

North South Ministerial Council
Joint Secretariat



An Chomhairle Aireachta
Thuaidh Theas
An Chomhrúnaíocht

PAPER NSMC HEFS 1 (15) JC

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY MEETING

ALTNAGELVIN AREA HOSPITAL

15 APRIL 2015

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

1. The nineteenth North South Ministerial Council Health and Food Safety meeting was held at Altnagelvin Area Hospital on 15 April 2015. The meeting was attended by Leo Varadkar TD, Minister for Health, Jim Wells MLA, Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, and Michelle O'Neill MLA, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development. Minister Wells chaired the meeting.

Review of Work Programme

2. Ministers had a discussion on the review of work programmes for the Health Sector and noted that an update paper on the review will be brought to the next Health and Food Safety sectoral meeting.

HEALTH AND CHILD PROTECTION

CANCER AND HEALTH RESEARCH CO-OPERATION

3. Ministers welcomed the opportunity to visit Altnagelvin Area Hospital to discuss cooperation in health care. They welcomed the presentation by the Western Health and Social Care Trust representatives on the Radiotherapy Unit and looked forward to viewing the construction underway on the Unit later that day.
4. The Council was advised that construction on the Radiotherapy Unit is on target for completion within the agreed timeframe.
5. Ministers welcomed the continued progress of the Ireland – Northern Ireland – National Cancer Institute Cancer Consortium and looked forward to the Consortium Conference in Belfast which will be held on 10-13 May 2015.
6. Ministers also welcomed the update on the ongoing work of the *All Ireland Institute of Hospice and Palliative Care*.

HEALTH PROMOTION

7. The NSMC noted the continued progress on strategies to prevent harm related to alcohol misuse in both jurisdictions including the work of the *North/South Alcohol Policy Advisory Group* and the *North/South Hidden Harm Group* facilitated by Co-operation and Working Together (CAWT).
8. The Council noted that decisions on the introduction of Minimum Unit Pricing of Alcohol (MUP) had been announced in both jurisdictions. Ministers agreed to work together, as far as possible, to ensure a coordinated approach to MUP in terms of timing and appropriate MUP levels to ensure health impacts are maximized and impact on cross-border trade is minimized.
9. The Council noted that legislation to introduce standardized packaging of tobacco products has now been enacted in both Ireland and the United Kingdom and the provisions will come into force in May 2016.
10. Ministers also welcomed the developments on rare diseases and the plans to establish mechanisms for future collaboration.

SUICIDE PREVENTION

11. Ministers received an update on the development of the two new suicide prevention strategies. The Ministers undertook to work more closely together on this important issue.
12. The Council noted that the Self Harm Registry has been commended by the World Health Organisation and is now an internationally recognized model of best practice.

CHILD PROTECTION

13. Ministers noted that the work programme agreed at a previous NSMC meeting continues to be progressed by the cross-border Steering Group of officials (co-chaired by the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs) which most recently met on 1 April 2015.
14. The Council noted that progress on work undertaken on the work programme will be reported at future NSMC meetings.

FOOD SAFETY PROMOTION BOARD (safefood)

FOOD SAFETY AND TRACEABILITY

15. Ministers welcomed the presentation by Professor Chris Elliott of the Institute for Global Food Security, Queen's University Belfast on the topic of *"Food Safety and Traceability- an all island imperative"*.

SAFEFOOD-REVIEW OF 2014 LOOK AHEAD TO 2015

16. The Council noted the CEO's report on the high level achievements and updates on campaigns against 2014 Business Plan targets. The targets and objectives for 2015 were also discussed and progress to date was noted.

OTHER ISSUES

INTERREG VA PROGRAMME

17. Ministers welcomed that both Member States and the European Commission have approved the INTERREG VA Programme for the period 2014-2020 and the associated budget allocation of €282m.
18. The NSMC approved the INTERREG VA Programme.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

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

Joint Secretariat
15 April 2015

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