



## **Ministerial Meeting of the Sectoral Group on the Misuse of Substances**

**Dublin Castle, 27<sup>th</sup> June 2014**

### ***Communiqué***

The Irish Government today hosted the 9th Ministerial meeting of the British-Irish Council on the Misuse of Substances in Dublin Castle. The meeting was chaired by **Mr. Alex White T.D., Minister of State for Primary Care in Ireland** with responsibility for the National Drugs Strategy. The key thematic discussion at the meeting focused on current patterns and responses in relation to Cannabis, New Psychoactive Substances and Misuse of Prescribed Medicines.

The Ministers agreed on the importance of national and international collaboration to intercept and prevent the trafficking of drugs, illicit medicines, new psychoactive substances and drug precursors.

The Ministers identified as a priority the need to respond effectively to the emergence and rapid spread of new psychoactive substances. The Ministers agreed that prompt and proactive action should be taken to control new psychoactive substances where there is evidence of harm.

The Ministers shared information about innovative approaches aimed at detecting cannabis farms, including measures to promote the sharing of information between energy companies, landlords and fire services and cannabis card awareness campaigns.

The Ministers also discussed ways to address the misuse and/or diversion of prescribed controlled medication and the inappropriate use of over the counter medicines, and highlighted the importance of promoting good prescribing practice.

Evidence of trends in drug use in Member Administrations was shared by Ministers. The importance of social media in disseminating timely drug awareness and harm reduction messages to young people was discussed, as well as the potential of online services to provide access to screening, early intervention, treatment and support.

The Ministers also had an opportunity at this British-Irish Council meeting to share information on alcohol policies within their jurisdictions and the various approaches that are being taken to address these issues, including legislative measures.

The Ministers reviewed the recent work carried out by the British-Irish Council work sector in the area of the misuse of substances, which focused on approaches to prevention and education, tackling the impact of parental substance misuse on children and the role of internet helplines. The 2014-15 work programme will also address the issue of the aging cohort of heroin users and the development and implementation of naloxone programmes to reduce deaths from heroin overdoses.

The Ministers agreed that these meetings provided a very useful forum for sharing the detailed expertise and knowledge of those involved in the drugs sector across the British-Irish Council area. It was also noted that, in addition to exploring specific themes in depth, each meeting has facilitated the exchange of information on wider policy developments and initiatives.

The Ministers agreed that the work programme for 2014-15 would include Sectoral Group meetings on the Misuse of Substances in Ireland and Scotland. They also look forward to the continuation of the informal links that have built up between the Member Administrations to the benefit of the effort against drug/alcohol misuse in all jurisdictions.

It was agreed that Ministers would meet again in the latter part of 2015.

## **British-Irish Council - Misuse of Substances**

**27<sup>th</sup> June 2014**

### *Note to Editors*

The British-Irish Council was established under the Strand Three Provisions of the 1998 Multi-Party Agreement as a forum for its Members to exchange information, discuss, consult and use best endeavours to reach agreement on co-operation on matters of mutual interest within the competence of relevant Member Administrations. The Irish Government is the lead administration within the Council on the issue of Misuse of Substances.

### List of Delegates

<b>Irish Government</b>	
Minister of State for Primary Care	Minister Alex White T.D
<b>UK Government</b>	
Minister of State for Crime Prevention	Minister Norman Baker MP
<b>Northern Ireland Executive</b>	
Minister of the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety	Minister Edwin Poots MLA
Office of First Minister and deputy First Minister	Junior Minister Jennifer McCann MLA
<b>Scottish Government</b>	
Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs	Minister Roseanna Cunningham MSP
<b>Welsh Government</b>	
Minister for Health and Social Services	Dr Mark Drakeford AM
<b>Government of Jersey</b>	
Minister of Health and Social Services	Deputy Anne Pryke
<b>Government of Guernsey</b>	
Minister for Home Department	Deputy Peter Gillson
<b>Government of Isle of Man</b>	
Minister for Department of Home Affairs	Hon Juan P Watterson MHK