



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Health

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday, 23 April 2026

Meeting Location: Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present: Phillip McGuigan MLA (Chairperson)
Danny Donnelly MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Linda Dillon MLA
Alan Chambers MLA
Diane Dodds MLA
Órlaithí Flynn MLA
Nuala McAllister MLA
Alan Robinson MLA

Apologies: Colin McGrath MLA

In Attendance: Keith McBride (Clerk)
Roisin Donnelly (Senior Assistant Clerk)
Michael Doran (Senior Assistant Clerk)
Angela McParland (Assistant Clerk)
Jonathan Lamont (Clerical Supervisor)



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Caroline Devlin (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 2.01 pm in public session.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Oral Briefing from the Department of Health (DoH): Elective Care Framework: Governance, Delivery & Outcomes

The following officials from the Department of Health meeting at 2.02 pm:

- Professor Mark Taylor, Regional Clinical Director for Elective Care, DoH;
- Lisa McWilliams, Director of Acute Planning and Performance, DoH; and
- Joanne Elliott, Interim Director of Elective Care and Cancer Policy Directorate, DoH.

The officials briefed the Committee on the Elective Care Framework.

Alan Chambers joined the meeting at 2.09pm

A question and answer session followed.

Órlaithí Flynn left the meeting at 3.07pm

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Health to receive:

- Detail as to what consideration has been given by the Department to reduce the age for screening for cancer, in particular bowel cancer;



Northern Ireland Assembly

- The context for the Southern Health and Social Care Trust (SHSCT) being an outlier, by a large margin, in a response on waiting lists breakdown provided by the Department to the Committee in February 2026;
- An explanation as to why the FIT test is not more widely used for detection, rather than invasive endoscopy procedures, in patient pathways;
- How Programme for Government targets are decided and progress monitored for waiting lists; and
- On the figure of £75m for additional new review for new outpatients diagnostics, treatments and AHPs, cancer and time critical, confirmation on the number of patients seen that is included in this spend; and
- Detail of the work being undertaken by the Department in relation to data on the referral to treatment pathway.

The Department is to provide an oral briefing on the Encompass programme (Epic) on 2 July 2026. The written briefing to be received ahead of the briefing to include:

- Detail of builds planned, and timeline, to ensure Encompass will identify and remove the names of deceased people in a timely manner from waiting lists, to avoid future distress to families of the deceased;
- Detail of builds planned, and timeline, to produce figures on each cancer patient's treatment pathway, that will produce adequate statistics, such as is standard in England. To ensure clear data is collated on patients red flagged or not, further treatment diagnosis, when any treatment received or what waiting lists added to;
- Detail of builds planned, and timeline, to produce figures that give comprehensive understanding on validation and a clear metric of movement for waiting lists figures; and
- Full up to date detail of costs and running costs for Encompass.



Northern Ireland Assembly

3. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson noted the Committee held an informal meeting with the Professional Standards Agency on Tuesday 21st April 2026 regarding a general overview of the work of the Agency.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that he had attended a vigil in Parliament Buildings, on Tuesday 22nd April 2026, organised by the Lobular Moon Shot Project. The vigil was part of a campaign to highlight the need for improved research and treatment for lobular breast cancer.

The Chairperson advised that he and the Deputy Chairperson spoke at the Mental Health Champion (MHC) event in Parliament Buildings that morning to launch the MHC report 'Mental Health in Northern Ireland: Current Services and Strategic Priorities'. The Chairperson thanked the MHC and commended the Report and noted it provides an extensive, up to date, report on the current mental health landscape of Northern Ireland.

4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 16 April 2026.

5. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

6. SR 2026/66 The Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland (General) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026

The Committee considered SR 2026/66 – The Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland (General) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026. The Rule will introduce an increase in pharmacist registration and retention fees paid to the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2026/66 The Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland (General) (Amendment) Regulations 2026 and has no objection to the Rule.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Pharmaceutical Society of Northern Ireland (PSNI) and the Professional Standards Agency that the Committee receive regular updates on the performance of PSNI.

7. SR 2026/72 The Health and Personal Social Services (General Medical Services Contracts) (Prescription of Drugs Etc) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026

The Committee considered SR 2026/72 The Health and Personal Social Services (General Medical Services Contracts) (Prescription of Drugs Etc) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026. The Rule will allow out-of-season prescribing and dispensing of two influenza (flu) antiviral medicines in Primary Care.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2026/72 The Health and Personal Social Services (General Medical Services Contracts) (Prescription of Drugs Etc) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026 and has no objection to the Rule.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

8. SR 2026/73 The Firefighters' Pension Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026

The Committee considered SR 2026/73 The Firefighters' Pension Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026. The Rule is to update the member contributions' structure in the Firefighters' Pension Scheme. This will address a yield shortfall and will futureproof the contribution structure to ensure that it remains responsive to changes over time.

Agreed: The Committee considered SR 2026/73 The Firefighters' Pension Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026 and has no objection to the rule.

9. Written Briefing from the Department of Health: Referral Pathways within the Committee's Strategic Priorities

The Committee considered a written briefing from the Department of Health on Referral Pathways within the Committee's Strategic Priorities.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department that the oral briefing from the Permanent Secretary, scheduled for 7th May 2026, on the Neighbourhood Model, address timescales and in particular progress and timescales for Integrated Neighbourhood Teams (INTs) being established.

