



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

Ceannasaí Náisiúnta Oibríochtaí Meabhairshláinte  
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Deputy Mark Ward.  
Dail Eireann,  
Dublin 2.

07th March 2022

**PQ Number: 8177/22**

**PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health if he will provide details on the pathways for mental health care for women in Ireland; and if he will make a statement on the matter - Mark Ward**

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Dear Deputy Ward,

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.

Our mental health services are designed to be person centred where clinicians respond to the individual needs of service users. In addition to generic mental health services the HSE have a number of services which are specifically focused on women and these are detailed below.

#### **Specialist Perinatal Mental Health Services (SPMHS)**

The Specialist Perinatal Mental Health Service Model of Care was formally approved and launched by the HSE in November, 2017. The Model of Care is based on the maternity networks recommended in the National Maternity Strategy. Perinatal mental health services are specialist services for women with a mental health problem. The service is for pregnant women and women with a baby up to one year old who may have an existing or new mental health problem and also women with severer mental health problems and are planning a pregnancy. perinatal mental health service will usually look after someone who has a more serious or complex mental health problem. So, not every woman with a mental health problem during pregnancy, or after their baby is born, will need this service. Perinatal mental health services have now been developed in all maternity units/hospitals and provide specialist support to women experiencing mental health problems in pregnancy.

#### **Access to this service**

Women are now asked specific questions about their mental health as well as their physical health at maternity hospital clinic appointments. Women can talk to their midwife and ask for support from the perinatal mental health midwife in their hospital if required. The GP and Public Health Nurse can also provide support and signposting to the most relevant service for each woman.

Referral to the SPMHS can be made by any professional involved in the care for pregnant women, such as:

- Midwife – particularly at booking visits
- Perinatal Mental Health Midwife



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- Obstetrician
- GP
- General Adult Psychiatrist

These services are provided in maternity hospitals and teams try to see women in convenient and child friendly locations. These include both Antenatal clinics and Maternity wards. During the COVID-19 global pandemic, the use of Video Enabled Care through (AA) has supported women to connect with their perinatal mental health service. For some women, clinicians can provide support and interventions online through this platform. Video calls through AA may provide a blended approach to linking with the service; allowing accessibility for those who have limited transport links or cannot drive following a C-section.

More information on SPMHS can be found here:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/specialist-perinatal-mental-health/>

Currently the National Forensic Service provides a service for women in the Dochas Centre. The new National Forensic Mental Health Service (NFMHS) in Portrane will have a dedicated female unit once operational.

I trust this information is of assistance to you. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any further queries.

Yours sincerely,

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**Jim Ryan**  
**Assistant National Director - Head of Operations**  
**National Mental Health Services**