



Unit 7A, The Dargan Building
Heuston South Quarter
Military Road
Kilmainham
Dublin 8.
076 695 9991

21st November 2018

Deputy McGrath
Leinster House
Dublin 2.

PQ Ref 48289/18 To ask the Minister for Health the details of the funding and support he has made available to tackle foetal alcohol syndrome in each of the past five years; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

Dear Deputy McGrath,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

The National Women and Infants Health Programme (NWIHP) was established in January 2017 on foot of the publication of the *National Maternity Strategy 2016 – 2018 – Creating A Better Future Together*. Recommendations 16 and 17 of the National Strategy specifically outlines the requirement for the system to “develop a consistent approach to informing women about the risks of alcohol consumption during pregnancy” and ensuring ‘maternity hospitals/units strengthen methods of detecting alcohol abuse and supporting women to reduce their intake’.

Education on alcohol consumption is an essential part of care provided to women during the antenatal period. The NWIHP recognise the importance of this and in addressing Recommendations 16 and 17 in the National Maternity Strategy are working with HSE Health and Wellbeing to standardise the Make Every Contact Count educational training package thereby enabling maternity staff and students to educate and empower women to abstain from alcohol throughout pregnancy. This initiative will also aid in identifying women in need of additional support during the antenatal period.

Whilst it is not possible to quantify the cost of resources specifically directed to address Foetal Alcohol Syndrome, a number of additional investments have been made in maternity services since 2015, with a view to enhancing the one-to-one care women receive from maternity staff.

In the period 2015 – 2017 this additional funding has been used to support a number of priority developments in maternity hospitals / units across the country, including:

- 100 additional midwives, as recommended by the Birth Rate Plus report;
- 15 bereavement counsellors, to support families after perinatal death, or traumatic event;
- Additional consultant obstetricians, neonatologists, perinatal pathologist and perinatal psychiatrist to enable the establishment of the managed clinical network between the Coombe Women and Infants’ University Hospital and Portlaoise Hospital, within the Dublin Midlands Hospital Group;

- Funding to support the implementation of the Maternity and Newborn Clinical Management System;
- Supporting increased access to anomaly scanning;
- Financial support to facilitate establishment of the managed clinical maternity networks in each hospital Group; and
- Establishment of quality and patient safety resource in each managed clinical maternity network;

IN 2018, NWIHP was allocated additional development funding, a significant portion of which was used to enable the implementation of the Model of Care as set out in the National Maternity Strategy. This model of care is about providing women with informed choice regarding the care pathway they choose for their pregnancy. To support the implementation of these care pathways an additional 77 Midwives have been approved for 2018 in addition to additional specialist posts and allied health professional posts.

Collectively these investments in maternity care are enabling improvements in the level of care provided to pregnant women across the country including those aspects of care related to alcohol consumption.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,



Mary-Jo Biggs

General Manager, National Women and Infants Health Programme