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19th January 2023

Deputy Cairns
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ Ref 2294/23: To ask the Minister for Health if he will outline his engagement with gynaecological experts and down syndrome groups to develop specialist gynaecology services for individuals with down syndrome.

Dear Deputy Cairns

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 training programmes provided by educational providers in collaboration with service providers by means of clinical placements, ensure that health care professionals are positioned and capable of managing the care requirements of persons presenting with specific needs, clinical or otherwise.

Therefore when a person presents with a particular need, this is not so unusual that the system cannot adapt to the specific needs of that person and ensure that any additional requirements e.g. sign language requirements, mobility supports etc., are secured to ensure that the holistic needs of that person are met.

The HSE has published guidelines to give practical guidance to all health and social care staff about how they can provide accessible services to patients and clients with additional needs. The guidelines aim to enable staff to effectively and competently deal with issues arising from a person presenting with additional needs. There are guidelines for specific services, and Guideline 10 is regarding accessible hospital services.

Here they advise to draw on the expertise of staff from across the hospital, as relevant to the particular need of the individual such as physiotherapists, social workers and speech and language therapists, who will assist with planning services and information for people prior to admission and on discharge

Guideline 10 can be found on the link below:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/yourhealthservice/access/natguideaccessibleservices/part2.html#services10>

It is also important to note that any patient presenting with particular needs e.g. individuals with Down Syndrome, will actively be encouraged to attend their appointments with an advocate, i.e. parent, or other relative, who can also work with healthcare staff to ensure the needs of the person are fully understood

and met and that services are provided in as far as practicable and feasible in a manner that minimises any undue stress or distress to the patient concerned.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,



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