed to advise the Committee for Justice that it is content with the Department of Health's response.
- vi. The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister of Health responding to the Committee's request for further information relating to the hyponatraemia-related deaths work programme.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed to note the correspondence pending a scheduled briefing session with the Permanent Secretary on 27 May.
- vii. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding the Neurology Recall.
- viii. The Committee considered a request from 123GP to brief the Committee on access to counselling.



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**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to schedule an informal meeting with 123GP during Mental Health Week.

- ix. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Committee for Communities to the Department of Health regarding permissible numbers for sports training.
- x. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Committee for the Economy to the Minister for the Economy regarding core funding for Include Youth's essential skills programme.
- xi. The Committee considered a copy of correspondence from parents of children who attend Harberton Special School to the Belfast Trust regarding access to speech and language and occupational therapy services.

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

- xii. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Education Committee to the Department of Health seeking an update on the Autism Strategy action plans.
- xiii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Children's Law Centre providing its views on the Department of Health's proposal to extend some of the provisions of the Children's Social Care (Coronavirus) (Temporary Modification of Children's Social Care) Regulations for a further period of time.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward CLC's correspondence to the Department of Health for a response to the issues raised and to remind the Department of Health that it wishes to receive a SL1 relating to the proposed changes to assist its early scrutiny of this proposal.





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- xiv. The Committee considered correspondence from the Policing Board regarding the policing of events and gatherings during the pandemic.  
**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to ROSA who had raised this matter with the Committee.
- xv. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from Department of Justice to ROSA regarding the policing of events and gatherings during the pandemic.
- xvi. The Committee noted correspondence from Royal College of Nursing NI regarding a temporary change to leadership arrangements.
- xvii. The Committee considered an invitation from the Public Health Agency to take part in a virtual choir as part of a series of events to mark Mental Health Week.  
**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that Members would respond to the invitation directly.
- xviii. The Committee noted that written submissions on the Health and Social Care Bill had been received from: British Association of Social Workers NI, British Dental Association NI, Chartered Society of Physiotherapy NI, Community Pharmacy NI, NI Local Government Association, Royal College of General Practitioners NI and Royal College of Nursing NI.
- xix. The Committee noted that twenty written submissions from individuals had been received on the Severe Fetal Impairment Abortion (Amendment) Bill.
- xx. The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister of Health providing information on engagement relating to the production of guidance on the new continuing healthcare policy.
- xxi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Education relating to the Public Accounts Report on Special Educational Needs.
- xxii. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding a public interest disclosure involving the Western Trust.



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- xxiii. The Committee noted the Examiner of Statutory Rules' Thirty-fifth Report of Session 2020-2021.

## 12. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted its draft Forward Work Programme.

## 13. Any Other Business

- i. The temporary suspension of reproductive healthcare services in the Western Health and Social Care Trust was raised.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request further information on the temporary suspension from the Western Trust and the Department of Health.

- ii. The impact of the pandemic and barriers to accessing public health information for blind and partially sighted people, deaf people and those with hearing loss was discussed.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to ask for written briefing from the Royal National Institute of Blind People on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the community of blind and partially sighted people.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Health for detail on the provision of important public health information, including vaccine information, to blind and partially sighted people, deaf people and those with hearing loss. The Committee also agreed to seek clarity on the policy in relation to access to vaccine centres for those with guide dogs.



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

The next meeting of the Committee for Health was scheduled to take place on 6 May 2021 at 9.30 am.

The meeting was adjourned at 1.14 pm.

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