



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Committee for Health

### Minutes of Proceedings

**09 May 2024**

**Meeting Location:** Room 29, Parliament Buildings

**Present:**

Liz Kimmins MLA (Chairperson)

Danny Donnelly MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Alan Chambers MLA

Órlaithí Flynn MLA

Nuala McAllister MLA

Colin McGrath MLA

Alan Robinson MLA

**Present by Video or Teleconference:**

Linda Dillon MLA

Diane Dodds MLA

**Apologies:** None

**In Attendance:**

Keith McBride, Clerk

Roisin Donnelly, Assistant Clerk

Angela McParland, Assistant Clerk

Jonathan Lamont, Clerical Supervisor

Noel Gallagher, Clerical Officer

The meeting commenced at 2.02pm in public session.

**1. Apologies**

There were no apologies.

**2. Chairperson's Business**

The Chairperson reminded Members that Dementia Action Week will run from 13 to 19 May 2024 and the Alzheimer's Society will hold an event in Parliament Buildings on Monday 13 May. This will include an opportunity for Members to experience the dementia virtual simulation bus.

The Chairperson informed Members that Mental Health Awareness week will also run from 13 May to 19 May.

The Chairperson advised the Committee of reports that the Department has not increased university places for nursing, allied health professions and social work students. The Chairperson further advised Members of having been made aware of a delay, by the Department, in advising universities of allocations for student nurse places.

*Linda Dillon and Diane Dodds joined the meeting at 2.03pm*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ascertain why there was a delay in advising universities around allocation of student nurse places and to receive an assurance that the Department is taking

steps to ensure there will not be a delay on notification of allocations to universities in the future.

### **3. Draft Minutes**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 2 May 2024.

### **4. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

### **5. Budget Allocations for Mental Health Services and Mental Health Strategy – Briefing from the Mental Health Champion Northern Ireland**

The following representatives from the Office of the Mental Health Champion joined the meeting at 2.04pm:

Professor Siobhan O'Neill – Mental Health Champion; and

Peter Cash – Head of the Office of the Mental Health Champion and Senior Policy and Research Officer.

*Órlaithí Flynn joined the meeting at 2.05pm*

*Nuala McAllister joined the meeting at 2.06pm*

The Mental Health Champion briefed the Committee on concerns about the proposed budget allocations for mental health services and the implementation of the Mental Health Strategy.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that the Chairperson write to the Minister for the Committee to request the following information:

- detail of plans by the Department to increase funding to support the implementation of the Mental Health Strategy, and if there is to be an increase, by how much;
- the spending plans by the Department for the community and voluntary sector that will support the Mental Health Strategy;
- detail of current initiatives of the Department to identify and roll-out good practice on mental health provision across Trusts, and current initiatives to identify and remove any disparity in services between Trusts; and
- detail of work being carried out by the Department to ensure implementation of recommendations highlighted in the Coroner's Report on the Cawdry Inquest.

## **6. Secondary Care Doctors - Briefing from the British Medical Association (BMA) Northern Ireland**

The following officials from the British Medical Association (BMA) Northern Ireland joined the meeting at 3.32pm:

Dr David Farren, Consultants Committee Chairperson, BMA NI;

Dr Leanne Davison, SAS Committee Chairperson, BMA NI; and

Dr Fiona Griffin, Junior Doctors Committee Chairperson, BMA NI.

The representatives briefed the Committee on secondary care doctors.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

*Alan Chambers joined the meeting at 2.58pm*

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that the Chairperson write to the Minister for the Committee to receive:

- an urgent update on the Department's negotiations with BMA representatives on junior doctors pay;

- an assurance that the Minister will meet in person with BMA representatives as a matter of urgency;
- detail on the Department's understanding of any expected increase in Barnett Consequentials due to the pay settlement in UK and an update on its discussions with the UK Government on the matter, including detail of any bids by the Department in relation to secondary care pay;
- detail of how the Department tracks vacancy rates of Senior Registrars i.e. figures of Senior Registrars trained in this jurisdiction and leaving to take up positions outside of the jurisdiction;
- information, for each of the last five years, on the number of locally newly trained medical professionals who take up positions in Northern Ireland and the number that take up positions outside of Northern Ireland; and
- an update on the removal of the Clinical Excellence Award and the Minister's intentions in relation to this matter going forward.

## **7. Westminster Victims and Prisoner Bill – Infected Blood Compensation Scheme – Departmental Briefing**

The following officials from the Department of Health joined the meeting at 4.28pm:

Lesley Heaney – Head of Infected Blood Inquiry Team, Department of Health; and

Liz Redmond - Director of Population Health, Department of Health

The officials briefed the Committee on the Infected Blood Compensation Scheme clause within the Westminster Victims and Prisoner Bill and an expected Legislative Consent Memorandum.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

The Chairperson advised Members that the Committee will consider the Legislated Consent Memorandum once it has been laid in the Assembly.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

## 8. Correspondence

- i. The Committee considered a response from the Minister of Health regarding ambulance handover times.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to receive an urgent update on plans for funding the training required for Community First Responders that will support overall Northern Ireland Ambulance Service response times. Including, whether there is scope to allow the delivery of training to come from the Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service or others.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the response to Chris Hazzard MP.

- ii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Speaker regarding the laying of a Public Petition titled 'Adult ADHD Services'.
- iii. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from Advice NI to the Minister regarding help for health service charges.
- iv. The Committee noted a report by Pivotal on economic inactivity in Northern Ireland.
- v. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the House of Lords European Affairs Sub-Committee on the Windsor Framework to Andrea Leadsom MP regarding a Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) amending the Annex to Regulation (EU) No 609/2013 of the European Parliament and of the Council to allow the use of iron milk caseinate as a source of iron in total diet replacement for weight control and in food for special medical purposes, excluding food for infants and young children.

- vi. The Committee noted the correspondence from the House of Lords European Affairs Sub-Committee on the Windsor Framework to Andrea Leadsom MP regarding a Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) amending Delegated Regulation (EU) 2016/127 as regards the protein-related requirements for infant and follow-on formula manufactured from protein hydrolysate.
- vii. The Committee considered correspondence from ADDNI requesting to brief the Committee.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to add a meeting with ADDNI to the Forward Work Programme.

- viii. The Committee considered a copy of correspondence from Mid Ulster District Council to the Minister of Education regarding challenges faced by families regarding provision in childcare settings for children with disabilities and additional support needs.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson would consider this request as part of the Committee's strategic priorities.

- ix. The Committee noted correspondence from the Nursing and Midwifery Council regarding advanced practice and fitness to practice.
- x. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding the COVID-19 Public Inquiry.

## **9. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee considered a draft Forward Work Programme.

The Chairperson advised Members that an informal meeting with the Department is scheduled for Tuesday 14 May 2024, to inform Members on the Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG).

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed its Forward Work Programme.

#### **10. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

#### **11. 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 16 May 2024.

The meeting was adjourned at 5.03pm.

**Liz Kimmins MLA**

**Chairperson, Committee for Health**

**16 May 2024**