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Assembly

## Committee for Health

### Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday 18 June 2026

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

**Present:** Phillip McGuigan MLA (Chairperson)  
Danny Donnelly (Deputy Chairperson)  
Alan Chambers MLA  
Diane Dodds MLA  
Órlaithí Flynn MLA  
Colin McGrath MLA  
Alan Robinson MLA

**Present by Video or Teleconference:**

Linda Dillon MLA  
Nuala McAllister MLA

**Apologies:** None

**In Attendance:**

Keith McBride (Clerk)  
Roisin Donnelly (Senior Assistant Clerk)  
Michael Doran (Senior Assistant Clerk)



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Shannen Lofthouse (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Aidan Kennedy (Clerical Supervisor)

Caroline Devlin (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 2.01pm in public session.

**1. Apologies**

As above.

**2. Chairperson's Business**

- i. The Chairperson advised the informal meeting on Elective Care which was scheduled for 16 June 2026 will be rescheduled and Members will be notified of a new date.
- ii. The Chairperson acknowledged the publication of the Muckamore Abbey Hospital Inquiry report which represents one of the most significant safeguarding failures within the health system. The Chairperson thanked Tom Kark KC and his team for their diligence in producing such an extensive report. The Chair advised Members that a number of briefings will follow arising from the report's publication, and that Members will be informed of these in due course.



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### 3. Draft Minutes

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2026.

### 4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

### 5. SL1 - The Public Health (Notifiable Diseases - Hantavirus Diseases) Order (Northern Ireland) 2026

The following officials from the Department of Health joined the meeting at 2.12 pm:

- Mrs Christine Henderson, Head of Communicable Diseases Policy;
- Dr Louise McCorry, Senior Medical Officer for Health Protection and Communicable Diseases; and
- Mr Noel Griffin, Head of Healthcare and EU Citizen's Rights Branch.

The Committee considered the proposal by the Department of Health make a statutory rule to update the relevant section of the Public Health Act (Northern Ireland) 1967 to make hantavirus disease a notifiable condition under the Act.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content with the proposal for the statutory rule.



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**6. SL1 – The Provision of Health Services to Persons Not Ordinarily Resident (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026**

The Committee considered the proposal by the Department of Health make a statutory rule to update the relevant section of the Provision of Health Services to Persons Not Ordinarily Resident Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 to include hantavirus diseases.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content with the proposal for the statutory rule.

**7. SL1 - The Tobacco Retailer (Fixed Penalty) (Amount) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026**

The following officials from the Department of Health joined the meeting at 2.20 pm:

- Ms Lesley Heaney, Head of Tobacco Control and Infected Blood Compensation Policy Branch; and
- Mr Seán Garland, Deputy Principal, Tobacco Control

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

The Committee considered the proposal by the Department of Health to make a statutory rule to update fixed penalty offences and the amount of fines payable to align with changes brought in by the Tobacco and Vapes Act 2026.



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**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content with the proposal for the statutory rule.

**8. SL1 - The Tobacco Retailer (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations  
(Northern Ireland) 2026**

The Committee considered the proposal by the Department of Health to make minor amendments to existing legislation to ensure that terminology is updated to reflect an expanded range of tobacco, vape and nicotine products in line with the Tobacco and Vapes Act 2026.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content with the proposal for the statutory rule.

**9. Oral Briefing from Mesh Ireland**

Ms Mary McLaughlin, Campaigner from Mesh Ireland joined the meeting at 2.32 pm

Mary briefed the Committee on the work of Mesh Ireland to raise awareness and campaign for improved support for women affected by plastic mesh implants.

*Alan Chambers MLA joined the meeting at 2.38 pm.*

*Nuala McAllister MLA joined the meeting at 2.41 pm.*



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A question and answer session followed.

*Phillip McGuigan MLA left the meeting at 3.44 pm.*

*The Deputy Chairperson, Danny Donnelly MLA, took the Chair at 3:44 pm.*

The Deputy Chairperson thanked Ms McLaughlin for her attendance.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking clarity on mesh removal expertise, including the availability of any super-specialism in Northern Ireland, the number of surgeries carried out, their success rates, and any plans to develop expertise.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request information on whether consideration has been given to establishing a reimbursement scheme for women to access private mesh removal surgery, similar to the scheme previously available in Scotland, and what consideration has been given to facilitating access to international mesh removal expertise.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek an update on the timeline for delivery of the Women's Health Action Plan and details of engagement with Mesh Ireland.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request information from the Department on compensation and redress arrangements in this specialist area.



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## 10. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted a response to the Committee for Communities from the Department of Health regarding young people and supported housing.
- ii. The Committee considered a response from the Department of Health regarding access to palliative care services.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward to the Hospice Sector for information.

- iii. The Committee considered a response from the Department of Education in regarding the embedding of mental health within the school curriculum, following the Committee for Health's evidence session with the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY).

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward to NICCY for information.

