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2<sup>nd</sup> June 2022

Deputy Smyth,  
Dáil Éireann,  
Leinster House  
Dublin 2

**PQ Ref 25145/22: To ask the Minister for Health the estimated full-year cost to ensure that every woman has immediate access to a lactation consultant before being discharged from hospital or within 48 hours following a home-birth.**

Dear Deputy Smyth,

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.

Midwives and PHN's provide routine infant feeding support to women and their babies. The role of the Clinical Nurse/Midwife Specialist (Infant Feeding/Lactation) is to provide care to those who need additional support due to complexities, challenges or concerns that have arisen with infant feeding. These mothers will have specific lactation concerns and breastfeeding needs. The Clinical Nurse/Midwife Specialist (Infant Feeding/Lactation) will identify and agree appropriate referral pathways for mothers with complex needs.

The HSE Breastfeeding in a Healthy Ireland Action Plan 2016-2021 is the framework for progressing supports for breastfeeding in Ireland. The HSE is partnering with key divisions to provide the supports that mothers require at all stages of the breastfeeding continuum.

A total of 34.5 infant feeding/lactation posts were approved through the National Maternity Strategy and the DOH between 2020 and 2021 to ensure every maternity unit/hospital and community health services will have dedicated posts in place. The HSE also recruited a national lead at the end of 2021 to support implementation of infant feeding standards within maternity services.

With the full deployment of these additional specialist resources across both the hospital and community sector, and a concentrated drive at national level to support the implementation of the recently published National Breastfeeding Standards, NWIHP working with its partners across the system, is confident that women will have ready access to the appropriate level of breastfeeding support as determined by their care requirements.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,



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