



Bainisteoir Ginearálta Cúram Príomhúil
Cúram Sláinte Pobail Thoir

Bloc B, Lárionad Cathrach, An tSráid
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General Manager Primary Care
Community Healthcare East

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14th December 2022

Deputy Jennifer Whitmore
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

Re Ref: PQ 62227/22

****To ask the Minister for Health the counties in which the HSE home birth service is provided; if County Wicklow is one of the counties in which the service is fully available; if there has been any reduction in the availability of this service recently; if any changes to the services are proposed; and if he will make a statement on the matter.**

Dear Deputy Whitmore,

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 and Children for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

In Community Healthcare East, homebirth services are currently available in Wicklow and South Dublin. Two distinct services are provided in South Dublin: one based out of the National Maternity Hospital, and the other offered by the self-employed midwives engaged by the HSE. The HSE service in County Wicklow is currently provided by one self-employed midwife who lives in Wicklow, and three midwives who live in South Dublin area. The Wicklow-based midwife will not be available for the first six months of 2023; however, this service will remain available through other midwives who live in the area.

The transition of governance and administration for HSE home birth services from community Primary Care to acute services should be complete by the beginning of 2023. There will mean only small changes to the service following the move to the acute services during the first phase. Women will be affiliated with the Maternity hospital they are registered with, rather than the area they live. For example, a woman who lives in Bray may choose to attend the Coombe, which is in the Midlands Hospital Group, as opposed to the National Maternity Hospital (NMH) which serves South Dublin and North Wicklow.

There has been discussion around a '30 minutes transfer time' to hospital. If this restriction is implemented it will affect the majority of women in County Wicklow, who will no longer be



able to avail of a homebirth service. This issue is currently being reviewed by a national implementation committee.

I trust this information is of assistance to you but should you have any further queries please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads 'Sinead Kilbride'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line underneath the name.

Sinead Kilbride
General Manager Primary Care