



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

10th July 2019

Deputy Louise O'Reilly,
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

PQ Ref 27263/19 – To ask the Minister for Health the estimated additional cost of ensuring each maternity hospital has access to foetal anomaly screening including a breakdown in terms of equipment and staff.

Dear Deputy O'Reilly,

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.

In relation to the provision of foetal anomaly scanning services in the public maternity hospitals and units in the country a significant amount of work has been undertaken in recent times in relation to achieving the objective that all women attending maternity units would be offered a foetal anomaly scan.

As you may be aware, a maternity ultrasound review undertaken led by University College Cork highlighted that as of 2016, foetal anomaly scanning was offered universally to all women in only 7 of the 19 public maternity services, whilst a further 7 services offered this service selectively to women if clinical indicated and advised by a doctor.

The HSE recognizes that foetal anomaly scan is a necessary component of good quality antenatal care. With the launch of the *National Maternity Strategy 2016 – 2018- Creating A Better Future Together*, the HSE's National Women and Infants Health Programme (NWIHP) have, with the support of the Department of Health, invested in this area and supported maternity services to work towards achieving the objective of this service being offered universally to all pregnant women. A key component of this support has been the approval of an additional 28 sonographers in 2018 to enable 100% delivery of this objective.

On foot of this investment, 14 maternity units/hospitals are now providing all women with a 20 week foetal anomaly scan, with a further service providing the scan but at a later stage in pregnancy. The remaining four units are actively growing their anomaly scanning capacity as their allocated additional sonographer posts are actively recruited into and/or identified personnel are being trained up to assume these positions.

NWIHP will continue to monitor the situation on an on-going basis.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. J. Biggs'.

Mary-Jo Biggs,
General Manager, National Women and Infants Health Programme