



PAPER NSMC HEFS 2 (09) JC

NORTH SOUTH MINISTERIAL COUNCIL

HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY SECTORAL

FORMATS

BELFAST

25 NOVEMBER 2009

JOINT COMMUNIQUÉ

HEALTH SECTOR

1. The ninth North South Ministerial Council meeting in the Health and Food Safety sectoral formats was held in Belfast on Wednesday, 25 November 2009. The meeting was attended by Michael McGimpsey MLA, Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Michelle Gildernew MP, MLA Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development and Mary Harney, TD, Minister for Health and Children. Minister McGimpsey chaired the meeting.

Progress Report

2. The Council noted and welcomed progress on the following issues:

Suicide Prevention

The launch of revised media guidelines on suicide prevention and the removal of border area roaming charges by O2 to the Crisis Response Helpline.

Paediatric Congenital Cardiac Services (PCCS)

The commencement of a Service Level Agreement between the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) for Northern Ireland and Our Lady's Children's Hospital in Crumlin (OLCHC) to support provision of paediatric congenital cardiac services (PCCS).

Radiotherapy Services

The establishment of a cross border collaboration subgroup to advise on care pathways for the new facility taking account of capacity for patients from County Donegal.

H1NI Pandemic

3. Ministers reviewed the current state of play on H1N1 flu planning and preparedness. They welcomed the co-operation and sharing of information between officials and Ministers in both jurisdictions and noted the structures that are in place for coordination on issues of mutual concern, which have served well to date.

Child Protection

4. The Council was updated on the work of the cross border Child Protection Group and its various sub-groups. Ministers noted and welcomed the exchange of information on internet safety and social networking sites and co-operation on child protection research and knowledge transfer.
5. Ministers reviewed progress towards establishing a joint protocol on children in care, or on the child protection register, that go missing and children moving across the border where there are concerns. They noted on-going work on developing a joint draft communication strategy and leaflets with advice and guidance on what to do if worried about a child, and on safer recruitment procedures for employers.
6. Ministers welcomed a successful vetting and barring conference on 11 November. They were updated on developments on the Vetting and Barring Scheme in Northern Ireland and noted work under way to place existing vetting arrangements in Ireland on a statutory basis.

Cancer Research

7. The Council reviewed continuing co-operation on cancer research. They noted and welcomed the extension of a Trinity College Dublin project on the human papilloma virus (HPV) into Northern Ireland, and the setting up of an all-island gene library.
8. Ministers welcomed ongoing clinical trials and research at local, cross-border and international levels. They noted progress in planning for the establishment of a biobank for medical research in both jurisdictions while recognising the challenge of advancing these plans in the current economic climate.

9. Ministers discussed the findings of the report “Cancer Incidence Mortality, Treatment and Survival in the North and South of Ireland: 1994-2004” and welcomed the success of two recent conferences, one on health economics and the other on cancer registries epidemiology.

FOOD SAFETY PROMOTION BOARD (safefood)

safefood Progress Report

10. The Council noted **safefood’s** promotional activities including a campaign, in collaboration with the Irish Heart Foundation and the Northern Ireland Chest Heart and Stroke foundation, to raise awareness on reducing dietary salt. They welcomed the planned launch of community food initiatives projects at Stormont in January 2010.
11. The Council was updated on **safefood** proposals for the development of an enteric reference service for the island of Ireland. They agreed to defer further work on this proposal.

Scientific Advisory Committee

12. Ministers expressed their thanks to the outgoing members of **safefood’s** Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) for their work. They noted **safefood’s** proposal for a revised structure for the incoming SAC and that nominations for the new SAC will be brought forward for consideration at a future NSMC meeting.

safefood Business Plans & 2008 Annual Report

13. Ministers noted the current position on **safefood’s** Business Plans for 2009 and 2010 and that **safefood’s** 2008 Annual Accounts have been submitted to the Comptrollers and Auditors General in both jurisdictions.

**Joint Secretariat
25 November 2009**