

North South Ministerial Council
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta
Thuaidh Theas
An Chomhrúnaíocht

PAPER NSMC HEFS 2 (14) JC

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY MEETING

**NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OFFICES,
ARMAGH**

12 NOVEMBER 2014

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The eighteenth North South Ministerial Council Health and Food Safety meeting was held in the NSMC Joint Secretariat Offices, Armagh on 12 November 2014. The meeting was attended by Leo Varadkar TD, Minister for Health, Dr. James Reilly TD, Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Jim Wells MLA, Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, and Michelle O'Neill MLA, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. Minister Varadkar chaired the meeting.

HEALTH AND CHILD PROTECTION

EU FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

2. Ministers noted the considerable funding opportunities available in this sector and encouraged officials to continue to identify joint projects which can attract EU Funding.

3. Ministers welcomed the collaboration that is taking place to draw down funding, in particular the Cooperation and Working Together (CAWT) project delivering cross-border health services to improve patient care.

HEALTH PROMOTION

4. The NSMC noted the progress on alcohol-related harm prevention strategies in both jurisdictions. This included the work of the North/South Alcohol Policy Advisory Group and the establishment of a North/South Hidden Harm Group facilitated by Co-operation and Working Together (CAWT).
5. The Council noted the ongoing work on Minimum Unit Pricing of Alcohol. Ministers were informed that the findings from the jointly commissioned University of Sheffield Study on the potential impact of Minimum Unit Pricing in both jurisdictions and an addendum report, are currently under consideration by the Department of Health (DOH) and the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS). Ministers committed to work towards introducing Minimum Unit Pricing at the same time, subject to the decision of the European Court.
6. The Council was informed that the Tobacco Products Directive came into force in May 2014 following European Union Member States final approval. Ministers noted the ongoing work under the EU Action Plan on Childhood Obesity.
7. Ministers welcomed the progress in relation to the development of the two new suicide prevention strategies. They also welcomed the commitment to share knowledge arising from media and public information campaigns on mental health.

CANCER AND HEALTH RESEARCH CO-OPERATION

8. The Council noted that a Memorandum of Understanding and Service Level Agreement for the operation of the Radiotherapy Unit at Altnagelvin had been signed, that works had commenced at the site and the project remained on target for completion with the operational date for the Unit being Autumn 2016.
9. Ministers welcomed the continued progress of the Ireland – Northern Ireland – National Cancer Institute Cancer Consortium and the proposals for sharing information to support the work streams of the Consortium.
10. Ministers noted the report from the latest meeting of the tri-jurisdictional Steering Group for US-Ireland R&D Partnership which took place on 29 September 2014. The NSMC noted that the meeting included discussion on the various application success rates in the different research priority areas, opportunities for promoting partnership to increase visibility, particularly in the US, the opportunities for expanding cooperation into the Agri-Food Area and new funding mechanisms including centre-to-centre collaboration.

11. Ministers also welcomed the update on the ongoing work of the All Ireland Institute of Hospice and Palliative Care including the recent launch of the Children and Young People website.

CHILD PROTECTION

12. The Council recalled the discussion at the NMSC Plenary in Dublin on 3 October. Ministers noted that the Child Protection work programme, continues to be progressed and that updates will be reported to future meetings. They also noted that a North/South Child Care in Practice conference on authoritative early intervention was held on 22 October 2014 in Dundalk.

FOOD SAFETY PROMOTION BOARD (*safefood*)

13. The Council noted a progress report provided by the recently appointed Chief Executive of *safefood*, Ray Dolan. Ministers were briefed on the continued development of the awareness campaign targeting childhood overweight and obesity. They also noted the success and development of the community food initiatives and a range of research reports and surveys completed in recent months.

FOOD SAFETY PROMOTION BOARD (*safefood*) BUSINESS PLAN AND BUDGET 2015

14. The Council was advised that *safefood* has prepared a draft 2015 Business Plan and Budget. These will be submitted to NSMC for approval once they have been approved by Sponsor Departments and Finance Ministers.

***Safefood* ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2013**

15. The Council noted that *safefood* has prepared its Annual Report and Accounts 2013 (as certified by the Comptrollers and Auditors General) and once the Annual Report has been approved by both Sponsor Departments they will be laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly and both Houses of the Oireachtas.

TOURISM IRELAND ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2013

16. Ministers noted the position with regard to Tourism Ireland's Annual Report and Accounts 2013 which have been laid before the Northern Ireland Assembly and will be laid before both Houses of the Oireachtas.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

17. The Council agreed that the next NSMC Health and Food Safety meeting will be held in Spring 2015.

Joint Secretariat
12 November 2014

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