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27th June 2022

Deputy Shortall
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ Ref 31339/22: To ask the Minister for Health if he will outline the recruitment processes used to appoint all members of the HSE Obstetric Event Support Team; the remuneration associated with these posts; the means by which, under the HSE's Code of Practice: Appointment to Positions in the Civil Service and Public Service, the selection and appointment process ensured that it did not advantage or disadvantage any particular candidate or group of candidates; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Shortall,

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.

The Obstetric Event Support Team (OEST) is an important new initiative, which has been established to try and reduce the incidence of avoidable events during labour. The specific events which the OEST is focused on are:

- a) Maternal deaths
- b) Intrapartum fetal deaths
- c) Early neonatal deaths
- d) Babies requiring therapeutic hypothermia

The purpose of OEST is to support hospitals after one of these adverse events occurs to ensure that a comprehensive review of the event takes place, and then to ensure that learning from the adverse event can be shared nationally. The dual approach of improving the quality of the reviews, and sharing the learning from the events in a timely fashion, in conjunction with other initiatives already underway, is designed to reduce the rate of these events.

The OEST is being implemented in a two-phase approach. Phase one commenced in August 2021, and focused on three hospital groups – South/South West, University of Limerick and Saolta. The second phase was due to start in April 2022, but will now start in July 2022, and will involve all six hospital groups.

The OEST was developed and led by the NWIHP Clinical Director, and was part of their remit. In April 2022, following a competitive process, NWIHP appointed a new Clinical Director. As OEST is in its infancy, it was agreed that the previous Clinical Director of NWIHP would continue to lead OEST, while

this new initiative becomes established. It will take some time to scope out the role and function of the OEST, and it will undoubtedly change in approach as it evolves. On this basis, the previous Clinical Director for NWIHP will lead the OEST until the process is more firmly established, and recruitment can commence, or if the process is not working, it may be discontinued.

In relation to other personnel engaged in supporting the initial development and rollout of the OEST initiative, these resources are currently drawn from NWIHP funded personnel, and as such no new personnel have been appointed or recruited in this regard.

If the OEST is deemed successful, then recruitment will proceed in line with normal HSE policy.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,



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