



Deputy Burke,  
Dail Eireann,  
Leinster House,  
Dublin 2.

6<sup>th</sup> December 2022

**PQ Ref 55740/22: To ask the Minister for Health if he will confirm that the necessary support services would be provided to women who have opted for a home birth delivery, and that no new guidelines or regulations would be put in place which would place restrictions on such a service where the person is not living immediately adjacent to a maternity unit; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Colm Burke**

Dear Deputy Burke,

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 homebirth service has been present for many years. The HSE homebirth service is delivered by self-employed community midwives in accordance with a range of clinical guidelines and within the scope of practice and compliance requirements of the HSE. There are currently 22 SECM's providing the service.

Acceptance under the homebirth scheme is contingent on meeting medical criteria and some will be excluded on this basis. Availability of a midwife is a requirement as well as the need for a second at the time of birth.

In 2016 in the annual report distance, family support and access were noted as being important.

Since 2020 the guidance has stipulated that "Ideally the woman should be transferred to an obstetric unit 30 -40 minutes from the phone call to the ambulance service requesting transfer"

With the transfer of the governance of the service to the Acute Hospital division clarity on this was required. This was refined as 30 minutes "blue light" which does not include phone call, transfer time on either side.

Consideration was made of the transfer rate of 22% and mean ambulance response times. There is a time imperative for delivery of women in the second stage of labour. Within the hospital system obstetric and neonatal staff are expected to reside within a similar distance on call in case of emergency delivery.

The HSE is committed to the Maternity Strategy and improvements in maternity care. The supported care pathway has provided for midwifery care and community midwifery clinics across the country. In the last two years alone there have been 13 home from home rooms established. There has been a move to early transfer home and the development of post-natal hubs in the community also.



I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Smith', written in a cursive style.

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**John Smith,**  
**Assistant National Director, Acute Operations.**