



Office of the Head of Primary Care
Services
Community Health Organisation
Midlands Louth Meath

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24th May 2024

Deputy Darren O'Rourke
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Dublin 2

Re PQ – 22671/24 To ask the Minister for Health the reason the breastfeeding support service in Dunboyne County Meath was cut; if he will immediately review this decision; and if he will make a statement on the matter

Dear Deputy O'Rourke,

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 outline the position as follows;

Meath Public Health Nursing services are fully committed to promoting and supporting breast feeding practice. This is in line with the Health Service Executive (HSE) Nurture Infant Health and Wellbeing programme to increase rates and duration of breast feeding in Ireland and also the Healthy Ireland Breast Feeding Action Plan.

Public Health Nurses (PHN)s have all received training to provide breast feeding support, advice and education to mothers in the post-natal period. For mothers experiencing more than the normal difficulties in the post-natal period, a Clinical Nurse Manger (CNM2) Infant Feeding and Lactation was appointed in September 2023. The CNM2 is a qualified lactation consultant and is now in a position to provide mothers with this extra specialist support.

Since January 2024, an Assistant Director of Public Health Nursing (ADPHN) who is also a qualified lactation consultant has taken on with leading out on service initiatives to promote breast feeding across the county. One of these initiatives has been to review existing Breast Feeding Support Groups in Co. Meath supported by the HSE. The ADPHN is reviewing policies and, seeking to establish further groups. The HSE as provider of Nurse Led Breast feeding groups must operate in line with best international practice, national and local policy.

Breast feeding support groups led by PHN's are very popular as they provide support and expert breast feeding advice to mothers. Feedback from participants who have attended such groups say that, they benefitted greatly from the social and emotional support of meeting new mothers going through similar experiences and have gained friendship ,confidence as a parent and a sense of community belonging.



The Meath PHN services are now collaborating with the Healthy Ireland Coordinator from the Meath County Council to establish new breastfeeding group within locally based libraries and County Council spaces.

A decision was taken by the Meath PHN service to dispend the Breastfeeding group in The Oak Park Centre in Dunboyne as the number of mothers attending was low and the group was not operational in line with best practice. However, I am delighted to inform you that a breast feeding group which will be led by the PHN service will start in the Dunboyne Library from 28th May 2024. The HSE MyChild.ie website will be updated to reflect this and it is hoped that this group will act as a valuable resource in supporting mothers in the Dunboyne area with their breast feeding journey.

I trust the above is in order but please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any further queries in this regard.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Grainne McGill'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Grainne McGill
A/Head of Primary Care Services
Midlands Louth Meath Community Health Organisation