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Deputy Ward,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House
Dublin 2

19/05/2025

PQ 33064/25: To ask the Minister for Health to outline the postnatal supports and services available to new mothers in the community; the steps being taken to ensure that there is a coordinated approach to support postnatal women; and if she will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Ward,

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 2020 Maternity Experience Survey identified that women often felt unsupported after discharge from the maternity services. The HSE developed the concept of postnatal hubs to address these valid concerns. Postnatal hubs are designed to provide accessible, multidisciplinary care to women and their babies in accessible, community based locations. Women's health hubs are at various stages of development across the country as hospital services endeavour to identify and secure the appropriate facilities and locations, with many of these projects involving a level of design, refurbishment and equipping. Specifically in relation women's health hubs, one initiative that NWIHP is developing and deploying is the establishment of postnatal hubs in the community. The concept of the postnatal hub is that it is a local centre where women can access various elements of care relevant to their postnatal journey. As these hubs develop, it is planned that the services available in these hubs will include perinatal mental health, lactation support, postnatal education, specialist pelvic floor physiotherapy services, etc.

Postnatal hubs provide a wide-range of services to women, including:

- Core midwifery care and advice
- Wound management
- Lactation supports
- Parent education
- Physiotherapy
- Perinatal mental health supports
- Birth reflection; and
- Smoking cessation

Critically the focus in the postnatal hubs is on the mother, and the supports that she might need in that early phase after having a baby.

The development of postnatal hubs is happening in three phases, and has been funded by the Department of Health's Women's Health Taskforce. Phase 1 which commenced at the end of 2022 saw postnatal hubs develop in:

- Cork University Maternity Hospital
- University Hospital Kerry
- Sligo University Hospital
- Portlincula University Hospital
- St Luke's General Hospital Kilkenny

The phase 1 sites are fully operational and the model is currently being academically evaluated. This evaluation process will conclude later in 2025

Phase 2 will consist of four hospitals:

- Rotunda
- National Maternity Hospital
- The Coombe Hospital, and
- Our Lady of Lourdes in Drogheda

The development of phase 2 is well underway and is supported by the HSE Spark Innovation Programme. It is expected all four hubs will be operational by year end.

Phase 3 will start in quarter four 2025 and will involve a further four hospitals. The exact locations have not yet been confirmed. The design for phase 3 will also be supported by the Spark Innovation Programme and it is expected that the hubs will go live in quarter 2 2026.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,

Mary-Jo Biggs, General Manager, National Women and Infants Health Programme