



Oifig an Stiúirthóra Náisiúnta Cúnta
Oibríochtaí Meabhairshláinte

Ospidéal Naomh Lómáin, Baile Phámar,
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Deputy Neasa Hourigan
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

19th April 2024

PQ Number: 14744/24

PQ Question: To ask the Minister for Health if the mother-and-baby inpatient peri-natal mental health unit will be in place in Q4 of 2024; as outlined in Sharing the Vision: when it is expected to open; and if he will make a statement on the matter. –Neasa Hourigan

Dear Deputy Hourigan,

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.

Currently, there is no inpatient perinatal mental health unit in the Republic of Ireland. Planning for an inpatient Mother and Baby Units (MBU), to be located in Dublin, is currently underway. The report of an appraisal study, due to commence soon on the development of Elm Unit at St Vincent's University Hospital, to accommodate an inpatient mother and baby unit is due later this year. This is in line with recommendations made in the Specialist Perinatal Mental Health Model of Care for Ireland (HSE, 2017) and the National Maternity Strategy (DOH, 2016).

A MBU is a specialist inpatient unit for women who have severe mental health problems, where the mother and baby can be admitted together. MBU's provide specialist care for mothers with an existing mental health problem that has become much worse during pregnancy or after birth and for mothers who develop severe mental health problems for the first time during pregnancy or in the first postnatal year. MBU's specialise in treating severe mental illness. These include Bipolar Affective Disorder, Schizophrenia, Postpartum Psychosis and other psychotic illnesses. A mother can also be admitted for treatment of severe Depression or Anxiety Disorders, such as Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder. For this reason it is important to note that MBU's need to be co-located with an adult mental health unit. MBU's typically admit women in late pregnancy and at any point until their baby is one year old. They are calm, welcoming places that are more homely than other wards. Each mother should have their own bedroom, with a cot for the baby. A nursery is also part of the required schedule of accommodation in an MBU. The entrance to the unit is controlled by staff to ensure the safety of mothers and babies. MBU's will work closely with community mental health teams, specialist perinatal mental health teams, maternity services and public health nurses.

At present, Mothers who require inpatient mental health treatment continue to be admitted to an adult mental unit.



The HSE are continuing to work with all key stakeholders to ensure that the planned MBU development is done as quickly as is possible.

More information on an MBU is available here:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/publications/mentalhealth/what-is-a-mother-and-baby-unit-mbu.pdf>

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tony Mc Cusker'.

Tony Mc Cusker
General Manager - Operations
National Mental Health Services