



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Health

Minutes of Proceedings

Meeting Location: Room 29, Parliament Buildings

28 May 2026

Present: Danny Donnelly MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Alan Chambers MLA
Diane Dodds MLA
Órlaithí Flynn MLA
Nuala McAllister MLA
Colin McGrath MLA
Alan Robinson MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Linda Dillon MLA

Apologies: Phillip McGuigan MLA (Chairperson)

In Attendance: Keith McBride (Clerk)
Michael Doran (Senior Assistant Clerk)
Roisin Donnelly (Senior Assistant Clerk)



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Caroline Devlin (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 2.02 pm in public session.

The Deputy Chairperson, Danny Donnelly took the Chair.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Chairperson's Business

North/South Inter-Parliamentary Association – Children's Palliative Care Services

The Deputy Chairperson provided an update on his attendance at a meeting of the North/South Inter-Parliamentary Association which included a discussion on palliative care and reference to joint working involving children's services.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Health and the Minister of Health in the Republic of Ireland to ask what engagement has taken place on joint working for children's palliative care services.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Minister of Health for detail on his Department's work relating to the sustainability of children's palliative care services including the Children's Hospice and what work his Department is carrying out for young people who are transitioning between children and adult palliative care services in both hospice and community settings.



Northern Ireland Assembly

NI Audit Office Report on the use of temporary nursing staff in Northern Ireland

The Deputy Chairperson declared an interest as being employed as a Band 5 Bank Nurse.

The Deputy Chairperson referred to the findings of the recently published NI Audit Office report on the use of temporary nursing staff in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Health for detail on its plans to reduce dependency on the use of agency nursing staff and to ask what consideration is being given to capping the hourly rate paid to agency staff.

Right Care, Right Person

The Deputy Chairperson referred to the planned partnership work between the Health and Justice Departments on the Right Care, Right Person operational model and advised that the Committee had not received any recent updates on this work.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask for an update from the Department of Health and the Department of Justice on the Right Care, Right Person initiative and its planned implementation.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 21 May 2026.

4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

5. Oral Briefing from the Department of Health - Stroke Action Plan

The following officials from the Department of Health joined the meeting at 2.07 pm:

- Ryan Wilson, Director of Secondary Care;
- Brian McAleer, Co-Director of Acute and Emergency Medicine, Strategic Planning Performance Group;
- Fiona Quigg, Deputy Commissioning Lead, Strategic Planning Performance Group; and
- Dr Ivan Wiggam, Clinical Lead for the Stroke Network.

The officials provided an update on the progress of the Department of Health's Stroke Action Plan.

Nuala McAllister left the meeting at 2.58 pm.

Diane Dodds left the meeting at 3.09 pm.

Alan Robinson left the meeting at 3.12 pm.

A question and answer session followed.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Health for: an update on the PitStop initiative involving the Altnagelvin Area Hospital and the NI Ambulance Service; further information on the mental health support provided to stroke patients including the role of clinical psychologists; and detail on the recruitment of clinicians within psychological services across HSC Trusts.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Northern Health and Social Care Trust for further information on its decision to decline funding to deliver



Northern Ireland
Assembly

the Early Supported Discharge intervention as part of a community stroke service model.

6. Oral Briefing from Royal College of Emergency Medicine - The State of Emergency Medicine in Northern Ireland Report

The following representatives from the Royal College of Emergency Medicine (RCEM) joined the meeting at 3.16 pm:

- Dr Michael Perry, Vice President for Northern Ireland; and
- Dr Sara Jane McGurk, Northern Ireland Board Vice Chair.

Nuala McAllister rejoined the meeting at 3.18 pm.

The representatives briefed the Committee on the findings of the RCEM report, 'The State of Emergency Medicine in Northern Ireland'.

Diane Dodds rejoined the meeting at 3.23 pm.

Alan Robinson rejoined the meeting at 3.23 pm.

A question and answer session followed.

Alan Robinson left the meeting at 4.15 pm.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives from RCEM for their attendance.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule briefing from the Department of Health on pressures in emergency care, with particular focus on how capacity in social and domiciliary care impacts demand and performance within emergency departments.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Chief Medical Officer for his response to calls for the services provided by the charity, *Doctors in Distress* to be made available in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to contact *Doctors in Distress* to ask for information on its services and its operation in Northern Ireland.

Colin McGrath left the meeting at 4.39 pm.

7. The Tobacco and Vapes (2026 Act) (Commencement No.1) Order (Northern Ireland) 2026

The Deputy Chairperson advised that as minor amendments were being made to the Tobacco and Vapes (2026 Act) (Commencement No.1) Order (Northern Ireland) 2026 this would be rescheduled for consideration at a future meeting when the revised Order had been laid.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

8. Written Briefing from the Department of Health - Cancer Strategy

The Committee considered a written briefing from the Department of Health on the Cancer Strategy for Northern Ireland 2022-32.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Health: what work has been undertaken to assess the impact of the funding shortfall for the cancer strategy; an update on the use of the drug *Abiraterone* for the treatment of prostate cancer; and whether any specific work is being progressed in relation to the detection and treatment of ovarian cancer.

Alan Robinson rejoined the meeting at 4.40 pm.

