



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Health

Minutes of Proceedings

Meeting Location: Room 29, Parliament Buildings

4 June 2026

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

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Apologies: None

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



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Michael Doran (Senior Assistant Clerk)
Shannen Lofthouse (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Aidan Kennedy (Clerical Supervisor)
Caroline Devlin (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 2.06 pm in public session.

1. Apologies

None.

2. Oral Briefing from Palliative Care Sector- Scoping of Specialist Palliative Care Services for Children and Adults

The following representatives joined the meeting at 2.07 pm:

- Trevor McCartney, CEO NI Hospice and NI Children's Hospice;
- Professor Max Watson, Consultant in Palliative Medicine;
- Dr Clare White, Consultant in Palliative Medicine; and
- David Graham, Northern Ireland Paediatric Palliative Care Network.

The representatives provided an update on the ongoing work of the palliative care sector and set out their views on the Department's response to the Inquiry and the ongoing scoping exercise.



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Linda Dillon MLA joined the meeting at 2.09 pm.

Alan Chambers MLA joined the meeting at 2.20 pm.

A question and answer session followed.

Nuala McAllister MLA joined the meeting at 3.16pm.

Colin McGrath MLA joined the meeting at 3.24pm.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

3. Oral Briefing from Cancer Research UK – Waiting Times in Northern Ireland

The following representatives from Cancer Research UK joined the meeting at 3.46 pm:

- Mr Naser Turabi, Director of Health Policy and Evidence; and
- Ms Liz Morrison, Public Affairs Manager.

The representatives briefed the Committee on their Cancer in the UK: Northern Ireland Review.



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Diane Dodds MLA left the meeting at 4.32pm.

A question and answer session followed.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives from Cancer Research UK for their attendance.

4. Chairperson's Business

Committee Visit to London with Permanent Secretary

The Chairperson noted the Committee's visit to London on 3 June as part of its programme of engagement on primary and preventative care. Members met with stakeholders and visited relevant sites to inform the Committee's ongoing scrutiny work. The Chairperson recorded the Committee's thanks to all those who facilitated the visit and engaged with Members during the programme, as well as to the Permanent Secretary for his engagement. The Chairperson recorded that a note on the visit will be prepared and circulated to Members.

Mental Health Champion and Health Committee Joint Event

The Chairperson noted that the Committee, together with the Mental Health Champion, hosted a joint event in the Long Gallery earlier today, bringing together representatives from the Department and those working across the mental health sector for a series of roundtable discussions. The Chairperson recorded the



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Committee's thanks to the Mental Health Champion, the Department, and all those who participated and contributed to the discussions. The Chairperson recorded that a note on the event will be prepared and circulated to Members and relevant stakeholders.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to publish the press release on the Mental Health Event held today.

5. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 28 May 2026.

6. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

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

Alan Chambers MLA declared an interest for items 7-9 as a tobacco retailer.



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The Committee noted the Draft SR - The Tobacco and Vapes (2026 Act) (Commencement No.1) Order (Northern Ireland) 2026.

8. SL1 - The Tobacco Retailer (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (NI) 2026

The Committee noted that the Department of Health is proposing to make a statutory rule that will 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 to publish the SL1 papers on the Assembly website and to issue a call for views on the proposal.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule consideration of the proposed SR at its meeting on 18 June 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask officials to brief the Committee on the proposed rule.



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9. SL1 - The Tobacco Retailer (Fixed Penalty) (Amount) Regulations (NI) 2026

The Committee noted that the Department of Health is proposing to make a statutory rule that will amend existing legislation to update fixed penalty offences and the amount of fines payable to align with changes brought in by the Tobacco and Vapes Act 2026

Agreed: The Committee agreed to publish the SL1 papers on the Assembly website and to issue a call for views on the proposal.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule consideration of the proposed SR at its meeting on 18 June 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask officials to brief the Committee on the proposed rule.

10. SL1 – The New Firefighters’ Pension Scheme (Amendment) Order (NI) 2026

The Committee considered a proposal by the Department of Health to make a statutory rule to amend the existing *New Firefighters’ Pension Scheme (NI) 2007* to complete and improve the delivery of the “Matthews remedy” for retained (part-time) firefighters.

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



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11. Written Briefing from the Department of Health – Hospital Car Parking

The Committee considered a written briefing from the Department of Health on Hospital Car Parking.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Health to seek clarification on the reported installation of 200 NPR cameras across Trust areas, including what data is being collected, the purpose of the data collection, and how the data is being retained.

Diane Dodds MLA rejoined the meeting at 4.43pm.

12. Correspondence

- i. The Committee considered a response from the Department of Health regarding Homecare Services and an update on their engagement with the care sector. The Committee welcomed re-engagement and emphasised the need for constructive engagement with the independent care sector, recognising that this remains an important issue for all stakeholders.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward to Independent Health and Care Providers for information.



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- ii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Health regarding the Health Bill with explaining why a Legislative Consent Motion is not being sought in relation to the UK Government Health Bill at this time.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Health to ensure the Committee are kept up to date on any progress of any Legislative Consent Motions at the earliest possible stage.

- iii. The Committee noted a response from the Belfast Trust regarding the relocation of the Extern Enhanced Needle and Syringe Exchange Services and Homelessness Support Services from council owned premises.
- iv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Communities regarding Retention and Disposal Schedules.
- v. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding the 2025 - 2026 Public Expenditure Outturn and Forecast Outturn, as part of its ongoing engagement to support the Finance Committee's scrutiny of the public expenditure position.
- vi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding findings from the National Population Projections published by NISRA.



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- vii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Education enclosing a letter to the Department of Health regarding Special School Summer Schemes and concerns raised by special school principals about safety in the absence of appropriate nursing ratios.
- viii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Education enclosing a letter to the Department of Health seeking to establish the level of engagement between the Departments of Health and Education in scoping a counselling intervention to replace the Healthy Happy Minds programme.
- ix. The Committee considered correspondence from the Professional Standards Authority regarding the publication of their most recent performance review of the Nursing and Midwifery Council.
- x. The Committee noted correspondence from the Nursing and Midwifery Council providing context on the PSA's annual review report's findings and an update on the significant programme of change and improvement under way within the Council.

Danny Donnelly MLA declared an interest as a registered nurse.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Nursing and Midwifery Council to request regular updates on progress to address the issues identified in the Professional Standards Authority Report.



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- xi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Strategic Investment Board Limited enclosing the Investing Activity Report for the Department of Health for April 2026.
- xii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions regarding the possibility of meeting with the Committee for Health before the summer recess.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to arrange an informal briefing with the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions.

- xiii. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding a Freedom of Information request on Band 8D posts within the Strategic Planning and Performance Group.

13. Forward Work Programme

Agreed: The Committee agreed its draft Forward Work Programme.

14. Any Other Business

There was no other business.



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15. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting was scheduled to take place at 11 June at 2.00 pm in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.48 pm.

Phillip McGuigan MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Health

11 June 2026