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09th March 2021

Deputy O'Callaghan
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ Ref 9364/21: To ask the Minister for Health when pregnant women will be permitted to have the support of their partners at consultations in maternity hospitals in view of the vaccination of healthcare workers; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy O'Callaghan,

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 purpose of restrictions in maternity units is to provide a safe environment for mothers, babies and staff. The rollout of the vaccination programme is a welcome development.

It should also be noted however that there is some concern that even when vaccinated people may still have the ability to carry the virus and infect others. This issue is being considered by NPHE and further advice on this is awaited. Given the above, and the fact that the country is facing more restrictive measure than ever it is likely that maternity units will continue to adopt a conservative approach to visiting. Until the community transmission rates are much lower than currently, significant changes are not anticipated.

All involved in the provision of maternity services are aware of the difficulty and distress that the current restrictions on accompanying persons due to COVID 19 have caused. All service providers look forward to the restoration of normal visiting and the accommodation of partners when it is safe to do so.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,

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