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29/07/2025

Deputy Toibin
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ 39798/25: To ask the Minister for Health if bereavement suites and a bereavement champion are available 24/7 in each maternity hospital in the State; and if not, will she detail which maternity hospital does not have either in view of the fact mothers who tragically lose their baby just before birth or just after often have to endure the cries of healthy babies in the maternity hospital which can add to their trauma

Dear Deputy Toibin,

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 on the various areas and issues you raised.

Bereavement suites: there is a range of accommodation available for parents in the 19 maternity units. These range from a dedicated bereavement suite, to dedicated bereavement in-patient rooms. These rooms are situated in various places in all of the hospitals, from postnatal wards, gynaecological wards to antenatal wards. See link to examples of bereavement spaces in Maternity units throughout the country. Case Studies: Hospital Spaces – Pregnancy & Infant Loss Ireland. <https://pregnancyandinfantloss.ie/case-studies-hospital-spaces/> . The organisation and management of services in each individual maternity unit dictates where women experiencing pregnancy loss are cared for. The elderly infrastructure in the majority of units often limits where the rooms are situated.

Bereavement champions: there is a dedicated Bereavement Clinical Midwife/Nurse specialist in post in each maternity unit. As part of their role these specialist midwives co-ordinate care, provide bereavement support to families experiencing pregnancy loss. While they are not available 24/7, part of their role includes providing education and training to staff who care for all women who experience pregnancy loss.

We do acknowledge how traumatic it can be for women to hear the cries of babies in this difficult time. The challenge can be balancing the requirement for these women to be cared for in the appropriate place with the specialist services they need while shielding them from other infants.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,

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