- iv. The Committee noted a response from the Department of Health regarding an update on the ongoing programme of work to improve maternal and neonatal care, including actions being taken in response to Professor Renfrew's report.
- v. The Committee noted a response from the Department of Health regarding the Emotional Health and Wellbeing in Education Framework.



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- vi. The Committee noted a response from the Department of Health regarding cross border cooperation in paediatric gastroenterology.
- vii. The Committee noted a response from the Department of Health regarding the impact of the shortfall of funding for the Cancer Strategy.
- viii. The Committee noted a response from the Department of Health regarding the Programme for Government and Programme for Government Delivery Unit.
- ix. The Committee noted a response from the Department of Health regarding PHA advice on drug harm reduction.
- x. The Committee noted a response from the Department of Health following the Committee for Health's briefing from the Law Society of Northern Ireland regarding the implementation of the Mental Capacity Act.
- xi. The Committee noted a response from the Department of Health following the Committee for Health's briefing on Stroke Action Plan.
- xii. The Committee considered a response from the Department of Health regarding the organisations consulted in relation to the Safe Staffing Bill.
- xiii. The Committee considered a response from the Department of Health regarding provision for post 19 adults with complex needs in the Southern Trust area.



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

- xiv. The Committee considered a response from the Department of Health regarding following a formal complaint from UK Independent Aesthetic Practitioners regarding the development of the Non- Surgical Procedures and Function of Medical Reviewers (Scotland) Act 2026.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward to UKIAP for information.

- xv. The Committee noted a copy of a response from the Department of Health to RaiSe regarding a timeline for secondary legislation under the Tobacco and Vapes Act 2026.
- xvi. The Committee noted a response from the Department of Health regarding Hospital Car Parking and ANPR cameras.
- xvii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department regarding a complaint from an individual in relation to concerns at A&E in Altnagelvin Hospital.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward to the individual for information.

- xviii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department for Justice regarding Right Care Right Person policy initiative.



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**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward to the Committee for Justice for information.

- xix. The Committee noted a response from the Department of Health in relation to the bowel cancer screening programme.
- xx. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Health regarding a consultation on the display, packaging and devices for tobacco products and vapes.
- xxi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Belfast Trust regarding the ending of a joint initiative between the Department of Health and the Department for Education for children and looked after young people.
- xxii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs Committee regarding a call for view on the Areas with Natural Constraints (Payments) Bill Call for Views.
- xxiii. The Committee noted a copy of a letter to the Department of Health from the Committee for Education regarding the research report from Prof. Noel Purdy of Stranmillis University College entitled 'Transform – Exploring Pathways and Barriers for Young People with Disabilities Transitioning from Education to Employment in Northern Ireland.



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xxiv. The Committee noted a copy of a letter to the Department of Health from the Committee for Education regarding the campaign for the introduction of Benedict's Law in Northern Ireland, a set of national protections to improve allergy safety in schools.

xxv. The Committee noted a copy of a letter from the Committee for the Executive Office to the Department of Health regarding the Regional Trauma Network.

xxvi. The Committee considered correspondence from Extern requesting Committee support of their Prisoner Support Project.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward to the Department for comment.

xxvii. The Committee noted correspondence from the British Medical Association advising of the outcome of the industrial action ballot by specialist, associate specialist and specialty doctors.

xxviii. The Committee considered correspondence from Caleb's Cause, including documents agreed to be forwarded to the Committee following 11 June 2026 oral briefing: a Turning 18 Checklist and a redacted Care Act Assessment.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward to the Department for comment.



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- xxix. The Committee noted correspondence from the Nursing and Midwifery Council acknowledging the request from the Committee to receive six monthly updates on progress against each area highlighted in their recent report on reform.
- xxx. The Committee noted correspondence from Pivotal sharing their new report 'Improving the Institutions: Suggested Reforms to the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive'.
- xxxi. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding concerns of governance, equality, and procedural failures within the Belfast Health & Social Care Trust.
- xxxii. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding the oral briefing from Caleb's Cause on 11 June 2026.

The Committee agreed to move into closed session at 4:14 pm.

**11. Oral Briefing from Legal Services at Northern Ireland Assembly – Adult Protection Bill**

Ms Htaik Win, Legal Advisor, Northern Ireland Assembly Legal joined the meeting at 4.14 pm.



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Ms Win briefed the Committee on some of the legal queries that had arisen during deliberations on the Adult Protection Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to seek further legal advice in relation to the assessment of capacity and the impact of the recent Supreme Court ruling on deprivation of liberty on the Adult Protection Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to consider the recommendations of the Inquiry Report on Muckamore Abbey Hospital and whether any further amendments were needed to the Adult Protection Bill.

### **12. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee Clerk took Members through the Forward Work Programme, including a discussion on upcoming legislation and Committee clinics.

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

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that due to the heavy legislative workload from September to the end of the mandate, it would not be possible for the Committee to undertake further informal meetings with stakeholders.

### **13. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.



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

The next meeting was scheduled to take place at 25 June at 2.00 pm in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.59 pm.

**Phillip McGuigan MLA**  
**Chairperson, Committee for Health**  
**25 June 2026**