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14th March 2022

Deputy Wynne
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ 12182/23: To ask the Minister for Health if he has fulfilled his commitment to facilitating homebirth services and midwife led services in rural areas; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Wynne,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Representatives Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position.

In February 2022, the HSE Home Birth Service transitioned from Community Operations to Acute Operations and is now being formally integrated into the maternity networks, which are part of the six hospital groups, in line with the strategic objectives of the National Maternity Strategy.

To support the incorporation of the Home Birth services into our maternity services, significant additional investment was made in this service in 2022 with a view to assisting integration and the delivery of safe high quality care.

The homebirth service is delivered on behalf of the HSE by self-employed community midwives in accordance with a range of HSE clinical guidelines and within the scope of practice and compliance requirements as determined and stipulated by the HSE.

As such the homebirth service continues to be provided in rural areas under the governance of the relevant Hospital Group based on these HSE's requirements.

The HSE is committed to the Maternity Strategy and improvements in maternity care. The investment to date in the development of the supported care pathway has provided for significant expansion in midwifery care and community based midwifery clinics across the country with all 19 maternity services. All services now have in place a midwifery provided supported care pathway, with all services furthermore having community based midwifery clinics. This investment has been supported by a parallel stream in investment in infrastructure developments, so may regional maternity services have received funding for the development of home-away-from-home births suites, and upgrade of existing maternity facilities and equipment.

In tandem with the developments as set out above, there has been a move to develop and implement early transfer home services, with the HSE now focusing on the development of post-natal hubs in the community. A number of hospitals serving rural communities have been successfully awarded postnatal hub funding including Kerry, CUMH, Kilkenny, Sligo and Portlincula.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,



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