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11th May 2023

Deputy Ward,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ Ref 18142/23: To ask the Minister for Health when the oversight group for National Standards for Bereavement Care Following Pregnancy Loss and Perinatal Death under the National Women and Infants Health Programme will be reconstituted; if he will outline the process of how an individual or group can become part of the oversight group; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

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.

The National Standards for Bereavement Care Group will reconstitute as an Advisory Group – largely advisory, reviewing materials, suggesting issues of importance for the National Women and Infants Health Programme (NWIHP) to consider in improving bereavement care and pregnancy loss supports. This would mean transitioning from overseeing the development of the Standards to advising on issues relating to improving bereavement care and pregnancy loss supports, including – but not limited to – the continued implementation and development of the Standards for Bereavement Care Following Pregnancy Loss and Perinatal Death in the 19 Maternity Units in the Republic of Ireland. The Terms of Reference will be agreed at the first meeting of the new Group. The Group will be chaired by Professor Keelin O’Donoghue, Consultant Obstetrician. Administration support will be provided by NIWHP. It is currently planned that the first meeting will be held at the end of Q2 2023.

All members of the previous oversight group have been invited to remain on the Advisory Group. In addition, membership will be widened to include: people with lived experience of pregnancy loss who are not affiliated to any support/advocacy group, a CMS Bereavement and Loss from each hospital group, palliative care medicine/nursing, neonatal nursing, specialist perinatal mental health nursing/midwifery and social work/counselling.

The Advisory Group will continue to report to NWIHP who are responsible for providing the Advisory Group with resources and/or assistance to carry out their functions. The Group will meet three times a year. Meetings will be held online, with a plan to hold one hybrid meeting per year in Dublin. If a member is unavailable to attend the meeting, they will send their apologies to the Secretariat; the Chair may agree a nominee on their behalf.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,



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