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09th March 2021

Deputy Kelly,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ Ref 9725/21: To ask the Minister for Health if alongside birth centres pursuant to the National Maternity Strategy have been rolled-out.

Dear Deputy Kelly,

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.

Alongside birth centres in Irish maternity services were first developed in the north east of the country, with the maternity services in both Drogheda and Cavan having such centres on site. Each of these centres has dedicated clinical space including two specifically designed delivery suites to enable and support midwifery provided maternity services to women in their region.

With the publication of the National Maternity Strategy and in due cognisance of the infrastructure challenges that present on many of the existing clinical sites, the focus of the National Women and Infants Health Programme working closely with the relevant maternity services is currently on the development of home-away-from-home delivery suites within the maternity services. These suites effectively replicate the environment and birthing infrastructure available in Drogheda and Cavan.

These facilities are being implemented by means of refurbishment of ancillary clinical space adjacent to existing labour wards and/or refurbishment of existing traditional delivery suites. These facilities are a key enabler in delivering on the vision of enhanced midwifery care as set out in the National Strategy and are core to supporting the full implementation of the supported care pathway.

Limerick, Cork, Holles Street, Wexford, Mullingar and the Coombe all have in place home-away-from-home facilities, whilst work is on-going in a number of other maternity sites to develop such facilities with the support of NWIHP.

Parallel to the development of these facilities, maternity services around the country are actively transferring antenatal care from their acute sites out to the community by means of establishing new midwifery provided clinics in community settings in tandem with the development and expansion of Early Transfer Home services.

Combined these initiatives are delivering on the objectives of the National Maternity Strategy in terms of enabling greater continuity of care to women and their families and growing and developing midwifery led care.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,



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