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April 08th 2021

Deputy Shorthall,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ Ref 15637/21: To ask the Minister for Health if there is a specific budget for the provision of breastfeeding supplies in maternity hospitals and units; if so, the way this budget compares to that of formula supplies (details supplied); and if he will make a statement on the matter, Breastfeeding supplies: nipple cream, pumps etc. Formula supplies: artificial milk, teats etc.

Dear Deputy Shorthall,

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 is committed to supporting, promoting and protecting breastfeeding and optimum infant feeding practices for all mothers and babies. The HSE's Infant Feeding Policy for Maternity and Neonatal Services outlines the clinical practices and supports for feeding necessary within maternity hospitals. Maternity hospitals provide infant feeding supplies and equipment in line with national infant feeding policy regardless of feeding method.

Every hospital provides mothers with access to a hospital grade breast pump when needed and there are 191 hospital grade breast pumps available for use throughout the country. Furthermore 10 hospitals provide breast pumps on a loan basis when a mother of a very premature baby admitted to NICU is discharged home and the baby remains in hospital. Other breastfeeding supplies provided where indicated are breast pump attachments, expressed breast milk containers, specialised pillows and lanolin cream. Formula milk and teats are provided for babies who are bottle fed in each maternity hospital.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

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