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25/02/2025

Deputy O'Hara,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ 4455/25: To ask the Minister for Health the number of additional WTE staff recruited into neonatology services in 2024 and to date in 2025; and if she will make a statement on the matter. - Louis O'Hara

Dear Deputy O'Hara,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Questions, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position based on information available at national level to the HSE's National Women and Infants Health Programme (NWIHP).

As part of the on-going work to implement the National Maternity Strategy, NWIHP have worked closely with the six maternity networks in place with a view to strengthening the provision of neonatal services around the country.

Within this work programme and collaborating closely with the HSE's National Clinical Lead for Neonatology, NWIHP have worked to expand the multidisciplinary expertise available to neonatology in each of the six regions including the allocation of speech and language therapists, occupational therapists, psychologists and advanced nurse practitioners in addition to additional consultant neonatology posts being approved for the Dublin tertiary services.

Support to NICU services and the babies and families they support have also been further strengthened by the allocation of a range of other health personnel who although not exclusively identified as NICU staff would provide professional input as required to the service including additional medical social workers, lactation midwives, clinical skill facilitators, clinical specialist nurses and midwives, bereavement personnel and pharmacy personnel.

In parallel to the above investment and working with nursing and midwifery educational and training structures within the HSE, NWIHP are supporting the development and implementation of a national network of designated neonatal nurse tutors with a view to standardising and enabling structured access to continual professional development and educational opportunities in the area of neonatal nursing both so as to ensure that staff are enabled and supported to provide a safe service.

The National Model of Care for Neonatal Services in Ireland is currently being reviewed and updated and it would be anticipated that it should be finalised and published shortly. This national document will provide detailed information as to the current staffing levels in each of the NICU and SCBU services and

will provide guidance and recommendations as to future investment required in the area of neonatal care as benchmarked against best national and international practice.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,

MaryJo Biggs, General Manager, National Women and Infants Health Programme