



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## Committee for Health

### Minutes of Proceedings

**11 December 2025**

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

**Present:**

Phillip McGuigan MLA (Chairperson)

Danny Donnelly MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Alan Chambers MLA

Diane Dodds MLA

Órlaithí Flynn MLA

Colin McGrath MLA

Alan Robinson MLA.

**Apologies:**

Linda Dillon MLA

Nuala McAllister MLA

**In Attendance:** Keith McBride, Clerk  
Roisin Donnelly, Senior Assistant Clerk  
Shannen Lofthouse, Assistant Clerk  
Angela McParland, Assistant Clerk  
Jonathan Lamont, Clerical Supervisor  
Noel Gallagher, Clerical Officer

The meeting commenced at 2.04pm in public session.

## **1. Apologies**

Linda Dillon MLA

Nuala McAllister MLA

## **2. Chairperson's Business**

The Chair noted that today, 11th December, marked Organ Donation Discussion Day. The Chair emphasised the vital importance of encouraging open conversations around organ donation.

The Chair highlighted the Committee's concern upon hearing reports that patients may experience delays in receiving chemotherapy treatment during holiday periods.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department requesting clarity on the relevant policy to ensure that cancer patients' treatment schedules are not disrupted and that appropriate arrangements are in place to accommodate care throughout holiday periods.

*Alan Robinson MLA joined the meeting at 2:07pm.*

### **3. Draft Minutes**

The Committee agreed the draft Minutes of the meeting held on 4 December 2025.

### **4. Matters Arising**

Members were referred to the revised DALO Readout and to the outstanding responses. Committee staff have requested a full update on each of the outstanding issues.

Members were advised that a response from the Minister was included in the tabled papers in relation to queries raised by the Chairperson concerning the Real Living Wage for social care workers. In his response, the Minister apologised to the Committee for previously providing incorrect information and clarified that the 70% figure referred to advertised roles, approximately 50 jobs, some of which involved additional duties and senior or advanced caring responsibilities.

The Minister further outlined that he has met with IHCP and confirmed that a number of actions are being taken forward by the Department. The Committee reiterated that urgent action is required to implement a real living wage for social care workers immediately.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the Ministers response to IHCP for information.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to express concerns around data collection and information provided to the Committee.

### **5. Community Pharmacy - Oral Briefing from the Department**

The following representatives joined the meeting at 2.11pm:

The representatives briefed the Committee on Community Pharmacy.

- Prof Cathy Harrison, Chief Pharmaceutical Officer, Department of Health; and

- Ms Kathryn Turner, Interim Head of Pharmacy and Medicines Management, SPPG; and
- Ms Teresa Magirr, Co-Director of Specialist Services, Department of Health.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their briefing.

*Alan Chambers MLA joined the meeting at 2.34pm.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request further information on pension allocation, clarification on arrangements between wholesalers and community pharmacies, and statistics on the percentage of drugs for which the Department of Health is paying more than the cost of the drug the percentage on which it is paying less than the cost of the drug.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department expressing frustration regarding community pharmacy, specifically in relation to core funding and clawback. The Committee also agreed to request that the Department undertake negotiations with Community Pharmacy representatives on these issues.

## **6. SL1- Amendment to Regulation & Improvement Authority**

The following representatives joined the meeting at 3.42pm:

- Mr Aaron Thompson, Principal, Quality, Regulation and Improvement Branch, Department of Health; and
- Ms Stefani Millar, Head of Looked After Children and Adoption Policy Unit, Department of Health

The representatives briefed the Committee on the SL1.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their briefing.

The Committee considered the SL1 – Amendment to Regulation & Improvement Authority.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it is content with the merits of the policy and that the Statutory Rule is made.

## **7. Adult Protection Bill- Oral Briefing from Police Service of Northern Ireland**

The following representatives joined the meeting at 3.48pm:

- ACC Davy Beck, QPM - Crime Department, Police Service of Northern Ireland; and
- DCS Zoe McKee, Head of Public Protection Branch, Police Service of Northern Ireland; and
- CS Gary McDonald, Justice Branch, Police Service of Northern Ireland

The representatives briefed the Committee on the Adult Protection Bill.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their briefing.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request a written response from PSNI on the estimated cost of implementing the Bill.

