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30th July 2020

Deputy Cullinane,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ Ref 16972/20 To ask the Minister for Health his plans to implement the National Maternity Strategy; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Cullinane,

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 Maternity Strategy 2016 – 2016 Creating a Better Future Together*, published in 2016, is a 10-year plan with funding to support its implementation to be introduced across the lifetime of the plan. With a view to managing and enabling the implementation of the Strategy the HSE has established a dedicated National Women and Infants Health Programme. The Programme at the request of the Department of Health developed a detailed implementation plan. The plan was developed under the Strategy's four strategic priorities and details how each of the 77 actions identified in the strategy will be implemented, on an incremental basis.

Successful implementation of the Strategy is dependent on multiple stakeholders ranging from national to local level, both internal and external to the HSE, and the additional investment required being made available by the Department of Health.

Since the publication of the Strategy, significant progress has been made in implementing the Model of Care as recommended in the Strategy and developing the recommended governance structures for maternity services.

Achievements to date include:

- The development of maternity networks across the six hospital groups supported by quality and patient safety resources;
- Significant investment in additional midwifery resources both to address workforce requirements as recommended by the Birth Rate Plus Report in 2016 and also to drive and enable the development and deployment of the midwifery provided supported care pathways across all 19 maternity services;
- The continued implementation of home-away-from-home delivery suites across services;

- Expansion in specialist medical services by means of additional consultants in the areas of obstetrics and gynaecology, perinatal pathology, anaesthetists and psychiatrist;
- Increased access to support and ancillary services required by pregnant women by means of investment in allied health professional services including dietetics and social work,
- Implementation of a hub and spoke model of perinatal mental health services;
- Development of specialist midwifery bereavement services in all maternity sites;
- Targeted investment programme in anomaly scanning service provision with a view to ensuring that all 19 services were provided anomaly scans to all women attending their service; and
- On-going implementation of the Maternity and Newborn Clinical Management System (MNCMS);

Parallel to the above, work is actively underway in a large number of additional areas as set out in the implementation plan including breastfeeding, smoking cessation, clinical guideline development and review, management and review of maternity related adverse events, workforce planning and utilisation and review of quality and risk data.

Overall, whilst significant work has been undertaken, the National Programme remains mindful that there is still further work to be undertaken before all women have access to type of maternity service envisaged in the National Strategy. In this context the Programme is currently reviewing its implementation plan vis-à-vis timelines and associated additional investment required.

Working with its key partners including the Department of Health and HIQA, the HSE remains committed to ensuring that the vision in the National Strategy is realised and that the actions identified in the Strategy are fully implemented.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,



Kilian McGrane, Programme Director, National Women and Infants Health Programme