

NICS SENIOR LEADERSHIP GROUP (SLG)
Friday 04 September 2026, 09:00am
Executive Room, Stormont Castle

In attendance:

Jayne Brady (HoCS) (Chair)
Moirá Doherty (MD)
Neil Gibson (NG),
Alex Gordon (AG)
Hugh Widdis (HW)

Louise Crilly (LC)
Mike Farrar (MF)
Katrina Godfrey (KG)
Ian Snowden (IS)
David Malcolm (DM)

Declan McGeown (DMcG) obo Emer Morelli
Linsey Farrell (LF) obo Grainia Long

Conor O'Hare joined the meeting for agenda item 3 only

Jayne Byrne, Debbie Murphy (Secretariat)

1. Welcome and Apologies

HoCS noted apologies from Grainia Long and Emer Morelli, welcomed members to the meeting and those deputising.

2. Minutes & Actions arising from SLG 28 August 2026

The minutes of the 28 August 2026 meeting were agreed with a minor amendment, and members noted that actions are progressing.

3. NI Socio Economic Key facts

SLG received a presentation from Conor O'Hare, Head of the Executive Economics Unit in TEO, on key socio-economic indicators for Northern Ireland, including comparative regional performance and longer-term trends. Members noted that statistics show improvement across a number of areas, including growth, employment, crime levels and perceptions of local policing. Discussion focused on the importance of presenting the data in a balanced and nuanced way, including appropriate comparators, the longer-term picture, and the distinction between overall positive trends and continuing inequalities or areas requiring further intervention. Members emphasised the need to avoid oversimplification, particularly in relation to poverty, cost of living pressures, productivity, environmental constraints and sustainable growth. SLG agreed that the material would benefit from further development, including clearer longitudinal analysis, visual presentation of key trends, identification of areas of progress and areas requiring further work, and careful consideration of the wider policy and budgetary context.

Action: SLG members to provide further feedback, including input from departmental policy and analytical teams, on proposed metrics, comparative measures and the overall content and balance of the framework. Secretariat to commission.

4. Timeline – key milestones for remaining mandate

SLG considered the draft timeline of key milestones for the remainder of the mandate, which had been developed to support improved forward planning across budgetary, statutory and strategic obligations. Members noted that departments were at differing stages in developing internal timelines and that some budget-related dates remained unconfirmed and should be marked as estimated or subject to confirmation. Discussion highlighted the potential value of adding further layers to the timeline, including departmental forward workplans, emerging strategy timelines, EU-UK reset implications, judicial review outcomes and other cross-cutting pressures likely to affect departmental prioritisation and delivery. Members agreed that the timeline should focus on the fundamental strategic issues requiring resolution before the election period, support advice to Ministers, and help identify cross-cutting priorities and areas where early planning or triage would be beneficial. It was noted that, once further developed, the timeline could inform engagement with Special Advisers, including consideration of any additional inclusions and how the approach might operate in practice.

5. CCG Paper

The Group welcomed the paper and recorded its appreciation to DoF and CCG colleagues for its development. Members were encouraged to complete the National Cyber Security Centre training.

The Group considered the Catastrophic Impact Programme and recognised that any cessation of non-essential activity would require a proportionate, department-specific approach.

Members highlighted the significant emergency-response expertise available across departments and agencies and supported a more structured approach to sharing and mobilising this capability. The proposed job-family model for civil-contingencies roles was also supported, with an emphasis on clear prioritisation.

The group noted the paper and its recommendations.

Action: CCG paper to be shared with NICS Board.

6. Tour de Table by exception

DoH: MF updated on improvement in health waiting times and the establishment of an independent reconfiguration committee.

DfE: IS updated on preparations for the household electricity payment scheme.

OLC: AG updated on the volume, resourcing implications and potential financial consequences of Private Members' Bills.

DfI: DMcG updated on the audit into NI Water.

DE: DM updated on pre-school admissions legislation.

HoCS: Updated on emerging workforce matters and preparations for the forthcoming CSLG event.

7. AoB

The Group noted forthcoming engagement between the Executive, the Secretary of State and party leaders, with arrangements being progressed with the NIO. Members discussed significant budgetary and governance risks, including potential overspend and the need for engagement with Ministers, the UK Government and HM Treasury.

The Group also noted forthcoming HR policy work and the development of more structured and inclusive student and job-placement opportunities, with appropriate conflict-of-interest safeguards.

The Group recorded its thanks to Janine Fullerton and Sean Holland on their retirement for their significant contributions.

8. Date of next SLG meeting

Next meeting: Friday 11 September 2026 at 09:00-10:30 in the Executive Room.

@ 11.00 am meeting concluded