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26th January 2022

Deputy Canney,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ1085/22: To ask the Minister for Health the interment arrangements for the remains of babies from late-term abortions in circumstances in which the parents of the baby do not undertake personal arrangements; and if the baby is buried in a designated plot within the hospital grounds or elsewhere.

Dear Deputy Canney,

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.

A central principle of the Health Service Executive and all service providers is that all products of conception are dealt with respectfully regardless of the circumstances e.g. termination, miscarriage etc. All patients presenting for termination service in the acute hospital sector are clearly informed of the options available on individual hospital sites (incineration and/or hospital burial and/or private burial) and informed consent is received in each individual case.

In relation to terminations undertaken in the early stages of pregnancies within the acute sector, the products of conception are ordinarily managed in line with existing processes in place for the management of early miscarriages.

Terminations undertaken in the latter stages of pregnancies in hospitals as provided for under the Act in relation to fatal fetal anomalies, will in many circumstances result in the patient seeking to undertake personal arrangements for example burial, or alternatively the hospital arranging burial in its designated plot.

Where a woman has not made a decision about the pregnancy remains within a locally specified and pre-notified period, the hospital responsible for the woman's care will make arrangements as outlined above, on behalf of the woman.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,



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