



9<sup>th</sup> March 2022

Deputy Neasa Hourigan, Dail Eireann Kildare Street Dublin 2

Re: PQ10146/22: To ask the Minister for Health his plans to address the cost of breastfeeding equipment and supplies; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Hourigan,

The above PQ has been forwarded to my department for direct response to you on same.

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.

Breast pumps are available when needed in maternity services and there are 225 breast pumps available for use within postnatal and neonatal services. 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.

10 of the 19 maternity hospitals/units have procedures to provide breast pumps on a loan basis to mothers when their premature or sick baby remains in the neonatal intensive care unit and she is discharged home. However, there is currently no universal availability of hospital grade breast pumps when needed for mothers with preterm and sick babies once a mother is discharged home from the maternity hospital and their baby remains in hospital or when the pre-term or sick baby is discharged home from hospital and is unable to feed directly from the breast. The cost of renting a hospital grade pump is approx. €80-100 per month. Some charities provide breast pumps at a subsidised rate. The HSE National Breastfeeding Implementation group will continue to seek funding through the estimates process to address the gaps in provision of breast pumps in the community at an annual cost of €0.77m.

Funding for 10.5 Whole Time Equivalent (WTE) additional infant feeding posts, in maternity hospitals/units was received in 2020 & 2021 to ensure every maternity unit/hospital have dedicated infant feeding posts in place. The Minister for Health announced further investment of 1.58m to support an additional 24 infant feeding posts to bring staffing levels up to an international benchmark of recommended posts per birth rate.



Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Anne Pardy". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A'.

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**Anne Pardy**  
**Chair of National Breastfeeding Implementation Group**  
**Programme Manager National Healthy Childhood Programme**