



13th May 2021

Deputy Louise O'Reilly,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

PQ 22371/21 - To ask the Minister for Health the number of full-time lactation consultant posts in each CHO; the cost of meeting the deficits; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

- Louise O'Reilly

Dear Deputy O'Reilly,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question (PQ 22371/21), which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

The HSE is committed to protecting, supporting and promoting breastfeeding. We know breastfeeding support is most effective where it is face to face, scheduled and predictable and provided by trained health professionals and/or peer counsellors. Midwives and Public Health Nurses are trained and are skilled in supporting breastfeeding commencing in the antenatal period with the delivery of antenatal/breastfeeding education. Midwives support mothers to establish breastfeeding immediately after birth and help mothers learn the skill of breastfeeding in the immediate post-natal period. There are currently 10 whole time equivalent (WTE) lactation consultant posts across the nine CHOs.

The lactation consultants are part of the public health nursing service. The maternity hospital lactation consultants liaise with Public Health Nurses and voluntary breastfeeding support counsellors to bridge the gap between hospital and community. There are 32 public health nursing areas (aligned to the old Local Health Office areas). Providing 1 whole time equivalent to each Public Health Nurse area would require a further 22 whole time equivalents. The cost of providing an additional 22 whole time equivalent consultant posts is estimated at €1.5m

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

Maeve Raeside
General Manager Primary Care
National Community Operations