



Clár Sláinte Náisiúnta do Mhná & do Naíonáin
Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte, Aonad 7A, Áras
Dargan, An Ceantar Theas, Baile Átha Cliath 8
T: 076 695 9991

National Women and Infants Health Programme
Health Service Executive, Unit 7A, The Dargan Building,
Heuston South Quarter, Dublin 8
T: 076 695 9991

30th January 2023

Deputy Smith
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ: 1379/23 To ask the Minister for Health the national breastfeeding guidance that is in place in non-maternity adult acute hospitals; the steps that he will take to ensure support to breastfeeding patients in non-maternity adult acute hospitals with regard to prescribing practices and nursing care; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Smith.

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 on the various areas and issues you raised.

Arising from severe pre-existing underlying health conditions or significant clinical complexities arising during pregnancy, women may deliver their babies in non-maternity adult acute hospitals.

In circumstances where this is deemed clinically required, care for the woman and her baby is shared between the relevant maternity services and relevant adult medicine service such that the obstetric team inclusive of midwives will attend the acute hospital for the delivery. Breastfeeding support is available to the woman by means of this shared care package where identified as required.

In relation to prescribing practices, it should be noted that the non-maternity adult acute hospitals that would be involved in such shared care packages will have on their staff consultant obstetrician and gynaecologists who provide gynaecology services on those site.

These shared posts support close working relationships and ensures that prescribing practices are in line and cognisant as those that would be used and applied in a maternity setting. As such, postnatal prescriptions therefore would all be in line with national guidance to allow safe breastfeeding or expressing, unless the prescription is necessary for the mothers wellbeing due to her morbidity.

In the event that a birth in the non-maternity adult acute hospital was unplanned, support for the relevant surgical team in relation to prescribing requirements vis-à-vis breastfeeding, can be accessed from any of the following:

- The maternity service that the women was booked to;
- Their hospital group maternity tertiary referral centre; and/or
- The Irish Medicines in Pregnancy Service located in the Rotunda Hospital Dublin.

Within the National Infant Feeding Standards Self-Assessment tool Maternity Services are required to assess and ensure that they have systems and processes in place to support mothers and babies to continue breastfeeding if they become separated from each other, e.g. if the mother is admitted/readmitted to Maternity Service or another medical service.

I trust this clarifies the matter and provides reassurance as to the level of commitment that the HSE has to enabling and supporting increased breastfeeding rates in Ireland.

Yours sincerely,



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