## **8. Correspondence**

- i. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding the implementation of the McBride-Hill report.
- ii. The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding the Belfast Trust meeting with the Committee on 12 June 2025.
- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee regarding UK Rare Disease Network.

- iv. The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding bed transfers from South West Acute Hospital to Altnagelvin.
- v. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding the Publication of Infant and Follow-on Formula Market.
- vi. The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding Randomised Case Selection.
- vii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department with a copy of letter to the Committee for Communities regarding Universal Credit Help with Health Costs Query.
- viii. The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding the Northern Ireland Audit Office report on Performance of Restricted Procedures by Health Trusts.
- ix. The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding a copy of a letter to Committee for Justice regarding Lasting Power of Attorney.
- x. The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding legal claims concerning Maintaining High Professional Standards (MHPS).
- xi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding a copy of a letter to the Department of Health.
- xii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding Revised Outturn and Forecast.
- xiii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding a review of Arm's Length Bodies.

- xiv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Education regarding Private Tutoring.
- xv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Examiner of Statutory Rules regarding a the 52<sup>nd</sup> report to the Assembly and the Appropriate Committees.
- xvi. The Committee noted correspondence from the House of Lord Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee regarding a copy of a letter to the Department for Health and Social Care.
- xvii. The Committee noted correspondence from Linda Dillon MLA regarding the Breastfeeding Bill Consultation Report.
- xviii. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding Emergency General Surgery at South West Acute Hospital.
- xix. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding medical negligence.
- xx. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding Palliative Care Services in NI.
- xxi. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding an outstanding reply from the Department.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request an immediate response.

- xxii. The Committee considered a response from the Department regarding Real Living Wage.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the response to IHCP.

- xxiii. The Committee considered correspondence from Calebs Cause NI regarding Scrutiny of the Department of Health's Review of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons (NI) Act 1978.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department requesting a response to the issues raised.

- xxiv. The Committee considered correspondence from an individual regarding Urgent Safeguarding, Governance and Practice concerns in Western Health and Social Care Trust.

## **9. Forward Work Programme**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to the draft forward work plan.

## **10. Stroke Action Plan- Written Briefing from the Department.**

The Committee noted a written briefing from the Department regarding the Stroke Action Plan.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to schedule an oral briefing in Spring 2026.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request information to provide clarity on the 24/7 Thrombectomy commitment, which continues to be delayed; details of the long-term savings that can be quantified from full implementation of priorities one to four (£10m); and details of engagement between the DoH Stroke Action Plan Policy Branch and the DoH Transformation Policy Branch.

## **11. Closed Session- Committee Priorities.**

The Committee moved to closed session at 4.48pm to discuss ongoing Committee Priorities.



The Clerk took Members through the documents.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request that the Department meet in the immediate term with Palliative End of Life Care Trust clinicians leading on the proposal for a 'Regional Last Days Care Bundle' or 'Individualised Care Plan' to be embedded in hospital wards. This would provide clear prompts for doctors and nurses when reviewing patients in their last hours or days and serve as an aide memoire to support the delivery of good last days care.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request the following as part of its Strategic Priority on Respite Care / Complex Needs:

- Detail from the Department concerning the need for further early intervention work, with the Department to further engage with CVS.
- Detail of work currently underway to recategorise direct payments for use in either medical or nursing support.
- Detail of work ensuring that best practice programmes are identified and introduced to benefit all Trusts, such as the roll-out of the service provided by South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust to hold learning sessions for staff specifically to address systemic failings.
- In relation to an underspend by Trusts of £13m, the Department to provide confirmation that if an allocation for programme budget is not spent it can be re-categorised for spend on capital projects instead.
- The Department to provide detail of Executive working across the Departments of Health, Education, Communities and Economy to coordinate a joint approach to address Post-19 SEN transition.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that waiting lists for cancer referrals require a focused session. The Committee further agreed to request a written briefing on cancer waiting lists to be provided alongside the written briefing on paediatrics, and to schedule an oral briefing within Committee priorities.

## **12. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

## **13. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting**

The next meeting of the Committee was scheduled to take place in Room 29 at 2pm on 15 January.

*The meeting was adjourned at 5.01pm.*

**Phillip McGuigan MLA**

**Chairperson, Committee for Health**

**15 January 2025**