Agreed: The Committee noted that the Western Health and Social Care Trust WHSCT is the only Trust mentioned in the briefing as having a dedicated care management budget for autistic adults without statutory eligibility. The Committee agreed to write to the Department to receive detail of why there is an absence of this in the other Trusts and what work is being done to support adults with autistic adults in other areas.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

10. Written Briefing from the Department of Health: Invest to Save and preventative policy within the Transformation Agenda

The Committee considered a written briefing from the Department of Health on Invest to Save and preventative policy within the Transformation Agenda.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department that the Committee be kept informed regarding all budget reviews to identify savings and decisions taken that might impact services.

Nuala McAllister left the meeting at 4.13pm

11. Correspondence

11.1 Correspondence Index

The Committee noted the correspondence index.

11.2 Supported Housing

The Committee noted a response from the Department to the Committee for Communities regarding supported housing and correspondence from Inspire Wellbeing.

11.3 Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) Strategic Framework

The Committee noted a response from the Department to the Committee for the Executive Office on an update on the work being undertaken under the Ending Violence Against Women and Girls (EVAWG) Strategic Framework.



Northern Ireland Assembly

11.4 Northern Ireland Audit Office 'Partnership Working: Departments and Arm's Length Bodies'

The Committee considered a response from the Department on the Northern Ireland Audit Office (NIAO) report 'Partnership Working: Departments and Arm's Length Bodies'.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the response to the NIAO for comment.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward to the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service ahead of the Chief Fire Officer briefing to the Committee on 21 May.

11.5 Ministerial Visit to USA

The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding the Ministers recent USA visit.

11.6 Domestic abuse in family law proceedings

The Committee noted a response from the Department to the Committee for Justice in relation to domestic abuse in family law proceedings.

11.7 Commissioner for Survivors of Institutional Childhood Abuse (COSICA)

The Committee noted a response from the Department to the Committee for the Executive Office in relation to a briefing from the Commissioner for Survivors of Institutional Childhood Abuse (COSICA).

11.8 SOS Daisy Hill



Northern Ireland Assembly

The Committee considered a response from the Department regarding SOS Daisy Hill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward to SOS Daisy Hill for information.

11.9 Caleb's Cause and the transition period

The Committee considered a response from the Department regarding Caleb's Cause and the transition period.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward to Caleb's Cause for comment.

11.10 Category one ambulance response times

The Committee considered a response from the Department regarding category one ambulance response times.

Agreed: The Committee noted its concern regarding the response times and agreed to write to the Department to receive a detailed plan of how category 1 ambulance waiting times are to be addressed.

11.11 SHSCT Waiting Lists

The Committee noted a response from the SHSCT providing information on waiting lists.

11.12 Examiner of Statutory Rules 62nd report



Northern Ireland
Assembly

The Committee noted correspondence from the Examiner of Statutory Rules 62nd report.

11.13 House of Lords Committee - Unique Device Identifiers for spectacles

The Committee noted correspondence from the House of Lords Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee on Unique Device Identifiers for spectacles.

11.14 Department of Health and Social Care - Tobacco and Vapes Bill

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Health and Social Care regarding the Tobacco and Vapes Bill.

11.15 Community Pharmacy Northern Ireland on Ministerial Response

The Committee noted a response from Community Pharmacy Northern Ireland (CPNI) regarding correspondence from the Minister to the Committee.

11.16 The Gaitway Organisation Event

The Committee considered an invitation from The Gaitway Organisation to the event 'Moving Forward Through Therapy' in Parliament Buildings on 28th April 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Members would respond directly to the invitation.

11.17 UK-IAP) on non-surgical cosmetic procedures in the UK

The Committee noted correspondence from the UK Independent Aesthetic Practitioners (UK-IAP) on a public-interest dossier concerning the regulation of non-surgical cosmetic procedures in the UK.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

11.18 Alzheimer's Society Report on The Training Gap

The Committee considered correspondence from Alzheimer's Society regarding the launch of the report 'The Training Gap: A Hidden Injustice in Dementia Care and How to Fix It'.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward to the Department for a response in relation to safe staffing legislation.

11.19 Royal College of Emergency Medicine Report on Emergency Medicine

The Committee considered correspondence from the Royal College of Emergency Medicine regarding 'The State of Emergency Medicine in Northern Ireland' report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule an oral briefing by the Royal College of Emergency Medicine.

11.20 SOAS Request on SPPG paper

The Committee considered correspondence from Save Our Acute Services, South West Acute Hospital (SOAS) requesting a copy of an earlier paper provided to the Committee from the Strategic Planning and Performance Group (SPPG).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the SPPG paper to SOAS.

11.21 Individual on maladministration and management failure

The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding a maladministration and management failure.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

12. Any Other Business

The Committee discussed reports of a lack of graduate health care positions advertised by Trusts in the past year.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to receive an update on the issue.

The Committee agreed to go into closed session at 4.24pm

13. Oral Briefing from Research and Information Service (RaiSe):

The Committee received at 4.25pm:

- Dr Grainne Crealey, Research Officer, RaiSe, Northern Ireland Assembly.

The Research Officer briefed the Committee on the RaiSe Report "Clawback" in Community Pharmacies in Northern Ireland'.

A question and answer session followed.

The Chairperson thanked the Research Officer for their attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the Report to CPNI for its views on the Report and future funding policy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the oral briefing from the Department on 28th May 2026 on Community Pharmacy would be in closed session.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Diane Dodds left the meeting at 4.36pm

14. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme in conjunction with its strategic priorities and forthcoming legislation.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to continue to bring a particular focus to red flag cancer waiting lists, to include a focus on women's health matters

Agreed: The Committee agreed a draft Forward Work Programme.

15. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting was scheduled to take place at 30 April at 2.00 pm in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 5.00pm.

Phillip McGuigan MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Health
30 April 2026