



Clár Sláinte Náisiúnta do Mhná & do Naíonáin  
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Deputy Burke,  
Dáil Éireann,  
Leinster House  
Dublin 2

**PQ Ref 6151/21 To ask the Minister for Health if consideration will be given to the establishment of an android and smart phone application which would provide parents of newborns with a 24/7 support system with on-demand access to leading maternal and paediatric experts including lactation consultants; 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 for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

The HSE in its work of continually improving its maternity and childhood health care programmes strongly believes that the provision of good quality information from a trusted source is a key feature of the provision of a health service that is supporting and enabling parents to make the right decisions for the safety and well-being of their children. This requirement for good quality information, readily accessible, is also highlighted by users of our service as part of their feedback of their experience.

To this end, the HSE has in place a number of work programmes which are targeting the information requirements of parents. The [mychild.ie](https://mychild.ie) website, part of [HSE.ie](https://hse.ie), provides information to parents-to-be and parents of young children. This website alone received 3.5 million visits in 2020.

The [mychild.ie](https://mychild.ie) website covers pregnancy, labour and birth, babies and toddlers. Topics include symptoms and conditions, breastfeeding, nutrition, everyday care, development, parenting advice and child safety. There are more than 500 pages of information on the site. The content was written by healthcare professionals across Ireland, including doctors, midwives, public health nurses, physiotherapists, dietitians, and psychologists thereby ensuring that the information provided is accurate, reliable and in line with best national and international evidence.

Parents can also contact a team of lactation consultants through the HSE's 'Ask our breastfeeding expert' service on [mychild.ie](https://mychild.ie). This HSE service is a free online breastfeeding advice and information service staffed by experienced lactation consultants 7 days a week. There was a 38% increase in demand for the service in 2020 with almost 4,000 breastfeeding questions answered via live chat or e-

mail. The website [mychild.ie](http://mychild.ie) is promoted all year-round on social media and Google search, alongside advertising campaigns at specific times.

As part of a Sláintecare-funded project, the [mychild.ie](http://mychild.ie) website is currently being further expanded. This will see 100 new information guides being added and a new pregnancy support journey to be launched later this year. The first phase of the project will mean pregnant women can sign up for weekly emails which will be tailored to the subscriber's due date. The emails begin in early pregnancy and will include the first 3 months of a baby's life. Each email will contain information and tips relevant to that week, including appointments, vaccines and symptom information, and signpost to relevant articles on [mychild.ie](http://mychild.ie). The emails will also signpost to a new maternity services directory, which is also being created as part of the Sláintecare project, which will provide the public with an overview of the range and type of services available in each of our maternity services and how these services can be accessed.

Another element of the Sláintecare project will see a pilot of a closed/private social media group led by a lactation consultant providing breastfeeding support to new mothers.

These work programmes enable expectant mothers, their families and parents to access support and information in a flexible manner that suits them the best.

In addition to the work as alluded to above, it is important to note that maternity units and services around the country have in place 24/7 on site services to address and manage any emergencies that parents encounter in relation to the health and safety of their newborn, with such services having 24/7 cover by and access to specialists in the area of maternal and neonatal care.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,



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