Colin McGrath rejoined the meeting at 4.42 pm.

9. Written Briefing from the Department of Health - Implementation of the Adoption and Children Act

The Committee noted a written briefing from the Department of Health providing an update on the implementation of the Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) 2022.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

10. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted a response from the Department of Health regarding the relocation of the Extern Enhanced Needle and Syringe Exchange Services and Homelessness Support Services.
- ii. The Committee noted a response from the Department of Health regarding shared care arrangements for the treatment and management of patients with ADHD.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Health for a response to concerns that GPs are not continuing with shared care arrangements as a result of drugs that are used to treat ADHD being reclassified to the Red-Amber List.

Alan Chambers left the meeting at 4.47 pm.

- iii. The Committee considered a response from the Department of Health providing information on Programme for Government funding allocated to address red flag/time-critical Waiting List Initiatives.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Health for further information on the activities provided by the Independent Sector and those that were delivered through in-house capacity.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

- iv. The Committee considered a response from the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust to the Committee's request for further information regarding capital build projects following the Trust's attendance at the Committee meeting on 16 April 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Belfast HSCT for further information relating to the new Maternity Hospital capital build project including detail on: the BISRA audit; testing of outlets in the new Maternity Hospital for *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*; the timeline for the planned review of the capital build project; and plans and timeline for the early occupation of areas of the building.

- v. The Committee noted correspondence from the five Health and Social Care Trusts regarding the implementation of Encompass and the Epic software.
- vi. The Committee noted a Department of Health bulletin presenting the latest raw disease prevalence statistics for Northern as at 31 March 2026.
- vii. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Committee for Communities to the Department of Health regarding the introduction of new regulatory arrangements for supported accommodation for young people.
- viii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding guidance provided by the Minister of Finance and the Department



Northern Ireland
Assembly

of Finance Permanent Secretary to Executive Departments in the absence of a budget for 2026.

- ix. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Committee for the Executive Office to the Department of Health requesting that it is kept informed of the work of the Health and Social Care Trusts as the Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses Redress Scheme progresses to design and implementation.
- x. The Committee noted a response from Belfast City Council regarding the relocation of the Extern Enhanced Needle and Syringe Exchange Services and Homelessness Support Services from council owned premises.
- xi. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual providing information on awareness raising events relating to the neuropsychiatric conditions, Paediatric Acute-onset Neuropsychiatric Syndrome (PANS) and Paediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorders Associated with Streptococcal infections (PANDAS).
- xii. The Committee noted a response from the Department of Health to Caleb's Cause regarding Post-19 Transition arrangements and access to adult learning disability services.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

xiii. The Committee noted a response from the Department of Health regarding its engagement with palliative care service providers on planning for winter pressures in 2025/26.

xiv. The Committee considered a response from the Department of Health regarding funding for prosthetic procedures.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the Department's response to the individual who had raised this matter with the Committee.

xv. The Committee considered a response from the Department of Health regarding the Department's relationship with Independent Health and Care Providers.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the Department's letter to Independent Health and Care Providers for information.

xvi. The Committee considered correspondence from UK Independent Aesthetic Practitioners regarding concerns about the expert advisory process that informed the Non-Surgical Procedures and Functions of Medical Reviewers (Scotland) Act 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence from the UK Independent Aesthetic Practitioners to the Department of Health for a response to the issues raised.



Northern Ireland Assembly

- xvii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Nursing and Midwifery Council regarding an historical issue recently identified within the NMC's registration and revalidation process and the action now being taken.
- xviii. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding Continuing Healthcare assessments.

11. Forward Work Programme

Agreed: The Committee agreed its draft Forward Work Programme.

The Deputy Chairperson reminded Members about the planned visit to London on 2 June to meet primary care leaders on the delivery model for primary care in England and the Committee's joint event with the Mental Health Champion on 4 June in Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson confirmed that a briefing session with the mothers from the 'I am not ok' Spotlight programme has been scheduled for the meeting on Tuesday 30 June.

The Deputy Chairperson advised Members that the Committee has received confirmation of the publication of the Muckamore Abbey Hospital Inquiry report on 18 June and that arrangements were being made for engagement with the Inquiry Chairperson.



Northern Ireland Assembly

12. Any Other Business

Renfrew Report

A Member referred to concerns raised by the Royal College of Midwives regarding a lack of progress relating to the findings from the 2024 report, *Enabling Safe Quality Midwifery Services and Care in Northern Ireland* authored by Professor Mary Renfrew report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Health for an update on progress relating to the Renfrew report.

Safe Staffing Bill

A Member expressed concern that the representatives from the Royal College of Emergency Medicine had confirmed, in the earlier briefing session, that RCEM had not been consulted by the Department of Health in relation to the development of the planned Safe Staffing Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Health for a list of the organisations it consulted with in relation to the development of the Safe Staffing Bill.

Budget

A Member referred to the absence of a budget for 2026/27.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department of Health for information on the impact of the absence of an agreed budget for 2026/27 and the Department's planning in relation to this matter.

13. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting was scheduled to take place at 4 June at 2.00 pm in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 5.06 pm.

Phillip McGuigan MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Health

4 June 2026