



Clár Sláinte Náisiúnta do Mhná & do Naíonáin
Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte, Aonad 7A, Áras
Dargan, An Ceantar Theas, Baile Átha Cliath 8 T: 076
695 9991

National Women and Infants Health Programme
Health Service Executive, Unit 7A, The Dargan
Building, Heuston South Quarter, Dublin 8 T:
076 695 9991

03rd March 2021

Deputy Sherlock
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ Ref 8678/21: To ask the Minister for Health if the WHO International Code of Marketing on Breastmilk Substitutes is implemented and enforced across every maternity unit; 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.

The WHO Code is a set of recommendations to regulate the marketing of breast-milk substitutes, feeding bottles and teats. The code aims to stop the aggressive and inappropriate marketing of breast-milk substitutes. There are some statutory regulations in Ireland relating to the Code and while the current EU legislation does not mirror the WHO Code it does intend to conform to the principles and aims of the code. The legislation does not completely eliminate inappropriate marketing practices.

The HSE is committed to the promotion, support and protection of breastfeeding. Every maternity hospital/unit is working on implementing the HSE's Infant feeding policy for maternity and neonatal services, including the WHO's Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding. Each hospital monitors practices relating to the code in striving to comply with the WHO's Ten Steps and addresses any breaches in unethical marketing of breast milk substitutes within its services.

A HSE wide policy is at an advanced stage of development which sets out to promote and protect breastfeeding by eliminating marketing practices in HSE facilities, by HSE employees, including Section 38 agencies and their employees. This policy will extend the reach of protections against unethical marketing practices to all Public Health Services.

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