



Oifig Ceannasaí Oibríochtaí,
Oibríochtaí Pobail, Cúram Priomhúil

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25th May 2022

Deputy Róisín Shortall,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

PQ 27158/22 – To ask the Minister for Health when the 24 additional lactation posts that were announced over a year ago will be filled; the reason that these posts remain unfilled; his plans to review and update the National Breastfeeding Action Plan which was dated up to 2021 and extended to 2022; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

- Róisín Shortall

Dear Deputy Shortall,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question (PQ 27158/22) which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

The HSE Breastfeeding in a Healthy Ireland Action Plan 2016-2023 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.

34.5 new infant-feeding/lactation consultant posts in the HSE were approved in the last two years.

10.5 posts were approved through the National Maternity Strategy to ensure every maternity unit/hospital has at least one dedicated infant-feeding post in place. 8 of these posts are filled and recruitment continues for the remaining 2.5 posts.

There are currently 32.9 infant-feeding/lactation posts in place across maternity (24.6) and community services (8.3), which is an increase from 15.4 posts in place across the HSE in 2017. The HSE also recruited a national lead at the end of 2021 to support implementation of infant feeding standards within maternity services.

The Minister for Health announced funding for a further 24 additional posts last year with funding for these permanent appointments confirmed in the National Service Plan (NSP) 2022. Following sign off of the NSP 2022 in March, recruitment has now commenced. Recruitment progress for these posts will be closely monitored to identify challenges. 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 arrangements nationally.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Seán McArt'.

Seán McArt
General Manager Primary Care
National Community Operations