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02nd March 2021

Deputy Sherlock
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ Ref 8672/21: To ask the Minister for Health the number of international board-certified lactation consultants employed by the HSE in each CHO; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Sherlock,

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.

Breastfeeding support has been shown to be most effective where it is face to face, scheduled and Information provided to you in PQ 8673 outlines the types of supports for breastfeeding provided by the HSE and voluntary groups, including the context in which lactation consultant supports are also provided to mothers and babies within hospital and community services and virtual/online lactation consultant supports available.

Breastfeeding support has been shown to be 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 (many of whom are midwives and paediatric nurses) are trained and are skilled in providing breastfeeding support. Every new mother is seen by a Public Health Nurse with 72 hours of leaving hospital and follow up support is provided to breastfeeding mothers.

There are a number of Public Health Nurses qualified as lactation consultants working in every Public Health Nursing team around the country.

There are 9.8 Whole Time Equivalent (WTE) staff working in dedicated Lactation Consultant roles within Public Health Nursing services. This represents an increase of 5.8 WTE's in the past 4 years within this service. In parallel to these resources, there are a further 20.59 Whole Time Equivalent Lactation Consultant posts within Maternity Hospitals and units to provide specialised care for mothers experiencing challenges with breastfeeding. They also support the development of skills and knowledge of other front line colleagues working within maternity services. This represents an increase of 7.17 Whole Time Equivalent Lactation Consultant posts in the maternity service in the last 4 years.

A further 6.5 additional Lactation Consultant posts for maternity services and a national lead to support implementation of National Standards for the Baby Friendly Initiative in hospitals have been funded through the National Maternity Strategy in 2020 and 2021 and these are expected to be in post in 2021.

The table below outlines the location of lactation consultants within Community Healthcare Organisation areas, whilst the 20.59 existing WTE and the additional 6.5 WTE lactation consultants coming on stream in 2020/21 based in maternity services are distributed throughout our 19 maternity services and units.

Health Service Area	WTE Feb 2021
CHO 1	
Cavan/Monaghan	1
CHO 3	
Clare	1
Limerick	1
North Tipperary	1
CHO4	
North Lee	1
West Cork	0.8
CHO 5	
South Tipperary	1
CHO6	
Wicklow South	0.5
Dublin South East	0.5
Dun Laoghaire	0.5
Wicklow North	0.5
CHO8	
Longford/Westmeath	1
	9.8

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,



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