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6<sup>th</sup> July 2021

Deputy Ó Laoghaire  
Dáil Éireann,  
Leinster House  
Dublin 2

**PQ Ref 24351/21: To ask the Minister for Health when pregnant women are currently scheduled to be able to register and receive the Covid-19 vaccine.**

Dear Deputy Ó Laoghaire,

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 National Immunisation Advisory Committee (NIAC) recommended that pregnant women between 14 and 36 completed weeks gestation be offered an mRNA vaccine following a discussion on the risk/benefits of the vaccine with their obstetric care giver.

As pregnant women are the only vaccine category that require a discussion with a care-provider before they make a decision, a separate pathway was required. In addition, pregnant women are the only category that have a time sensitive element to being vaccinated – they can only receive a vaccine while pregnant between 14 and 36 completed weeks.

A separate pathway for the vaccination of pregnant women was established in the 19 maternity services, and the pathway commenced on the 10<sup>th</sup> of May. Each of the 19 Maternity Hospitals were asked to identify qualified pregnant women starting with those in the 30-36 week gestational age group. Those in later gestation were the initial priority given the time sensitive nature of the pathway.

The 19 maternity services were using the Patient Administration Systems to identify women in the 30 to 36 week gestational range. Following the cyber-attack on the 14<sup>th</sup> of May, maternity services were forced to introduce new ways of identifying women as their Patient Administration Systems were no longer available. A range of measures were introduced including dedicated phone lines, social media platforms and discussing vaccination with all women at their routine antenatal appointments.

Although the process changed significantly due to the cyber-attack, the new approaches worked well and by the middle of June over 20,000 women had a discussion with their obstetric care-giver about getting vaccinated.

After approximately four weeks further to the prioritisation of women in later gestation, a more standardised approach was adopted and maternity services started to have the discussion with all pregnant women at their booking visit (12-14 weeks gestation). If a woman wished to be vaccinated she was registered directly on the registration portal if 14 weeks gestation or older, and if less than 14 weeks, her appointment was held until she reached 14 weeks.

As the age cohorts have reduced pregnant women can now register themselves directly on the portal. However, in line with the NIAC recommendation, pregnant women must have a discussion with their obstetric care-giver before registering for the vaccine.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,



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