



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

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30TH. December 2019

Deputy Sean Fleming
TD
Dail Eireann
Kildare Street
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PQ 53221/19: To ask the Minister for Health the allocation of funding provided in each of the years 2016 to 2018, the estimated allocation in 2019 and 2020 in respect of the National Breastfeeding Action Plan launched in 2016, the estimated expenditure for the plan from 2016 to 2021, his plans to have a full estimated cost of implementing same and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Fleming,

The above PQ has been forwarded to you for direct response to you on same.

The National Breastfeeding Implementation Group was established in 2016 to oversee the implementation of Breastfeeding in a Healthy Ireland – HSE Action Plan 2016-2021.

The group is working to achieve the aims and objectives of the Breastfeeding Action Plan through the implementation of initiatives in the following areas:

1. Improved governance and health service structures
2. Breastfeeding training and skills development
3. Health service policies and practices
4. Support at all stages of the breastfeeding continuum through social marketing, support and advocacy.

The group is partnering with key divisions to develop and provide the supports that mothers require at all stages of the breastfeeding continuum. The allocation of additional funding each year is through the annual Estimates process. Submissions were made in 2017, 2018 and 2019 for funding to provide additional lactation consultant posts and breast pumps for preterm babies. Up until now the HSE has not received any additional funding to implement the plan. However, considerable progress has been made using existing resources and through support received from the Nurture-Infant Health and Wellbeing Programme.

1. Improved governance and health service structures

There are dedicated lactation supports in some hospitals and primary care, but comparisons with international staffing benchmarks suggest that there is a requirement for additional posts dedicated to lactation support to ensure timely skilled assistance for mothers. Community Health Organisations and Maternity services have prioritised these posts within their existing budgets and 29 staff are now working in

a variety of full and part time dedicated breastfeeding roles, which is an increase from 21 since 2017. The National breastfeeding Implementation group has sought funding to provide additional lactation consultants for maternity hospitals/units and Primary Care through the annual estimates process. The National Women and Infants Health Programme (National Maternity Strategy) is funding three additional lactation consultant posts in maternity hospitals/units in 2020.

2. Breastfeeding Training & Skills Development

The HSE Nurture Infant Health & Wellbeing Programme is funding initiatives to contribute to increasing the rates and duration of breastfeeding. This includes the development of new standards for antenatal education and a suite of breastfeeding training programmes.

This will make training more widely available to a broader range of front line staff who are supporting mothers and babies to breastfeed, including midwives, public health nurses, community medical doctors, practice nurses and other support staff. Two new eLearning programmes have been available on the HSE's online eLearning and development portal (HSELand) since October 2018. At the end of September, 1,332 had completed module 1 and 1,243 had completed module 2.

An accompanying skills-based programme is currently in development and will be rolled out in 2020.

3. Health Service Policies and Practices

A programme of work commenced in 2017 to develop HSE policies that will support staff working in the public health service to continue to breastfeed on return to work following maternity leave. This policy has gone through all consultation phases and is due for implementation in 2020. This policy is being implemented on a cost neutral basis and will allow employees to take up to 1-hour paid breastfeeding breaks.

A new Code of Marketing of Breast Milk Substitutes in public health services is in final draft and is due for implementation, across all health services, in 2020.

This year, the HSE implemented the revised Infant Feeding Policies for Maternity and Neonatal Services and for Community Health Organisations.

Accurate assessment helps to improve breastfeeding outcomes for mother and baby and allows for targeted advice to be offered to mothers to acquire early breastfeeding skills. The HSE Breastfeeding Observation and Assessment Tool was implemented in 2017.

4. Support at all stages of the breastfeeding continuum through social marketing, support and advocacy.

Breastfeeding is promoted to all expectant mothers in the antenatal period at maternity hospitals and in primary care. Mothers are offered support to breastfeed following birth by midwifery staff and care is provided by public health nurses in the community following discharge from maternity hospital. Since the beginning of 2019, expectant mothers receive a copy of the new HSE My Pregnancy Book. This contains a wealth of useful information and tips for breastfeeding mothers

Additional breastfeeding information is available from the mychild.ie website. The HSE '*Breastfeeding – a good start in life*' publication was updated and re-printed in 2019. This resource was developed in partnership with community and voluntary breastfeeding organisations. It is distributed widely through maternity hospitals and community based health services.

Breastfeeding support groups are provided by the HSE and HSE funded voluntary breastfeeding organisations around the country. The HSE has service agreements with voluntary breastfeeding organisations, La Leche League, Cuidiu, Friends of Breastfeeding as well as the Association of Lactation Consultant in Ireland. €264,969 in grant funding was provided from 2017-2019 in relation to breastfeeding support.

The HSE delivers an annual National Breastfeeding Week as part of its overall breastfeeding promotion campaign. The HSE website mychild.ie is the primary on-line route for providing information, advice and

support to women thinking about breastfeeding and those who are breastfeeding. An on-line Ask the Expert service and webchat facility is available on mychild.ie and support is provided by International Board Certified Lactation Consultant Lactation Consultants who respond to mother's queries about breastfeeding. This service is available 7 days a week.

The expenditure on breastfeeding campaigns by the HSE in the areas outlined above is as following:

2016	2017	2018	2019
€338,590	€242,970	€300,000	€500,000 (investment in the overall communications campaign for mychild.ie and MyChild resources, including breastfeeding and National Breastfeeding Week)

It is estimated that the allocation in 2020 in respect in respect of grant funding to voluntary agencies and promotional campaigns will be the same as 2019.

I trust this information will be of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,



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