

North South Ministerial Council
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta
Thuaidh Theas
An Chomhrúnaíocht

PAPER NSMC HEFS 3 (12) JC

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY MEETING

NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OFFICES, ARMAGH

21 NOVEMBER 2012

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The fifteenth North South Ministerial Council Health and Food Safety meeting was held in the NSMC Joint Secretariat Offices, Armagh on 21 November 2012. The meeting was attended by Edwin Poots MLA, Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, James Reilly TD, Minister for Health, Frances Fitzgerald TD, Minister for Children and Youth Affairs and Michelle O'Neill MLA, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. Minister Poots chaired the meeting.

HEALTH PROMOTION

2. Ministers noted that an initial scoping meeting for the North-South Alcohol Forum took place in October. Key players in alcohol policy from both jurisdictions to meet to share information and practice in dealing with alcohol misuse. The continuing development of strategies in both jurisdictions on alcohol misuse and collaboration on minimum unit price for alcohol was noted.
3. An update was provided on Northern Ireland's ten year tobacco control strategy including the establishment of a multi agency group to take the strategy forward. The Council noted that both Health Ministers supported the publishing

of the legislative proposal for the Tobacco Directive by the European Commission at the earliest opportunity.

4. Ministers noted the findings from the public consultation process in Ireland on calorie posting in restaurants which indicate a high level of support among the general public and within the food industry itself for calorie menu labeling. The progress in Northern Ireland with Caloriewise and the Front of Pack consultation which will empower consumers to make healthier food choices was also noted.
5. The Council noted and welcomed the ongoing co-operation and progress on the range of actions within the All-Island Action Plan on Suicide Prevention. In particular, the sharing of education and training programmes and the publication of the WorkOut online application (www.workoutapp.ie) designed to improve the mental fitness of young men

CANCER AND HEALTH RESEARCH CO-OPERATION

6. The Council noted that the business planning case for the establishment of a radiotherapy unit at Altnagelvin is further advanced and that officials are working together to ensure the effective delivery of the project.
7. Ministers welcomed the rapid progression by the All Ireland Institute of Hospice and Palliative Care in its work on education, research and the provision of care. They also welcomed the continuing success in multi-national research through the US-Ireland R&D Partnership including:
 - the development of common documentation and working procedures to deal with funding proposals involving health researchers from both jurisdictions and the US which were implemented and launched in August 2012; and
 - the publication of major findings, which attracted significant international interest, on the identification of the genes that may cause some patients with diabetes to develop serious kidney disease.

CHILD PROTECTION

8. The Council noted that the Child Protection work programme that had been agreed at the NSMC Health and Food Safety meeting in July 2012 is being taken forward and welcomed that an All-Island Child Protection conference will be held in the first half of 2013. Conference delegates will share practice knowledge, research and learning amongst policy makers, practitioners and managers in relation to safeguarding and child protection practices.

EU MATTERS

9. Ministers noted the Health Presidency Programme to be progressed during Ireland's Presidency of the Council of the European Union.
10. Officials from the Department of Health are exploring areas of common interest with officials from the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety in advance of the eHealth high level conference which Ireland will host in May 2013.
11. The Minister for Health wishes to ensure continued North/South engagement during the Presidency and it is hoped that, where appropriate, the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and his officials attend key events.

FOOD SAFETY PROMOTION BOARD (*safefood*)

12. The Council received a presentation on the work of **safefood** from the CEO, Martin Higgins. The report highlighted the range of consumer and scientific activities undertaken by the Body and its work on developing an indicator for measuring food poverty. The report covered **safefood's** involvement with the Department of the Environment and the Environmental Protection Agency in a joint campaign focussing on improving customers' understanding of "best before" and "use by dates".

Scientific Advisory Committee

13. The appointment of five new members to **safefood's** Scientific Advisory Committee was approved as were the appointments of Dr Mary Upton and Mr Robert Huey as Chair and Vice-Chair respectively.

Emerging Food Safety Issues

14. Ministers welcomed a report prepared by the Scientific Advisory Committee on emerging food safety issues and noted the proposal in the report of a new model of addressing emerging issues on an all-island basis.

Appointment of *safefood* CEO

15. The reappointment of Martin Higgins as **safefood** CEO until May 2015 was approved by Ministers

Next Meeting

16. The Council agreed that the next NSMC Health and Food Safety meeting will be held in July 2013.

**Joint Secretariat
21 November 2012**