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12th March 2019

Deputy O'Reilly
Leinster House
Dublin 2.

PQ Ref 8576/19 To ask the Minister for Health the estimated cost of funding and implementing the national maternity strategy -Louise O'Reilly**

Dear Deputy O'Reilly,

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.

As you will be aware, the National Maternity Strategy was developed and launched as a ten year plan, and its full and robust implementation will require additional funding to be introduced into public maternity services across the lifetime of the Strategy.

As set out in previous correspondence to you, €2m additional funding was provided in 2015 with a further €3m provided in 2016. This funding has been used to support a number of priority developments in maternity hospitals/units across the country, including:

- 100 additional midwives, as recommended by the Birth Rate Plus report;
- 15 bereavement counsellors, to support families after perinatal death, or traumatic event;
- Additional consultant obstetricians, neonatologists, perinatal pathologist and perinatal psychiatrist to enable the establishment of the managed clinical network between the Coombe Women and Infants' University Hospital and Portlaoise Hospital, within the Dublin Midlands Hospital Group. Other support staffs were also appointed; and
- Funding to support the implementation of the Maternity and Newborn Clinical Management System.

In 2017, €6.8m was provided to the Programme, which was primarily targeted at covering the full year costs of 2016 recruitment. However, this funding also enabled the following priorities to be advanced within 2017:

- Supporting increased access to anomaly scanning;
- Financial support to facilitate establishment of the managed clinical maternity networks in each hospital Group; and

- Establishment of quality and patient safety resource in each managed clinical maternity network.

The NWIHP was allocated €4.55m in development funding for 2018. This funding was used to support and enhance the following areas:

- Anomaly scanning - Each hospital group was asked to identify how many additional ultrasonographers are required to ensure that 100% of women presenting at each maternity hospital/unit can be offered an anomaly scan. An additional 28 posts have been approved.
- Model of Care - The model of care is about providing women with informed choice regarding the care pathway they choose for their pregnancy. The specialised and assisted models are well established, and the Programme's focus is on implementing the supported care pathway. An additional 77 Midwives have been approved for 2018 to support the implementation of the supported care pathway.
- Quality and Safety - The Programme has provided each maternity network with funding to support a quality and safety manager for women and infants which will support the function of a Serious Incident Management Forum (SIMF) within each Maternity Network.
- Benign Gynaecology - €400,000 of the €4.55m funding provided to the NWIHP was allocated to the South/South West Hospital Group for the development of Benign Gynaecology services.

No additional development funding was allocated to the Programme for 2019. The Programme as part of the development of its implementation plan has estimated that the total cost of the implementation of the National Maternity Strategy will be an additional €75 million approximately over the ten year period of the Strategy.

I trust the above clarifies the current situation for you.

Yours sincerely,



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