



15 July 2025

BY EMAIL ONLY

Deputy Shane Moynihan

Dáil Éireann

Leinster House

Kildare Street

Dublin 2

**Re: PQ36165/25 - To ask the Minister for Health when the community mothers scheme will be reintroduced. –
Shane Moynihan**

Dear Deputy Moynihan

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question which has been referred by the Minister for Health to the Health Service Executive for direct response.

The Community Mothers initiative has been re-titled the Community Families Programme and was formally re-launched on October 2nd 2024 by Minister Colm Burke. The programme originally began in Dublin in the 1980s, led by a Public Health Nurse (PHN) to provide additional support and guidance to mothers. It gradually expanded to other sites across the country, but subsequently faced a decline in availability in more recent years.

Arising from concerns about the Programme's sustainability following the closure of 9 of the original locations, the Katharine Howard Foundation commissioned a review of the Programme in Ireland in 2017. This review found consistency had been maintained in the delivery of the Programme across Ireland, but there were differences in governance, funding, and whether Home Visitors were paid or volunteers. Given these findings, it was recommended that a standardised approach to delivering the Programme in Ireland should be developed. Recommendations outlined the need for a national support structure that incorporated the two primary commissioning/funding partners to provide a sustainable future for the Programme.

In 2019, a consortium of organisations successfully secured Sláintecare Integration Funding to support the development of a national standardised model of delivery for the Community Mothers Programme. This initiative, the Community Mothers Programme Development Project, was governed by an Oversight Group comprising the HSE, Tusla, the Katharine Howard Foundation and the National College of Ireland. From March 2020 to December 2021, considerable work grounded in co-production and consultation resulted in the development of the Community Families Programme

A new governance structure co-chaired by the HSE and Tusla commenced work in March 2022 and by 2024 the following was achieved:

- A New Training Programme for all Community Families Coordinators and Home Visitors
- New resources and a manual to guide the work of all Home Visitors
- Developing a way to collect information collaboratively with Parents to help everyone reflect on how to support the best outcomes for all Children, Parents, Families and Communities and support roll out of a new CRM based data and information system
- Building capacity and resources so that existing Programme sites can deliver the Community Families model and new sites can be established
- Launch of the National Community Families Programme in October 2024
- Working collaboratively to ensure new Community Family sites are supported with roll out

In line with other home visiting programmes, Community Families is now delivered by trained, local Home Visitors employed by Community and Voluntary Organisations or the Health Service Executive (HSE). The 7 remaining original



sites have now adapted to the new model. In addition, four of the existing sites are expanding to new catchment areas and one new site is opening through a three year funding opportunity from the Children's Fund facilitated by the Dept Children, Disability and Equality.

The expansion of Community Families to other parts of the country will be progressed in line with availability of funding.

If you require any further information or clarification, please do contact us.

Yours sincerely,

Dr John Cuddihy

National Director of Public Health

MCRN: 16227