



Oifig Ceannasaí Oibríochtaí,
Oibríochtaí Pobail, Cúram Príomhúil

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1st July 2022

Deputy Duncan Smith,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

PQ 32597/22 – To ask the Minister for Health how far below optimum levels of staffing of lactation consultants employed by the HSE are; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

- Duncan Smith

Dear Deputy Smith,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question (PQ 32597/22) which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

It is possible to estimate the overall lactation staffing requirement in the HSE using staffing levels from counties achieving high breastfeeding rates as a benchmark. In 2017, The DOH reviewed practices that increase breastfeeding. The review highlighted a model of breastfeeding support in New Zealand where currently breastfeeding rates at birth are high. This equated to 0.77 lactation WTE per 1,000 births in the hospital setting and 0.27 lactation WTE per 1,000 births in the community setting.

In 2021, the HSE reviewed this evidence for the Irish context and engaged with the DOH on the requirement for additional lactation posts in order to reach the New Zealand benchmark; taking into consideration the births per maternity unit, existing resources in place or due to come on stream and socio-economic considerations. €1.58m funding has been allocated in NSP 2022 for 24 new lactation posts which will bring lactation staffing levels in the HSE in line with the New Zealand benchmark.

We reported on the progress of recruitment for the additional lactation posts in PQ 32596/22. It is acknowledged that recruitment for nursing related grades can be challenging, however, there is an expectation that these posts will be attractive options for qualified candidates, particularly given significant improvements in overall infant feeding staffing arrangements nationally.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

Maeve Raeside
General Manager Primary Care
National Community Operations

