



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Health

Minutes of Proceedings

25 September 2025

Meeting Location: Room 29, Parliament Buildings

Present:

- Philip McGuigan MLA (Chairperson)
- Danny Donnelly MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
- Colin McGrath MLA
- Linda Dillon MLA
- Órlaithí Flynn MLA
- Alan Robinson MLA
- Alan Chambers MLA

Apologies:

- Nuala McAllister MLA
- Diane Dodds MLA

In Attendance: Keith McBride, Clerk

Shannen Lofthouse, Assistant Clerk

Angela McParland, Assistant Clerk

Jonathan Lamont, Clerical Supervisor

Noel Gallagher, Clerical Officer

The meeting commenced at 2.01pm in public session.

1. Apologies

Nuala McAllister MLA

Diane Dodds MLA

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chair advised the Committee that he and the Clerk met with the Minister and the Permanent Secretary on Monday to have an initial discussion in relation to the Committee Inquiry Report. The Chair advised that the Minister wanted to pass on his thanks to Members for prioritising this important issue.

The Chair noted the debate in the Chamber on CAR-T therapy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Department should provide the Committee with further detail on the reasons for the length of time taken to implement this treatment locally, as the Committee understands that clinicians believe it could be introduced sooner.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Irish Minister of Health in relation to CAR-T therapy capacity in Ireland and the possibility of cross-border work on this issue.

3. Draft Minutes

The Committee agreed the draft Minutes of the meeting held on 25 September 2025.

4. Matters Arising

The Chair reminded Members that in last week's discussions, there was some discussion in relation to the Trusts engagement with families during inquiries.

Agreed: Members agreed to write to the Department to request further information on the engagement they have had with the families that were directly affected by these inquiries. The Committee agreed to seek clarification on the Departments understanding of the reasons why families did not participate in the liaison groups, and further provide detail on who did participate in those liaison groups.

Members were informed last week by officials that the Department of Finance would be responsible for laying the LCM in relation to the Public Office (Accountability) Bill.

Agreed: Members agreed to schedule a briefing from Department of Health officials once the LCM is laid.

5. Oral Briefing- Royal College of Nursing.

The following officials joined the meeting at 2.07pm:

- Briege Quinn, RCN Northern Ireland Board Chair;
- Professor Rita Devlin, RCN Northern Ireland Executive Director; and
- Dolores McCormick, RCN Northern Ireland Associate Director.

The officials briefed the Committee on its work in relation to the Pathway to Progression Programme.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Alan Chambers joined the meeting remotely at 2.44pm.

6. Departmental briefing – Paediatric Waiting Lists

The following officials joined the meeting at 3.13pm:

- Mark Taylor, Regional Clinical Director of Elective Care;

- Ms Paula Tweedie, Co-Director of Hospital Care;
- Joanne Elliott, Interim Director of Elective Care and Cancer Policy; and
- Paul Cavanagh, Director of Hospital Care.

The officials briefed the Committee on Paediatric Waiting Lists.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their briefing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department requesting a written briefing on time critical paediatric work.

The Committee adjourned at 4:19 pm.

The Committee resumed at 4:23 pm.

7. Departmental briefing- IT issues within the Southern Health and Social Care Trust.

The following officials joined the meeting at 4.23pm:

- Steve Sperry, Interim Chief Executive SHSCT;
- Dr Stephen Austin, Medical Director SHSCT;
- Elaine Wilson, Director of Planning, Performance and Informatics SHSCT;
and
- Dr Paul Rice, Chief Digital Information Officer DoH joined via video link.

The officials briefed the Committee on recent IT issues within the Southern Trust.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their briefing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request further information on the cost of IT supply in the Department of Health and the Trusts when available.

Alan Chambers MLA left the meeting at 5.11pm

8. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted the correspondence from the Department of Health regarding the Consultation Report on the Equality Action Plan.
- ii. The Committee noted the correspondence from the Department of Health regarding the UK-wide consultation on amending Human Medicines Regulations 2012.
- iii. The Committee noted the correspondence from the Committee for Justice regarding a request for views on the Crime and Policing Bill.
- iv. The Committee noted the correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding Cyber Security and Resilience Bill and the Public Office Bill.
- v. The Committee noted the correspondence from the Assembly Executive Review Committee regarding engagement on cross cutting Executive Strategies.
- vi. The Committee noted the correspondence from the Examiner of Statutory Rules in relation to 44th report.
- vii. The Committee considered the correspondence from Royal College of Psychiatrists with a request to brief the Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule an informal meeting with the Royal College of Psychiatrists.

- viii. The Committee considered the correspondence from Calebs Cause NI with a request for a Committee Inquiry into Post 19- SEND.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to incorporate the issues highlighted by Caleb's Cause into its forthcoming Programme of Work on complex needs and respite care, and further agreed that Caleb's Cause will be a key stakeholder in that work.

- ix. The Committee considered the correspondence from an individual in relation to Wigs and Associated Products Tender.

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

- x. The Committee noted the correspondence from an individual regarding a complaint about Western Trust.

- xi. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department regarding an invite to the Healthy Child Healthy Future event.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request that it considers holding events when the Committee is available to attend.

- xii. The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding Hospital Transformation.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking clarification on why the reclassification was not made at an earlier stage.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking clarification on why the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust has only one Level 1 Emergency Department, when every other Trust has two and what assessment has the Department made on the geographical spread of Level 1 Emergency Departments.

- xiii. The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding correspondence from Breast Cancer Now.

9. Forward Work Plan

The Committee considered a draft Forward Work Programme.

The Clerk briefed Members on the Palliative Care Inquiry Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft Forward Work Programme and established a new date for Inquiry Report launch of 2nd December.

10. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

11. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee was scheduled to take place at in Room 29 at 2.00pm on 2 October 2025.

The meeting was adjourned at 5.25pm.

Phillip McGuigan MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Health

2 October 2025