



Ceannasaí Náisiúnta Oibríochtaí Meabhairshláinte
Ospidéal Naomh Lómáin,
Baile Phámar Baile Átha Cliath 20.
R: PQReps.NatMHOPS@hse.ie

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St Loman's Hospital,
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Deputy Mark Ward,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

28th October 2022

PQ Number: 53563/22

PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health if the mother-and-baby inpatient peri-natal mental health unit will be in place in Q4 of 2024, as outlined in Sharing the Vision; if a site has been chosen; when it is expected to open; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Mark Ward

Dear Deputy Ward,

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.

There are no Mother and Baby Units (MBU) available in Ireland at present. Planning for Ireland's first MBU, to be located in St. Vincent's Health Campus, Dublin, is currently underway. This is in line with recommendations made in the Specialist Perinatal Mental Health Model of Care for Ireland (HSE, 2017) and the National Maternity Strategy (DOH, 2016). A MBU is a specialist inpatient unit for women who have severe mental health problems, where the mother and baby can be admitted together. MBUs provide specialist care for mothers with an existing mental health problem that has become much worse during pregnancy or after birth and for mothers who develop severe mental health problems for the first time during pregnancy or in the first postnatal year.

MBUs specialise in treating severe mental illness. These include Bipolar Affective Disorder, Schizophrenia, Postpartum Psychosis and other psychotic illnesses. A mother can also be admitted for treatment of severe Depression or Anxiety Disorders, such as Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder. For this reason it is important to note that MBUs need to be co-located with an adult mental health unit. MBUs typically admit women in late pregnancy and at any point until their baby is one year old. They are calm, welcoming places that are more homely than other wards. Each mother should have their own bedroom, with a cot for the baby. A nursery is also part of the required schedule of accommodation in an MBU. The entrance to the unit is controlled by staff to ensure the safety of mothers and babies. MBUs will work closely with community mental health teams, specialist perinatal mental health teams, maternity services and public health nurses.



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The MBU is part of HSE CHO6 Department of Psychiatry located on the campus of St. Vincent's Hospital. This reflects its primary purpose of treating mothers with severe mental illness whilst not separating them from their babies. To date CHO6 Mental Health Services have convened a group comprised of HSE Estates, CHO6 Mental Health, the Specialist Perinatal Mental Health Services and representatives from St. Vincent's Hospital.

A joint business case was developed and agreed within the group. It was then to go to the Executive Management Team of St. Vincent's Hospital for review. The current Adult Mental Health Unit on the grounds of St. Vincent's Health Campus may need to be repurposed or a new building built at a different location on site if it is to accommodate an Adult Mental Health Team and a Mother and Baby Unit.

There is no firm timeline in place regarding the allocation of dedicated funding for the inpatient mental health support mother-and-baby unit. The HSE are continuing to work with all key stakeholders to ensure that this is done as quickly as is possible.

More information on an MBU is available here:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/publications/mentalhealth/what-is-a-mother-and-baby-unit-mbu.pdf>

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

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

Tony McCusker
General Manager
National Mental Health Services