



**PAPER NSMC HEFS 2 (16) JC**

**NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL**

**HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY MEETING**

**NSMC JOINT SECRETARIAT OFFICES,  
ARMAGH**

**9 NOVEMBER 2016**

**JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ**

1. The twenty first North South Ministerial Council Health and Food Safety meeting was held in the NSMC Joint Secretariat Offices, Armagh on 9 November 2016. The meeting was attended by Michelle O'Neill MLA, Minister for Health, Simon Harris TD, Minister for Health, Katherine Zappone TD, Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, and Junior Minister Alasdair Ross MLA. Minister O'Neill chaired the meeting.

**IMPLICATIONS OF UK REFERENDUM**

2. Ministers noted that each jurisdiction is continuing to deepen its analysis on the implications of the UK Referendum. They recognised the challenging nature of this work when it is not yet known what new arrangements may emerge as regards the UK's future relationship with the EU. This matter will be kept under review at future NSMC meetings in this sector.

**REVIEW OF WORK PROGRAMME**

3. The Council noted the current work programme and welcomed progress made to date in these areas and agreed that the current programme remains relevant, enabling practical and effective co-operation for mutual benefit in the Health Sector.

4. Ministers noted the areas identified by the Department of Health (N) which, in its view, would have potential for further development and collaboration between the health authorities in both jurisdictions. They agreed that the Department of Health (S) will consider, in the first instance, the Department of Health (N) proposals for future collaboration as well as identifying any potential additional areas. Following this, the two Departments will liaise with a view to a joint approach being agreed for consideration at the first NSMC Health Sectoral in 2017.
5. They also noted that a review of the current child protection work programme is underway and a draft revised all island work programme will be presented at a future NSMC health sectoral meeting for approval.

## **HEALTH PROMOTION**

6. Ministers noted the continued progress on strategies to prevent the harm related to alcohol misuse in both jurisdictions.
7. They noted that following a joint review, the North/South Alcohol Policy Advisory Group renewed its existing Terms of Reference at its meeting in June 2016. Ministers welcomed the intention to host a knowledge exchange seminar on the link between alcohol, self-harm and suicide in early 2017.
8. The Council noted that both jurisdictions continue to review the recent Scottish Court judgement and the European Court of Justice Judgement in the Scottish Minimum Unit Pricing (MUP) case and their implications.
9. They also noted that both jurisdictions have introduced legislation to transpose the EU Tobacco Products Directive, which came into force in May 2016.
10. Ministers noted that standardised packaging for tobacco products was introduced from May 2016 under the UK-wide Standardised Packaging of Tobacco Regulations 2015. The Public Health (Standardised Packaging of Tobacco) Act 2015 is being amended through the Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2016 and it is anticipated that the standardised packaging measures will be introduced in Ireland in the near future.
11. They noted that an all-island conference entitled "A tobacco-free island – how are we doing?", organised by the Institute of Public Health, was held in Belfast on 14 June.
12. "A Healthy Weight for Ireland 2016-2025 a new National Obesity Policy and Action Plan" was launched on September 22.
13. The Council noted that the Public Health Agency, Food Standards Agency and Safefood are consulting on nutrition standards for Health and Social Care settings and that the consultation closes on November 18.

14. Ministers welcome the update on suicide prevention initiatives in both jurisdictions including:

- the launch of the '*Concerned About Suicide Leaflet*' which will help raise awareness and put people in contact with sources of support.
- the continued collaboration between Public Health Agency and National Office for Suicide Prevention in working with the GAA in both jurisdictions on a health and wellbeing project, including the recent holding of a National Health and Wellbeing day on 22 October.

## **CANCER AND HEALTH RESEARCH CO-OPERATION**

15. Ministers noted that construction on the Radiotherapy Unit at Altnagelvin is on target and it is planned that the Unit will open and be operational later this month. When fully operational, the new Unit will have the capacity to treat just over 1500 new patients, with up to 385 of these patients from the south.

16. The Council noted that a workshop involving participants from the "Ireland – Northern Ireland – NCI Cancer Consortium" took place in May 2016 and that the outcomes from the workshop are due to be discussed at the next meeting of the Board of Directors of the Consortium.

17. The Council also noted that five new submissions were made to the National Institutes of Health (NIH) involving researchers from both jurisdictions, in the US-Ireland R&D Partnership.

18. Ministers welcomed the update on the ongoing work of the All Ireland Institute of Hospice and Palliative Care (AIHPC) including:

- the launch of the *The Palliative Hub – Professional*;
- a workshop entitled "*Improving transition from children's to adult services for young adults with life-limiting conditions*"; and
- an International Palliative Care Conference took place virtually in October 2016.

## **CHILD PROTECTION**

19. It was noted that the Work Programme agreed at the NSMC Health and Food Safety meeting in July 2012 continues to be progressed through the cross-border Steering Group of officials, co-chaired by Department of Health (DOH (N)) and Department of Children and Youth Affairs.

20. Updates were also provided in the various workstreams relating to: Knowledge Exchange Forum, Quality and Effectiveness, Deaths of Children in Care, Cultural Competence in Safeguarding and other Specialist Services.

21. Ministers noted that a review of the current Child Protection Work Programme is underway and the outcome will be reported at a future NSMC meeting.

## **FOOD SAFETY PROMOTION BOARD (*safefood*)**

22. The CEO of *safefood*, Ray Dolan provided an overview of the work of *safefood* and made references to high level achievements and campaigns related to: Childhood Obesity, Food safety and Folic Acid along with the continued sponsorship of 'Operation Transformation'.
23. The Council noted that *safefood* has engaged with customers on digital media, developed various networks and carried out research in relation to: Community Food initiatives, Knowledge Networks, Cost of a Healthy Food Basket survey, research into Energy drinks and the all-island obesity action forum.
24. Safefood also reported on their attendance at the Balmoral Show highlighting the Childhood Obesity campaign.
25. Ministers noted the progress of the tripartite initiative between *safefood*, the Public Health Agency and the Food Standards Agency in developing minimum nutritional standards for catering for staff and visitors in Health and Social Care settings.
26. The Council noted that *safefood* has drafted its 2017 Business Plan and a 2017-2019 Corporate Plan which will be considered by both Sponsor Departments before seeking approval at an appropriate NSMC meeting.

## **SAFEFOOD ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS 2015**

27. The Council noted the *safefood* Annual Report and Accounts 2015.

## **SAFEFOOD ADVISORY COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS**

28. The Council approved the appointments of: Dr Mary Corcoran, Dr Kirsten Dunbar, Dr Joseph Hegarty, Prof Elizabeth Keane, Mr Gerry Lean, Dr Mary McCarthy and Dr Elaine Mooney as new members of the *safefood* Advisory Committee (SAC) for a three-year term and agreed that the Chief Executive would write to the new members of SAC confirming their appointments.

## **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

29. The Council agreed that the next NSMC Health and Food Safety meeting will be held in spring 2017.

**Joint Secretariat  
9 November 2016**

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