



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Health

Minutes of Proceedings

5 March 2026

Meeting Location: Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

Present:

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

Apologies: None.

In Attendance: Keith McBride, Clerk
Roisin Donnelly, Senior Assistant Clerk
Michael Doran, Senior Assistant Clerk
Shannen Lofthouse, Assistant Clerk
Angela McParland, Assistant Clerk
Jonathan Lamont, Clerical Supervisor
Caroline Devlin, Clerical Officer.

The meeting commenced at 2.03pm in public session.

1. Apologies

None.

2. Chairperson's Business

Members expressed disappointment at the delay in the Muckamore Inquiry Report and noted the families frustration at the delay. Members highlighted that access to the inquiry report and its recommendations would be important to support scrutiny of the Adult Protection Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister requesting that Consideration Stage of the Adult Protection Bill be delayed to allow time to review any recommendations of the Muckamore Inquiry Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Chair of the Muckamore Inquiry in relation to the delay.

The Chair noted the significant number of people currently on waiting lists across Northern Ireland. While acknowledging progress in some areas, Members stressed the need for a clear focus in the incoming financial year on reducing waiting lists, particularly red-flag cases.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request the following information:

- The starting position in April 2025 and the current waiting list position;
- The number of patients added to the over four year waiting list, and how this compares to reductions achieved;
- A breakdown of reductions by validation versus reductions due to procedures or appointments taking place;
- A breakdown of validation outcomes and reasons; and
- Information on patients who have received a colonoscopy, including how many have received their follow-up.

3. Draft Minutes

The Committee agreed the draft Minutes of the meetings held on 26 February 2026.

4. Matters Arising

There were no Matters Arising.

5. Oral Briefing from the Department - Hospital Car Parking Charges.

The following officials joined the meeting at 2.15pm:

- Mr Paul Montgomery, Infrastructure Investment Directorate, Department of Health; and
- Anne Marie Smyth, Infrastructure Investment Directorate, Department of Health; and

- Mr Jeff Thompson, Assistant Director, Facilities and Support Services, South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust.

The officials briefed the Committee on the Bill which will defer the operational date of the Hospital Car Parking Charges Act.

Colin McGrath MLA joined the meeting at 2.15pm.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Danny Donnelly MLA declared an interest as a staff nurse.

Alan Chambers MLA joined the meeting at 2.36pm.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their briefing.

The briefing was reported by Hansard.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request information on, how many staff are eligible for free parking and how many are not across Trust areas.

6. SL1 - The Firefighters' Pension Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026

The Committee considered the SL1 - The Firefighters' Pension Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2026.

The Chair advised Members that there had been no responses to the Committee's call for views on the proposed rule.

Agreed: The Committee agreed it was content with the merits of the proposal and that the Department make the rule.

7. SL1 - The Human Medicines (Amendment) Regulations 2026.

The following officials joined the meeting at 2.39pm.

- Chris Garland, Senior Principal Pharmaceutical Officer; and
- Eddie Murphy, Acting Head of Medicines Legislation Unit; and

- Martin Coleman, Head of Vaccination and Screening Policy Branch.

The officials briefed the Committee on the SL1.

The Committee considered the SL1- Human Medicines (Amendment) Regulations 2026.

The Chair advised Members that there had been no responses to the Committee's call for views on the proposed rule.

Agreed: The Committee agreed it was content with the merits of the proposal and that the Department make the rule.

8. Oral Briefing from the South Eastern and Social Care Trust - An Overview.

The following representatives joined the meeting at 2.53pm:

- Roisin Coulter, Chief Executive, South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust; and
- Jonathan Patton, Chair, South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust; and
- Helen Moore, Director of Planning, Performance and Informatics, South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust; and
- Veronica Cleland, Director of Primary Care and Older People's Services, South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust.

The representatives briefed the Committee with an overview of the Trust.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

Linda Dillon MLA joined the meeting at 4.19pm.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their briefing.

The briefing was reported by Hansard.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Trust to request the following information.

- Further information on waiting lists, including reasons why individuals are removed from lists and validation outcomes.
- Detail on the reported 61% reduction in outpatient waiting lists.

- Further information relating to colonoscopy lists; how many of those patients are treated and how many of those go onto another treatment pathway.
- The number of patients added to the four year + waiting list.
- A full list of all waiting lists.
- Further information on mental health and addiction figures.
- Information on the “levels” provided by the Trust in relation to Emergency Departments.

9. Urology Services Inquiry - Retention and Disposal Schedule.

The Committee considered the Independent Neurology Inquiry Retention and Disposal Schedule.

Agreed: The Committee was content with the Retention and Disposal Schedule as set out.

10. Written Briefing from the Department - Lifespan Gender Identity Service.

The Committee noted a written briefing from the Department regarding the Lifespan Gender Identity Service.

