

16th July 2020

Deputy Alan Kelly
Dail Eireann
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

PQ Number: 15201/20

PQ Question:

To ask the Minister for Health if he has made contact with Cork University Maternity Hospital on the lifting of visiting restrictions for designated birthing partners; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Alan Kelly

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:

In CUMH we risk assessed the situation and have agreed to the following visiting Policy for allowing birthing partners attend the hospital:

- The birthing partner can attend as soon as the mother is in established Labour
- The birthing partner can attend for the birth itself
- The birthing partner can attend for delivery by caesarean section.
- The birthing partner can also stay for some time in the immediate post birth period either in the Labour Ward or the Theatre Recovery.
- When a baby is in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit one parent (at a time) can visit their baby – of note the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit visiting times are unrestricted.
- We are also very sensitive to specific situations regarding pregnancy loss, stillbirth and unexpected complications and have relaxed our visiting restrictions in these situations.

As a result of all the safety measures in place at CUMH the hospital has been exceptionally successful in managing the risk and protecting our patients and staff from the virus. We understand how challenging our visiting restrictions are but with COVID-19 still very much in our community we need to minimise footfall to the hospital to limit the risk of the virus spreading and continue to aim to protect mothers, babies and staff as the health and wellbeing of our mothers and babies is paramount to us at all times.

Our staff appreciate how difficult this can be for expectant mothers, and our doctors and midwives are there to support our women at all times.

We are constantly reviewing the situation and will review our practice in line with the other HSE Maternity Hospitals once advised by the National Women and Infants Health Programme.

Yours sincerely,



John R. Higgins

***Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, University College Cork
Clinical Director Ireland South Women & Infants Directorate
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