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25th October 2019

Deputy Alan Kelly
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Dublin 2.

PQ 41697/19*To ask the Minister for Health the amount of funding allocated to the national maternity strategy since its launch by year, action and activity.

Dear Deputy Kelly,

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.

As you are aware, the National Maternity Strategy was published in 2016 and is a 10-year plan requiring funding to support its implementation to be introduced across the lifetime of the plan.

In 2016, an additional €3m funding was provided for maternity services. This funding was 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. Other support staffs were also appointed.
- Funding to support the implementation of the Maternity and Newborn Clinical Management System.

In 2017, €6.8m was provided to the Programme, which covered both the full year costs of 2016 recruitment and enabled further additional investment in the development of maternity services and networks.

The funding priorities for 2017 included:

- 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, the National Women and Infants Health Programme (NWIHP) was allocated a further €4.55m in development funding for 2018. This funding was used to address the following key areas:

- Anomaly scanning – An additional 28 sonographers posts were approved so as to achieve the target of 100% of women presenting at each maternity hospital/unit being offered an anomaly scan.
- Model of Care - The model of care is about providing women with informed choice regarding the care pathway they choose for their pregnancy. Significant investment was made in supporting the establishment of the supported care pathway for women presenting with low clinical risk by means of approving and funding over seventy additional midwifery posts.
- Allied Health Professionals – The availability of a comprehensive and holistic package of care by each maternity service is a central objective of the National Strategy. To commence ensuring equity of access to support and ancillary services required by pregnant women regardless of their location, additional posts in the areas of dietetics and medical social work were approved for each of the hospital groups.
- Perinatal Mental Health Services – Working with the HSE’s National Clinical Programme for Mental Health, NWIHP supported and funded the implementation of specialist midwifery posts in perinatal mental health thereby ensuring that each maternity hospital and service has access to this specialist service.
- Specialist Services – Further investment was made in the provision of specialist obstetric and gynaecology services and perinatal pathology services by means of additional consultant posts being approved in these areas.
- Maternity Networks – The development of maternity networks in each of the hospital groups is a key deliverable of the Maternity Strategy. Development funding provided in 2018 enabled key posts required in these networks to be approved and funded including quality and safety managers and data analysts who will enable and support the function of each Maternity Network including their Serious Incident Management Forum (SIMF).
- Gynaecology – A structured and successful gynaecology waiting list initiative in the South/South West Hospital Group is being supported and enabled by funding provided by NWIHP.

Whilst no additional development funding was allocated to the Programme for 2019, an additional €4.1m was allocated to cover the costs of 2018 developments.

The total estimated cost of the implementation of the National Maternity Strategy is approximately €75 million over the 10 year plan.

Since 2016 an additional €18.45m has been allocated to maternity services.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,



Mary-Jo Biggs

General Manager, National Women and Infants Health Programme