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Paul Donnelly, TD

Dail Eireann,

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E. paul.donnelly@oireachtas.ie (by email only)

1st June 2022

PQ 24395/22: To ask the Minister for Health if consideration will be given to the establishment of an android and smart phone application which would provide parents of newborns with a 24/7 support system with on-demand access to leading maternal and paediatric experts.

Dear Deputy Donnelly,

Thank you for your Parliamentary Question. I consulted with Anne Parry, Programme Manager National Healthy Childhood Programme in this response.

The mychild.ie website, part of HSE.ie, provides information to parents-to-be and parents of young children. It received 5.1 million visits in 2021. The website is part of a suite of information supports provided both directly by practitioners and online. This suite of resources includes MyPregnancy, MyChild 0-2 and MyChild 2-5 books available to all expectant parents and infants.

The mychild.ie website covers pregnancy, labour and birth, babies and toddlers. Topics include symptoms and conditions, breastfeeding, nutrition, everyday care, development, parenting advice and child safety. There are more than 362 pages of information on the site developed with support from the Sláintecare Integration Fund. The content was informed by consultation with expectant and new parents as well as child health practitioners who highlighted the topics frequently raised by parents.

The content was written by healthcare professionals and a range of experts in maternal and paediatric topics, including doctors, midwives, public health nurses, physiotherapists, dietitians, psychologists and others.

The information is available to parents 24/7 and the website has been designed to be accessible on phone or tablet devices.

Parents can also contact a team of lactation consultants through the 'Ask our breastfeeding expert' service on mychild.ie. Further breastfeeding support currently being evaluated is a pilot of a closed/private social media group led by a lactation consultant providing breastfeeding support to new mothers

The website is promoted all year-round on social media and Google search, alongside advertising campaigns at specific times.

As part of a Sláintecare-funded project, the mychild.ie website is expanding to more direct and focused engagement with expectant parents. This will include the development of further information and will see a new pregnancy support journey launched this year. The first phase of the project will mean pregnant women can sign up for weekly emails which will be tailored to the subscriber's due date. The emails begin in early pregnancy and will include the first 3 months of a baby's life.

Each email will contain information and tips relevant to that week, including appointments, vaccines and symptom information, and signpost to relevant articles on mychild.ie. The emails will also signpost to a new maternity services directory, which is also being created as part of the Sláintecare project.

The pregnancy digital journey is based on extensive research into the use of online applications.

Yours sincerely,



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