



Clár Sláinte Náisiúnta do Mhná & do Naíonáin  
Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte, Aonad 7A, Áras  
Dargan, An Ceantar Theas, Baile Átha Cliath 8  
T: 076 695 9991

National Women and Infants Health Programme  
Health Service Executive, Unit 7A, The Dargan Building,  
Heuston South Quarter, Dublin 8  
T: 076 695 9991

3<sup>rd</sup> November 2020

Deputy Whitmore,  
Dáil Éireann,  
Leinster House  
Dublin 2

**PQ Ref 30984/20 To ask the Minister for Health the provision made in Budget 2021 to roll out specialist perinatal mental health services as outlined in the national model of care, including provision of full staff teams and clinical space for the six specialist perinatal mental health hubs in the maternity hospitals in Galway, Limerick, Cork, the Rotunda, the National Maternity Hospital and the Coombe and for the development of a national mother and baby unit in view of the recent findings in the National Maternity Experience Survey.**

Dear Deputy Whitmore,

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 may be aware, the Specialist Perinatal Mental Health Model of Care is based on maternity networks as recommended in the National Maternity Strategy. This aligned specialist services to maternity hospitals/units in a hub and spoke format in 19 different sites (6 hub and 13 spoke sites).

Funding for the six Specialist Perinatal Mental Health hub teams was provided in 2016, 2017 and 2018 and 2019 to a total of €3.6m. This funding covers the cost of the full hub site teams, that is, in the three Dublin Maternity hospitals (Rotunda, Coombe and National Maternity Hospitals) as well as Cork University Maternity Hospital, University Maternity Hospital Limerick and Galway University Hospital. The table over page shows the current recruitment position of each staff member.

In addition to the above funding and posts, the National Women & Infants Health Programme (NWIHP), with which this Model of Care is being jointly delivered, funded and approved in 2018 clinical midwife specialists post in perinatal mental health for each of the hub and spoke maternity services.

In relation to the provision of clinical space for the six specialist teams, each hub site working within its existing infrastructure and the opportunities/constraints that it affords, has worked towards trying to ensure that the teams have the clinical space they require. It is important that these teams are based in a maternity hospital setting to ensure maximum accessibility and a seamless service for women.

During 2019 the Rotunda Hospital provided the expanding perinatal mental health team with two modular units on site. The Coombe hospital has also provided two units and the National Maternity Hospital has provided additional accommodation in line with additional perinatal mental health staff appointments.

The three hub sites outside Dublin are engaging with HSE Estates to support sustainable accommodation solutions for their perinatal mental health teams, in terms of both office accommodation and clinical space, with proposals in some areas being developed regarding the provision of modular units akin to the Dublin sites. Work will continue in this area in 2021.



The Model of Care for Specialist Perinatal Mental Health services set out three components for these services, these are:

- Specialist mental health service to maternity units/hospitals
- Mental health midwife component
- Specialist inpatient mother and baby unit

Planning for Ireland’s first Mother and Baby Unit had progressed and a joint business case has been developed between Mental Health Services in HSE CHO6, St. Vincent’s Hospital, Dublin and the National Maternity Hospital. Given the documented adverse effects of separating mothers from their babies, the provision of a mother and baby unit as a national tertiary unit is deemed vital. It is intended that a submission will be made to the HSE’s National Estates Management function in relation to supporting the progression of this project in 2021.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,



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