11. Written Briefing from Mental Health Champion - An Update.

The Committee noted a written briefing from the Mental Health Champion with an update.

12. Written Briefing from the Department - Advanced Care Planning.

The Committee noted a written briefing from the Department regarding Advanced Care Planning.

13. Written Briefing from the Department - Dental Services Overview.

The Committee noted a written briefing from the Department regarding Dental Services Overview.

14. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding cervical smear testing.
- ii. The Committee noted a response from the Department with a letter to the Public Health Agency regarding clean air in schools.
- iii. The Committee considered a response from the Belfast Trust with a follow up from their oral briefing on 5th February.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to include this in papers for Ministers oral briefing on 26 March on HSC Trusts Governance and Accountability.

- iv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding the Outturn and Forecast Outturn - January.
- v. The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for the Executive Office regarding a memo to Committee Clerks on Windsor Framework.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Committee Clerk will respond.

- vi. The Committee noted a correspondence from the Examiner of Statutory Rules regarding the 58th report of the Examiner of Statutory Rule.

- vii. The Committee noted correspondence from Strategic Investment Board Ltd regarding an Investing Activity Report- February 2026.
- viii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Fiscal Council.
- ix. The Committee noted correspondence from NICCY regarding a mental health research report- A System at a Crossroads.
- x. The Committee noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Fiscal Council.
- xi. The Committee noted correspondence from Arthritis UK regarding an invite to World yOung Rheumatic Disease (WORD) Day event on 18 March.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that members will RSVP directly.

- xii. The Committee considered correspondence from Food Standards Agency regarding a request to present to the Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Food Standards Agency and invite them to present to the Committee.

- xiii. The Committee noted correspondence from Positive Life NI regarding a request to present to the Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add Positive Life NI to the Committee Clinic list.

- xiv. The Committee considered correspondence from Caleb's Cause with a request to brief the Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add this to the Committee's forward work programme.

- xv. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding failure of statutory duty under Section 5 Disabled Persons.

- xvi. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding Adult ADHD service gap and withdrawal of shared care.

- xvii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding Hospital Car Parking charges, including the draft Bill and Explanatory and Financial Memorandum.

- xviii. The Committee considered correspondence from the Department regarding Wigs and Associated Products Tender.

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

- xix. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding the RalSe report on clawback.

- xx. The Committee noted correspondence from the Finance Committee regarding the Chancellors Spring Forecast.

- xxi. The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding issues with first clauses of Adult Protection Bill.

- xxii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding Transgender Health Care Services Briefing.

15. Forward Work Programme

The Chair noted that a visit to Craigavon Area Hospital will take place on Thursday 12 March from 10.30am to 12.00 noon, during which clinicians will demonstrate the palliative last days care template. The Chair further noted that, following this visit, they will meet the Chief Executive of the Pharmaceutical Society at 1.00pm in Parliament Buildings.

The Chair noted that a visit to St Francis Hospice in Dublin, focusing on lessons learned in implementing full funding for hospices, is scheduled for Wednesday 6 May, with the Permanent Secretary joining the Committee for this engagement.

Agreed: The Committee noted the forward work plan.

16. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move to closed session.

The Committee moved to closed session at 4.44pm.

Colin McGrath MLA left the meeting at 4.45pm.

17. Closed Session- Committee Deliberations on the Adult Protection Bill.

The Committee resumed its informal deliberations of the Adult Protection Bill.

Philip McGuigan MLA, left the meeting at 4.52pm and the Deputy Chairperson, Danny Donnelly MLA took the Chair.

Philip McGugan MLA rejoined the meeting at 4.58pm and took the Chair.

Nuala McAllister MLA left the meeting at 5.05pm.

Linda Dillon MLA left the meeting at 5.05pm

Órlaithí Flynn MLA left the meeting at 5.09pm.

The Committee discussed the clauses and agreed to seek further information from the Department on the following:

- Further detail on how assessments of capacity will be conducted, including:
 - the type of assessment to be used;
 - who will be authorised to carry out assessments;
 - the point at which assessments will be undertaken; and
 - the procedure to be followed in emergency or expedited circumstances.
- Clarification on how a Banning Order under the Bill will differ from a non-molestation order under existing legislation, and what consideration has been given to the rights of the individual subject to a Banning Order;
- An assessment of the impact of the Nursing and Midwifery Council's proposed amendment to include "professional regulators" among those to be consulted on guidance produced under Clause 22 (3); and
- Examples of what may constitute a "reasonable excuse" within the meaning of Clause 23 (1).

18. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee was scheduled to take place in Room 29 at 9.30am on 10 March.

The meeting was adjourned at 5.33pm.

Phillip McGuigan MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Health

12 March 2026