



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

Ceannasaí Náisiúnta Oibríochtaí Meabhairshláinte  
Ospidéal Naomh Lómáin Baile Phámar Baile Átha Cliath 20.

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**PQ Ref: 19650/21**

**6<sup>th</sup> May 2021**

**Parliamentary Question:**

To ask the Minister for Health the safeguards in place to support women with postpartum depression; if additional supports will be provided considering escalation of stress and anxiety that these women are going through during pandemic; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -David Cullinane

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.

Perinatal mental health services are specialist services for women with a mental health problem. The service is for pregnant women and women with a baby up to one year old who may have an existing or new mental health problem and also women with severer mental health problems and are planning a pregnancy. Although as many as 1 in 5 women have mental health problems in pregnancy or after birth a perinatal mental health service will usually look after someone who has a more serious or complex mental health problem. So, not every woman with a mental health problem during pregnancy, or after their baby is born, will need this service. Women can get good care from their GP and public health nurse (PHN) for milder mental health problems in pregnancy and after birth.

The specialist teams and perinatal mental health midwives work jointly to ensure that all women attending the maternity service will have information on positive mental health. Women are routinely asked about their mental health as well as their physical health at booking clinics. Perinatal Mental Health leaflets have also been developed by the PMH service and are available to order free of charge for individual women and frontline healthcare services at [www.healthpromotion.ie](http://www.healthpromotion.ie), these include a leaflets on general mental health in pregnancy as well as for specific conditions such as postnatal depression and a leaflet for carers or partners of women who are experiencing postnatal depression.

General Leaflet – Mental Health in Pregnancy

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/specialist-perinatal-mental-health/mental-health-in-pregnancy-print-version.pdf>

Postnatal Depression leaflet

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/specialist-perinatal-mental-health/postnatal-depression-print-version.pdf>

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Postnatal Depression for carers leaflet

<https://www.healthpromotion.ie/hp-files/docs/HMP01354.pdf>

The Specialist Perinatal Healthcare App for healthcare professionals continues to be updated regularly. It is designed to provide specific PMH information and information on how to access service for all frontline staff, as well as detailed PMH training materials. The PMH app has been downloaded by approximately 1,200 frontline healthcare professionals, the majority being midwives and public health nurses. The app provides easy access to the latest information from the service for all staff including GPs and practice nurses. Since June 2020 specific information was added for GPs following a specific piece of work with GP Buddy who developed a series of questions for the perinatal service. These were answered by Dr. Richard Duffy, Perinatal Psychiatrist, Rotunda Hospital.

New video resources aimed at new mothers were also added such as the SPMHS Me to Mum videos developed by the specialist perinatal mental health service in the Rotunda hospital and videos to raise awareness of women from the travelling community to perinatal mental health supports. Specialist perinatal mental health hub and spoke sites are also providing some group interventions for women to support those who may have heightened anxiety or those more isolated at this time.

Specialist perinatal mental health services are provided in maternity hospitals and teams aim to see women in convenient and child friendly locations. These include both Antenatal clinics and Maternity wards. However, in recent times because of covid-19 the use of Video Enabled Care through [Attend Anywhere](#) (AA) has supported women to connect with their perinatal mental health service. For some women, clinicians can provide support and interventions online through this platform. The rollout and support for this platform in the form of equipment and training for all hub and spoke sites took place since March 2020. For new mothers, it allows therapy to be provided in their own environment, without the constraints of travel or having to bring a newborn to an appointment. Video calls through AA may provide a blended approach to linking with the service; allowing accessibility for those who have limited transport links or cannot drive following a C-section.

Whilst the focus of the Model of Care (MOC) was on the specialist component of a perinatal mental health strategy, it is hoped and expected that this will act as the catalyst for all relevant service areas in the HSE to come together to implement a comprehensive mental health strategy. For this reason the MOC also included a section on the clinical pathway for a complete perinatal mental health response.

For more information on the Specialist Perinatal Mental Health Service please see the following link [here](#).

Yours sincerely,



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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amir Niazi".

Dr Amir Niazi  
National Clinical Advisor & Group Lead for Mental Health  
Clinical Design and Innovation  
Health Service Executive

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