



Deputy Roisin Shortall,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

23rd Oct 2023

PQ ref 44435/23

To ask the Minister for Health the current strategies in place to ensure clinical staff receive sufficient training in foetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD) to seek information on the efforts being made to enhance awareness of FASD among healthcare professionals and educators; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Shortall,

The HSE Alcohol Programme established a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) Expert Advisory Group in September 2020, a multidisciplinary group, to support the HSE Alcohol Programme work on FASD prevention. In 2022, it undertook a survey of Irish healthcare, social care, and education professionals' knowledge, attitudes and experience of FASD (N = 702 valid responses). Some of the findings indicated key needs such as a model of care, care pathway and need for training and support.

Over 99% of respondents had heard of FASD. Half (49%) of all respondents were not confident on the presentation of FASD with only 32% of healthcare staff reporting they were able to recognise FASD symptoms and signs or behaviours.

Just over 20% of respondents (N = 152) reported having ever referred a child/young person with suspected FASD and 5% (N =39) reported having ever diagnosed a child or young person with FASD.

The vast majority of respondents were aware of guidance on drinking in pregnancy (94%) and correctly identified 'no alcohol' as the guidance (96%). However 26% did not agree that the guidance is clear and understandable.

Of the 702 full respondents to the survey only 13 respondents, 1.9%, reported being aware of FASD care pathways. Over 86% of respondents are interested in future training on FASD.

In 2024, the HSE Alcohol Programme will lead on the development of the FASD learning module for health care staff. This need was identified through the survey of health care professionals in 2022. This is noted as action 11 on the HSE FASD Position Paper.

Yours Sincerely

Aleisha Clarke

Dr Aleisha Clarke
Mental Health and Wellbeing & Alcohol Programme
Strategy and Research
HSE