



**Cúram Sláinte
Pobail Thoir**
ag freastal ar Bhaile Átha Cliath
Thoir Theas, Baile Átha Cliath
Theas agus Cill Mhantáin

**Community
Healthcare East**
serving Dublin South East,
Dublin South and Wicklow

Ceannasaí Seirbhíse Cúram Príomhúil
Cúram Sláinte Pobail Thoir,
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An tSráid Mhór, Bré,
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16th February 2021

Deputy Colm Burke, TD,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

Head of Service Primary Care
HSE Community Healthcare East,
Block B, Civic Centre,
Main Street, Bray,
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Re: PQ ref 6149/21

* * To ask the Minister for Health if consideration will be given to reversing the proposed plan of withdrawal of lactation support services in the Dublin south east region; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Burke,

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 and Children for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

Community Healthcare East is committed to supporting and promoting breastfeeding and has a long track record in supporting mothers. However, Covid-19 has presented unprecedented challenges for many of our services.

Demand for services associated with this current third wave of Covid-19 has been exceptionally high due to the level of community transmission of infection.

Levels of staff absenteeism necessitated the urgent redeployment of a part-time Public Health Nursing staff member to cover service gaps in order to mitigate significant clinical risk to service users. The Public Health Nursing team had identified and designated another Lactation Consultant to immediately assist with referrals of those mothers who may require support, and with the weekly online breast-feeding support group that commenced last October. This Consultant replaced the redeployed staff member on Monday 25th January. There was no gap in service provision. Lactation consultant support remains available to all mothers who require it in Dublin South East.

Every new mother continues to be visited by a Public Health Nurse within 72 hours of hospital discharge, and home visits supporting breast-feeding mothers have continued throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

I trust this information is of assistance to you but should you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Maeve Rossini

ES Emma Smyth
Head of Service, Primary Care