



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Health

Minutes of Proceedings

30 January 2025

Meeting Location: Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present:

- Liz Kimmins MLA (Chairperson)
- Diane Dodds MLA
- Órlaithí Flynn MLA
- Nuala McAllister MLA
- Colin McGrath MLA
- Alan Robinson MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

- Danny Donnelly MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
- Alan Chambers MLA

Apologies:

- Linda Dillon 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

Apologies were received from Linda Dillon MLA.

2. Chairperson's Business

There was no Chairperson's Business.

3. Draft Minutes

The Committee agreed the draft Minutes of the meetings held on 23 January 2025.

4. Matters Arising

The Committee thanked the Southern Health and Social Care Trust and Daisy Hill Hospital staff again for hosting the Committee, the previous week, and agreed the tour of the Theatres, the Medical Ambulatory Unit and the Acute Care at Home Service facilities had given the Committee an important insight into positive developments and current examples of best practice within Health and Social Care.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a visit and Committee meeting at the South West Acute Hospital.

5. General Practice – Oral Briefing from the Royal College of General Practitioners Northern Ireland and British Medical Association Northern Ireland General Practitioners Committee

The following representatives joined the meeting at 2:05pm:

- Dr Ursula Mason, Chairperson, Royal College of General Practitioners Northern Ireland;
- Dr John Goodrich, Deputy Chairperson, Royal College of General Practitioners Northern Ireland;
- Dr Frances O'Hagan, Chairperson, British Medical Association Northern Ireland General Practitioners Committee; and
- Dr Ciaran Mullan, Deputy Chairperson, British Medical Association Northern Ireland General Practitioners Committee.

The representatives briefed the Committee on General Practice.

Órlaithí Flynn joined the meeting at 2.07pm

Diane Dodds joined the meeting at 2.17pm

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Alan Chambers joined the meeting at 3.42pm

Alan Chambers left the meeting at 3.53pm

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Health (DoH) to receive detail on the work currently ongoing by the Department to implement a Practitioner Health Programme in Northern Ireland and the associated costs. The Department to confirm that Northern Ireland is the only jurisdiction in the UK that does not currently have the Programme.

Agreed: The Department to provide figures for the operating costs for Trust-run GP Services.

6. SR 2024/218 The Firefighters' Pension Schemes and Compensation Scheme (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024

The Committee considered SR 2024/218 The Firefighters' Pension Schemes and Compensation Scheme (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024.

The Main changes brought about by the SR includes to:

- provide for early retirement for deferred members;
- remove the provision for the employer to initiate retirement before normal pension age without early payment reduction;
- remove the requirement for correspondence relating to an individual's medical appeal to be sent through the Department; and
- remove the requirement for payments to be made in advance in the compensation scheme.

Agreed: The Committee has considered agreed SR 2024/218 The Firefighters' Pension Schemes and Compensation Scheme (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024 and has no objection to the Rule.

7. Review of Children's Social Care Services – Oral Briefing from the Department of the British Association of Social Workers

The following representatives joined the meeting at 4.05pm:

- Professor David Hayes, Chairperson, British Association of Social Workers (BASW);
- Elaine Craig, Vice-Chairperson, BASW;
- Carolyn Ewart, National Director, BASW; and
- Andy McClenaghan, Public Affairs, Policy and Communications Lead, BASW.

The representatives briefed the Committee on the Review of the Children's Social Care Services.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Deputy Chairperson took the Chair at 4.14pm

The Chairperson returned to the Chair at 4.21pm

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

The briefing session was reported by Hansard.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to DoH to receive detail of its formula to measure and identify the numbers of social workers needed at any given time. To receive detail of the barometers it uses to have an accurate reading of where and when optimal services are not being met, and the extent, in terms of staffing. For example, staffing resources being targeted solely at protection and not preventative.

Agreed: The Department to provide detail of its work to ensure future workforce planning is based on a thorough understanding of system needs for an optimal service.

The Committee agreed to defer consideration of any further business to its next meeting, apart from one item of correspondence.

8. Correspondence

- i. The Committee considered a Written Ministerial Statement on the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) Review of the Pathways Associated with the Temporary Suspension of Emergency General Surgery at South West Acute Hospital, published on 29 January 2025.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to receive an oral briefing from the Department, RQIA, Public Health Agency, and the Western Health and Social Care Trust on the matter.

9. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered a draft Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft 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 is scheduled to take place at 3.00pm on 6 February 2025.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.59pm.

Liz Kimmins MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Health

6 February 2025