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19th December 2022

Deputy MacNeill
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ Ref 59597/22

To ask the Minister for Health the steps that his Department is taking to reduce a 52-week wait for an endometriosis excision surgery, considering that further delay to this type of surgery may impact severely on women's reproductive health; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy MacNeill,

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 National Women's and Infants Health Programme (NWIHP) invested initially to enhance endometriosis services in Tallaght University Hospital in 2021. This investment included the allocation of funding for recruitment of essential health care professionals and allowed for some once-off costs such as small refurbishments of clinical space, purchase of equipment etc. A draft Framework for a National Endometriosis Service has been developed by NWIHP and is currently undergoing key stakeholder review. The proposed Framework is envisaged to roll out in a phased manner, with initial phase one investment seeing the establishment of two supra-regional endometriosis services; TUH and Cork University Maternity Hospital. These services will be designed to offer specialised care to severe and complex cases of endometriosis. Services in the supra-regional services will be multidisciplinary in nature, with a focus on a holistic approach to care and with access to specialised surgery as and when clinically indicated.

In order to support the development of both supra-regional services, the Framework proposes that there be a named 'hub' within each hospital group. Each 'hub' will be positioned, through the allocation of additional resources, to provide interdisciplinary care to women experiencing endometriosis at a mild to moderate stage i.e. the cohort whose symptoms cannot be managed appropriately in primary care but who do not require the expanse of highly specialist services within the supra-regional services. Again, this will include access to surgery as clinically indicated.

During the course of 2022, Phase 1 funding has been provided by NWIHP to support the development of Cork supra-regional service, as well as the five hub services located in Limerick, Galway, the Coombe, the Rotunda and the National Maternity Services. Additionally, phase 2 funding has been approved for the supra-regional service at TUH. The implementation of this national Framework will involve the roll out of referral pathways, which will ensure structured access for women with (or with suspected)

endometriosis to the most appropriate treatment for their individual needs, in a timely manner and within the right service.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,

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