



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Health, Social Services and
Public Safety

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Health and Personal Social Services
(Amendment) Bill: Committee Deliberations

13 January 2016

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety

Health and Personal Social Services (Amendment) Bill: Committee Deliberations

13 January 2016

Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Ms Maeve McLaughlin (Chairperson)
Mr Alex Easton (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Thomas Buchanan
Mrs Pam Cameron
Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson
Mr Kieran McCarthy
Ms Rosaleen McCorley
Mr Michael McGimpsey
Mr Daithí McKay
Mr Fearghal McKinney
Mr Gary Middleton

The Chairperson (Ms Maeve McLaughlin): I wish to seek members' views and agreement on any actions they wish to take in relation to each clause. For example, a member might want to seek an amendment or a written ministerial assurance or make a recommendation for our report on the Bill.

Do members wish to raise any issues on clause 1? Are members content with clause 1?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson (Ms Maeve McLaughlin): Are there any issues that members wish to raise in relation to clause 2?

Mr McKinney: Was there an issue around data protection for social workers that we should put some focus on? I will have another look at the social workers' submission. They said:

"the powers to disclose information about a registered person's fitness to practice require to be more fully rehearsed and should also be explicitly referenced to data protection considerations."

The Chairperson (Ms Maeve McLaughlin): Is it something that we need to clarify? The issue that was flagged up in relation to clause 2 was also about the 14-day limit. Are you suggesting that we seek clarification from the Department on data protection in relation to clause 2?

Mr McKinney: Yes.

The Committee Clerk: Chair, let us be just a little bit more specific. I am not clear on what the question is.

Mr McKinney: It is just, basically, that the social workers' organisation has drawn attention to some data protection issues. They want to have clear links to that. I assume that it is for protection for its own members. It did not make reference to the 14-day limit at that point, but it referred to this. It is at page 210 of the pack, under clause 2, fourth paragraph.

The Committee Clerk: Chair, I am just looking at the Department's written response, which it has just rehearsed. Officials made the point that the Social Care Council has already to abide by the Data Protection Act 1998 and will continue to have to do so.

Mr McKinney: It might be that a written reference from the Department to that effect, that they are governed by data protection anyway, would cover this requirement, without any alteration to the Bill.

The Chairperson (Ms Maeve McLaughlin): Are members then suggesting that there should be some sort of assurance from the Department as to upholding the Data Protection Act, as was flagged up?

Mr McKinney: OK.

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson (Ms Maeve McLaughlin): OK. I think that that is clear. Are members content with clause 2?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson (Ms Maeve McLaughlin): Do members want to raise any issues in relation to clause 3? OK. Do members want to raise any issues in relation to clause 4? OK. Do members want to raise any issues in relation to clause 5? OK. Any issues with clause 6? OK. Are there any issues that members would like to raise with clause 7? OK. Are there any issues with clause 8? OK. Are there any issues with clause 9? OK.

Members, you are very cooperative today. That concludes our initial deliberations on the Bill. Final deliberations will take place at next week's meeting, which will include consideration of the text of any Committee amendments that are not forthcoming at this stage. We will certainly consider the assurance from the Department in relation to data protection, and the Questions will be put formally on the clauses at our meeting on 27 January.