



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Health

Minutes of Proceedings

21 November 2024

Meeting Location: Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Liz Kimmins MLA (Chairperson)

Danny Donnelly MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Alan Chambers MLA

Linda Dillon MLA

Diane Dodds MLA

Órlaithí Flynn MLA

Nuala McAllister MLA

Alan Robinson MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Colin McGrath MLA

In Attendance:

Keith McBride, Clerk

Roisin Donnelly, Assistant Clerk

Angela McParland, Assistant Clerk

Jonathan Lamont, Clerical Supervisor

Stephen McGlennon, Clerical Officer

The meeting commenced at 2.02pm in public session.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

Órlaithí Flynn joined the meeting at 2.03pm

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson acknowledged Carers Rights Day being held this day, with the theme this year being 'recognising your rights'.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that she had attended the Community Foundation Northern Ireland event on 20 November 2024 which celebrated the impact of £30m in Health Funds. One of these funds being the Carers Fund which the Chairperson noted as an important funding stream which has now come to an end and which it is hoped can be reinstated.

The Chairperson referred to an informal meeting held earlier this day by the Committee, by video conference, with Unite the Union in relation to registered child minders.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department for further information on when the Consultation on childminder-to-child ratios will begin and receive detail of the options to be considered in the Consultation.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Health and Social Care Trusts regarding reports of Trusts accessing the medical records of individual childminders. The Trusts to provide the Committee with an understanding of the circumstances in which it would be appropriate for Trusts to access the medical records of childminders and information on each Trust's policy relating to accessing the medical records of childminders. The Trusts to provide:

- the rationale/purpose for accessing the medical records of childminders;
- how the medical information is used and by whom;
- whether there are limitations (such as scope, time limits) applied to the medical records that are accessed;
- how the medical records of childminders are protected;
- the threshold that is required to be reached to justify access to the medical records of childminders; and
- what mechanisms are in place to secure consent from childminders to allow Trusts to access their medical information.

Alan Chambers joined the meeting at 2.05pm

3. Draft Minutes

The Committee considered the draft Minutes of the meeting on 14 November 2024.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to amend the draft Minutes regarding that Diane Dodds MLA wished to record her concerns that the Committee responsible for safeguarding children would not write to the Rainbow Project on a safeguarding issue concerning GenderGP.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5. General Update and Winter Preparedness - Oral Briefing from the Health and Social Care Trusts and Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Trust

The following officials joined the meeting at 2:06pm:

- Michael Bloomfield, Chief Executive, Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Trust;
- Roisin Coulter, Chief Executive, South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust;
- Neil Guckian, Chief Executive, Western Health and Social Care Trust;
- Maureen Edwards, interim Chief Executive, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust;
- Owen Harkin, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Finance, Northern Health and Social care Trust; and
- Colin McCafferty, Executive Director of Social Work, and Director of Children and Young People's Services, Southern Health and Social Care Trust.

The officials briefed the Committee on general issues and winter preparedness in relation to health and social care and ambulance services.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Colin McGrath left the meeting at 2.25pm

Colin McGrath returned to the meeting at 3.00pm

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to follow up with the Trusts for further information regarding: efficient use of theatre time for the School of Dentistry; outcomes around cancer diagnosis in red flag referrals and why there has been a rise in referrals; and detail of how each Trust plans to spend their share of the additional £13m for respite care.

6. October Monitoring – Oral Briefing from the Department of Health

The following officials joined the meeting at 4.15pm:

- Brigitte Worth, Director of Finance, Department of Health (DoH);
- Danielle Mallen, Head of Financial Management, DoH;
- Preeti Millar, Investment Director, DoH; and
- Linda Carter, Head of Capital Resources Unit, DoH.

The officials briefed the Committee on October Monitoring.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department in regards to the Department seeking £60m for depreciation due to capital investment decisions and ascertain what proportion of this relates to the Royal Maternity Hospital.

7. SL1 Human Medicines (Amendment) (Modular Manufacture and Point of Care) Regulations 2024

The following officials from the Department of Health joined the meeting at 4.34pm:

- Chris Garland, Senior Principal Pharmaceutical Officer, DoH; and
- Eddie Murphy, Deputy Principal, Pharmacy Directorate, DoH.

The officials briefed the Committee on SL1 Human Medicines (Amendment) (Modular Manufacture and Point of Care) Regulations 2024.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the merits of the policy and that the Department makes the Statutory Rule.

8. SL1 Period Products (Department of Health Specified Public Services Bodies) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024

The following officials from the Department of Health joined the meeting at 4.44pm:

- Irene Culleton, Head of People, Organisational Development and Equality, DoH; and
- Tim Morrison, Organisational Development and Equality Branch, DoH.

The officials briefed the Committee on SL1 Period Products (Department of Health Specified Public Services Bodies) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the merits of the policy and that the Department makes the Statutory Rule.

9. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted Ministerial correspondence on a forthcoming legislative consent motion for the Tobacco and Vapes Bill.
- ii. The Committee considered a Ministerial response on the GP Indemnity scheme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to note the response ahead of its informal meeting with the Department on GP Services on 26 November 2024.

- iii. The Committee noted a copy of a response from the Department to the Committee for Communities on Disability Rights and Representation.
- iv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Youth Assembly on a Consultation response to the draft Programme for Government.

- v. The Committee considered correspondence from the Mental Health Champion on the issue of Right Care Right Person.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange an informal meeting with the Mental Health Champion.

- vi. The Committee considered correspondence from CalebsCauseNI requesting to brief the Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite CalebsCauseNI to its next informal meetings clinic on 9 January 2025.

- vii. The Committee considered a request to brief the Committee from Hourglass on the Economics of Abuse 2024 Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite Hourglass to its next informal meetings clinic on 9 January 2025.

- viii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Florence Nightingale Foundation on the Report 'The potential impacts of additional advanced practice regulation on internationally educated nurses and midwives in the UK: final report' commissioned by the Nursing and Midwifery Council.

- ix. The Committee considered correspondence from Advice NI on the closure of the walk-in service at the RVH School of Dentistry.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward Advice NI's correspondence to the Department of Health for comment.

- x. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual in regards to a NIPSO investigation report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider further under its scrutiny of the redesign of Serious Adverse Incident protocol.

- xi. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual concerning winter fuel payments.

10. Forward Work Programme

The Chairperson invited the Clerk to speak to the Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft Forward Work Programme.

11. Any Other Business

The Committee considered availability of Deflazacort for treatment of Muscular Dystrophy for individuals.

Agreed: The Department to provide information on the provision of Deflazacort, including: whether there is a shortage of stock for patients in Northern Ireland; considerations by the Department of the implications of any shortage for patients with Muscular Dystrophy; work being undertaken to secure stock; and considerations by the Department to prioritising stock to ensure that those who need this medication can obtain it.

12. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee was scheduled to take place at 2.00pm on 28 November 2024.

The meeting was adjourned at 5.07pm.

Liz Kimmins MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Health

28 November 2024