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22nd September 2022

Deputy Smyth
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ Ref 42480/22: To ask the Minister for Health his plans to make the non-invasive prenatal test available free of charge to all pregnant women such as in other countries for example the UK; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

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.

As you have referenced, non-invasive prenatal genetic screening (NIPS) is not currently available free of charge in our maternity services. In a very small number of cases and based on clinical indications, NIPS may be provided free to a public patient with the referring hospital absorbing the expense of the test in some scenarios.

The HSE is currently overseeing a number of work programmes in the area of genetics and genomics. With regard to perinatal genetics, the HSE is developing a framework for the delivery of a structured and networked Perinatal Genomic Service in Ireland that will form part of an overarching National Genetics and Genomics Strategy.

Separately, the HSE's Chief Clinical Officer (CCO) has commissioned a review of Termination of Pregnancy Services, as provided under Section 11 of the Health Regulation of Termination of Pregnancy Act 2018. Amongst other things, this Section 11 Review will assess and evaluate pathways of care with a view to enabling ready and timely access to relevant testing (screening and diagnostic) for service users.

NWIHP will work collaboratively with HSE colleagues and the Department of Health to advance recommendations arising from these work programmes.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,

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

