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May 4th 2021

Deputy Cullinane
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ Ref 19801/21 To ask the Minister for Health the steps being taken in order to improve treatment options for women experiencing miscarriages; if additional funding will be available for research in this area; 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 HSE has in place National Standards for Bereavement Care Following Pregnancy Loss and Perinatal Death. These Standards, first published in 2016, with an update in same due to be published shortly, cover the full range of pregnancy losses – from ectopic, to first and second trimester loss to losses experienced latter in the pregnancy. Areas covered by these standards include communication requirements, treatment options, postnatal care, bereavement care after discharge, education and training for staff and policies, procedures and guidelines needed to support and enable good quality care for women and their families experiencing a loss during their pregnancy. The implementation of these Standards has been supported by means of the allocation of a Clinical Midwife Specialist in Bereavement Care being allocated to all 19 maternity sites and services.

Each Maternity Unit is aware of, and is measured against these bereavement standards, with a specific audit tool developed at national level to manage this process, provide feedback to services and ensure and enable a continual quality improvement cycle in this area of service delivery.

Additionally, following on from the HIQA maternity patient experience survey, in 2021 a survey is planned specifically targeting women who have suffered perinatal loss and second trimester miscarriage. This survey and its findings will be used by the HSE to guide further development in this area. I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mary-Jo Biggs'.

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