



Clár Sláinte Náisiúnta do Mhná & do Naíonáin
Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte, An Foirgneamh
Brunel, An Ceantar Theas, Baile Átha Cliath D08 X01F

National Women and Infants Health Programme
Health Service Executive, The Brunel Building, Heuston
South Quarter, Dublin D08 X01F

05/06/2024

Deputy Connolly,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ 22449/24: To ask the Minister for Health for an update on the implementation of the revised National Maternity Strategy Implementation Plan 2021 – 2026; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

PQ 22451/24: To ask the Minister for Health pursuant to the revised National Maternity Strategy Implementation Plan 2021 – 2026, the status of the establishment of a clinical audit function for maternity services; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

PQ 22452/24: To ask the Minister for Health pursuant to the revised National Maternity Strategy Implementation Plan 2021 – 2026, the status of plans to develop a research strategy for Irish maternity services; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Connolly,

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 National Maternity Strategy (NMS) was launched by the Minister for Health in January 2016. The NMS has 77 recommendations to be delivered on over the 10-year life span on the strategy. The National Women and Infants Health Programme (NWIHP) developed an implementation plan in 2017 with 236 actions, and a detailed cost estimate to deliver on the 77 recommendations in the NMS. Work has been ongoing on the delivery of the implementation plan since 2017

In February 2020 HIQA published a review of their 2016 maternity standards. The review was positive on the level of compliance at hospital level, but did make eight recommendations that need to be implemented. Recommendation 1 was the HSE produce a revised implementation plan, that is fully costed and time bound. The revised implementation plan and costings was prepared in 2021, and by then, 86% of NMS actions were recorded as either complete or in-progress. As of December 2023, 94% of actions are reported as complete or in-progress. The table below provides further detail on progress across all actions. The status of each of the 236 actions relates to the projected timelines developed in 2021.

	Implementation Progress 2021	Implementation Progress 2023
Complete	61% (n=145)	74.6% (n=176)
In progress	25% (n=59)	20.3% (n=48)
Delayed (Target end date extended)	9% (n=21)	3.4% (n=8)
Late/not started (Work yet to commence)	5% (n=11)	1.7% (n=4)

Table 1

With regards to the status of the establishment of a clinical audit function and plans to develop a research strategy for maternity services, I can advise as follows:

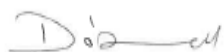
NWIHP works closely with the National Perinatal Epidemiology Centre (NPEC) which is a clinical audit centre located within the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology, University College Cork based in Cork University Maternity Hospital. The primary goal of this collaboration is to work jointly with the maternity services to effectively utilise clinical audit data and epidemiological evidence and to translate these insights into tangible improvements in maternity care.

In addition, NWIHP oversees the development and implementation of the Irish Maternity Indicator System (IMIS). The IMIS Report is a vital tool designed to monitor, evaluate, and improve the quality of maternity care services across Ireland. The system collects and analyses data on various aspects of maternity care, providing insights into the performance of maternity units and guiding strategic decision-making to enhance maternal and neonatal health outcomes.

As outlined in the updated National Maternity Strategy Implementation plan for 2021-2026, NWIHP aims to achieve a long-term goal of instituting a research and audit function within the Programme. To progress towards this objective, NWIHP submitted a bid for New Service Development as part of the HSE Estimates 2024 process. The bid aimed to establish a National Clinical Audit Function within NWIHP and create a research network concentrating on priority areas in women's health. Unfortunately, the proposal did not secure funding support in 2024. Nonetheless, NWIHP intends to revisit this initiative as part of the Estimates 2025 process. In the meantime, NWIHP has started to network the Professors in Obstetrics from all the universities, to provide a vehicle to enhance research. A similar engagement with the Professors in Midwifery will start shortly.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,



Davinia O'Donnell, General Manager, National Women and Infants Health Programme