



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Health

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday 1 October 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.



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In Attendance: Keith McBride (Clerk)
Michael Doran (Senior Assistant Clerk)
Shannen Lofthouse (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Aidan Kennedy (Clerical Supervisor)
Caroline Devlin (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 2.01 pm in public session.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Chairperson's Business

There was no Chairpersons Business.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2026.



4. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Oral Briefing from the Permanent Secretary – Neighbourhood Model

The following officials from the Department of Health joined the meeting at 2.02 pm:

- Mike Farrar, Permanent Secretary;
- Tracey McCaig, Chief Operating Officer, SPPG;
- Chris Matthews, Deputy Secretary, Resources & Corporate Management; and
- Cathy Harrison, Chief Pharmaceutical Officer.

Officials briefed the Committee on the Department's Business Plan and provided an update on the Neighbourhood Model.

Diane Dodds MLA joined the meeting at 2.07 pm.

Alan Chambers MLA joined the meeting at 2.25 pm.

Linda Dillon MLA joined the meeting at 2.48 pm.

A question and answer session followed.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking further information on a number of issues.

Diane Dodds MLA left the meeting at 3.32 pm.



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6. Oral Briefing from Food Standards Agency – An Overview

The following representatives joined the meeting at 3.37 pm along with the following Departmental officials:

- Rebecca Sudworth, Director of Policy, Wales and NI;
- Andy Cole, Director for Northern Ireland;
- Sharon Gilmore, Head of Standards and Dietary Health; and
- Phillip Kennedy, Head of Food Safety Policy and Delivery.

Officials briefed the Committee on the work of the Food Standards Agency and provided an overview of current priorities and ongoing activities.

A question and answer session followed.

Diane Dodds MLA re-joined the meeting at 3:56 pm.

Linda Dillon MLA left the meeting at 4:04 pm.

Nuala McAllister MLA left the meeting at 4:28 pm.

Alan Robinson MLA left the meeting at 4:31 pm.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

7. Written Briefing from the Department – Autism Strategy

The Committee considered a written briefing from the Department of Health on the Autism Strategy.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward to the Independent Autism Reviewer for comment.

8. Written Briefing from the Department – Elective Care Framework: Governance, Delivery & Outcomes

The Committee considered a written briefing from the Department of Health on Elective Care Framework: Governance, Delivery & Outcomes

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Elective Care Team to attend Committee to provide an update on progress in relation to elective care and waiting lists.

9. Correspondence

- i. The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Health with a copy of a response from SPPG to Action for Muckamore regarding Adult Safeguarding.
- ii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Business Office regarding a correction of SR 2026/72 Prescription of Drugs.
- iii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Business Office regarding the Pharmaceutical Society's NI Annual Report and Accounts.



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- iv. The Committee noted correspondence from the Education Committee regarding communication support, referral pathways and waiting times for an individual.
- v. The Committee noted correspondence from the Finance Committee regarding the Forecast Outturn Position Report for August (Round 5).
- vi. The Committee noted correspondence from the Finance Committee regarding the Baby Loss Ribbon Ceremony on 12 October 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed Members would RSVP individually.

- vii. The Committee noted correspondence from the Examiner of Statutory rules regarding its 74th Report.
- viii. The Committee noted a response from the Western Health and Social Care Trust to an individual regarding a request for scrutiny.
- ix. The Committee noted correspondence from the British Dental Association regarding the Department of Health's response on General Dental Services.

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



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- x. The Committee considered correspondence from Barnardo's regarding Reimagine Children's Collective and requesting a meeting with the Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to respond to Barnardo's advising that it would not be able to facilitate a meeting at this time, but would keep the organisation informed of any updates.

- xi. The Committee noted correspondence from Diabetes UK Northern Ireland regarding the cost of diabetes in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward to the Department of Health for comment on savings.

- xii. The Committee noted correspondence from Extern providing an update on the relocation of Extern services.

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

- xiii. The Committee noted correspondence from Strategic Investment Board regarding the Investing Activity Report for the Department of Health.



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- xiv. The Committee noted correspondence from National Childbirth Trust with a copy email to the Southern Health and Social Care Trust regarding the potential suspension of Daisy Hill inpatient maternity services.
- xv. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual with a copy email to the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman regarding a complaint.
- xvi. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from an individual to the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust regarding a complaint.
- xvii. The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from an individual to a number of statutory and public bodies regarding regulatory concern.
- xviii. The Committee noted correspondence from an individual regarding concerns about the administration of veterans' services and related public bodies.

The Committee moved into closed session at 4:37 pm.

10. Forward Work Programme

The Clerk took Members through the Forward Work Programme and outlined the proposed plan for forthcoming Committee business.



Agreed: The Committee agreed to the draft forward work plan.

11. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

12. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting was scheduled to take place on Thursday 8 October at 2.00 pm in Room 29, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.49 pm.

Phillip McGuigan MLA
Chairperson, Committee for Health
8 October 2026