



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Health

Minutes of Proceedings

30 May 2024

Meeting Location: Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Liz Kimmins MLA (Chairperson)

Danny Donnelly MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Alan Chambers MLA

Órlaithí Flynn MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Diane Dodds MLA

Nuala McAllister MLA

Colin McGrath MLA

Alan Robinson MLA

Apologies:

Linda Dillon MLA

In Attendance:

Keith McBride, Clerk

Roisin Donnelly, Assistant Clerk

Angela McParland, Assistant Clerk

Jonathan Lamont, Clerical Supervisor

Noel Gallagher, Clerical Officer

Antoinette Bowen, Clerical Officer

The meeting commenced at 2.03pm in public session.

1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Linda Dillon MLA.

2. Chairperson's Business

There was no Chairperson's Business.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 23 May 2024.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Infected Blood Scheme – Briefing from Haemophilia Northern Ireland

The following representative joined the meeting at 2.05pm:

Nigel Hamilton, Haemophilia NI.

The representative briefed the Committee on the Infected Blood Scheme.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the representative for his attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the Haemophilia UK briefing paper to the Department for the Department to provide a written brief to the Committee addressing all of the points raised in the paper.

The Committee agreed to write to the Department to receive clarification of the Department's understanding on whether all of the £10 billion compensation fund will go to victims, families of victims and estates recipients, or whether administration fees will also come out of the fund.

6. Strategy for Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland – Briefing from the Department of Health

The following officials from the Department of Health (DoH) joined the meeting at 3.13pm:

Eilís McDaniel - Director of Family and Children's Policy, DoH;

Astrid Hamilton - Joint Head of the Adoption and Children Act Implementation Team, DoH; and

Lynsey Armstrong - Head of Child Protection, Domestic and Sexual Abuse Unit, DoH.

The officials briefed the Committee on the Strategy for Stopping Domestic and Sexual Violence and Abuse in Northern Ireland.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Colin McGrath left the meeting at 3.34pm

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

Agreed: The Committee noted that it had not yet received the Strategy from the Department and agreed to write to the Department for the Committee to receive the Strategy and to also receive the following: an update on the Operation Encompass Review once completed; the feedback on the initiative providing security equipment to victims of domestic abuse who live in the Derry City & Strabane District; and confirmation of who is involved in the MARAC review.

7. Brexit Related Issues – Briefing from the Department of Health

The following officials from the Department of Health joined the meeting at 4.11pm:

Professor Cathy Harrison - Chief Pharmaceutical Officer, DoH;

Canice Ward, Senior Principal Pharmaceutical Officer, DoH;

David Wilson - Senior Principal Officer, DoH; and

Sean Curley - Principal Pharmaceutical Officer, DoH.

The officials briefed the Committee on Brexit related issues.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Nuala McAllister left the meeting at 4.36pm

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

8. Draft SR 2024/0000 The Human Medicines (Amendment Relating to Original Pack Dispensing) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024

The Committee considered SR 2024/0000 The Human Medicines (Amendment Relating to Original Pack Dispensing) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024 which introduces original pack dispensing to allow pharmacists flexibility in dispensing

medicine quantity and supports increased patient safety by improving access to safety information. The Rule also creates a requirement for pharmacists dispensing medicines containing all forms of valproate to dispense in the original manufacturer's packaging, with exceptions.

Agreed: The Committee recommends that the Draft SR 2024/0000 The Human Medicines (Amendment Relating to Original Pack Dispensing) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024 be affirmed by the Assembly.

9. SL1 The Firefighters' Pension Schemes and Compensation Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024 – Survivors' Benefit and Correction of the Public Service Pensions Revaluation Orders (Northern Ireland) for 2021 and 2022

The Committee considered a proposal by the Department of Health to make a statutory rule that amends certain Pension Scheme Orders to make amendments to the provisions for Survivors' Benefits. This follows the Supreme Court ruling that public sector pension schemes should no longer impose requirement for members to have completed a nomination form in respect of their co-habiting partner in order for survivors' pension to be paid.

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

10. Correspondence

- i. The Committee considered a Ministerial response to the Committee on financial pressures on the Northern Ireland Children's Hospice (NICH) and the wider hospice sector.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister to gain an understanding of plans by the Department to give consideration to Departmental funding for the NICH.

- ii. The Committee considered a Ministerial response to the Committee on issues raised by Mesh Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the response to Mesh Ireland for its consideration.

- iii. The Committee considered a Ministerial response to the Committee on Safe Families call for its volunteers to be able to provide a hosting service for both day and overnight provision across all Trust areas.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the response to Safe Families for its consideration.

- iv. The Committee considered a Ministerial response to the Committee on current work of the Department to identify opportunities for integrated services that can address waiting lists for therapies and provide a whole service approach in Special Education Needs (SEN).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the response and to revisit during its strategic priority work in relation to SEN.

- v. The Committee noted a Ministerial response to the Committee on confirmation to local universities of pre-registration nursing and midwifery training numbers for entry over 2024/25.

- vi. The Committee noted a response from the Public Health Agency (PHA) on its work to promote and raise awareness of cervical screening and other screening programmes for the year ahead.

- vii. The Committee considered a report by the British Association of Social Workers Northern Ireland (BASW NI) and the Social Workers Union (SWU) calling for an uplift in the Social Work Student Incentive Scheme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to receive clarity on what mitigation steps the Department is taking to prevent social work students leaving this jurisdiction to study elsewhere, whether because of financial hardship or there not being enough student places available in Northern Ireland.

- viii. The Committee noted correspondence from the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children Northern Ireland (NSPCC NI) providing a paper in relation to the Domestic and Sexual Abuse Strategy.
- ix. The Committee agreed to note a Ministerial response to the Committee on the latest Budget 2024/2025 assessment by the Department, ahead of the Committee's next meeting at which officials will brief on the June Monitoring Round and the new Minister of Health may provide a first brief.

11. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered a draft Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed its Forward Work Programme.

12. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

13. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee for Health is scheduled to take place at 2.00pm on 6 June 2024.

The meeting was adjourned at 5.00pm.

Liz Kimmins MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Health

6 June 2024