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8th October 2021

Deputy Barry,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ46054/21: To ask the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the high level of general practitioners and maternity hospitals that are not providing abortion services; the steps he will take to improve access; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Barry,

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.

Currently ten of the nineteen maternity units are currently providing elective abortion care for women under 12 weeks gestation. All nineteen maternity units provide care for women with a complication following termination of pregnancy and where there is a risk to the life or health of the mother. For women carrying babies affected by a life-limiting condition, these women are referred by their maternity service to the relevant tertiary maternity service for the appropriate care.

There are currently 402 GPs contracted to provide abortion services. A GP or doctor does not have to carry out an abortion, but they should always refer to a medical practitioner who does provide the service. There is a reasonable geographic spread of GPs currently providing termination of pregnancy services around the country in terms of enabling people who may need the service to access same. However, the HSE continues to work towards increasing the availability of abortion care for women under 12 weeks, both within community setting and in acute hospital settings.

The HSE My Options service provides free information and counselling to people experiencing an unplanned pregnancy and is available at www.myoptions.ie.

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

