



Clár Sláinte Náisiúnta do Mhná & do Naíonáin
Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte, Aonad 7A, Áras
Dargan, An Ceantar Theas, Baile Átha Cliath 8
T: 076 695 9991

National Women and Infants Health Programme
Health Service Executive, Unit 7A, The Dargan Building,
Heuston South Quarter, Dublin 8
T: 076 695 9991

5th January 2021

Deputy Toibin
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ Ref 60083/21 To ask the Minister for Health the number of children born either addicted to or severely affected by alcohol or drugs in each of the past ten years and to date in 2021; and if he will make a statement on the matter

Dear Deputy

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.

Information on children born addicted to or severely affected by alcohol is not easily available, as the impact on children, particular in relation to alcohol use, ranges across a spectrum, with no reliable clinical test or screening test available for more mild and subtle cases.

Catterick and Curran in their book ‘Understanding Fetal Alcohol Syndrome’ 2014 Jessica Kingsley Publishers, 73 Collier Street, London N19BE’ state it is not easy to determine the frequency of exposure to alcohol during pregnancy. The frequency in various international studies range from 0.2 -1.5 cases per 1000 births. For Ireland that would mean between 11 and 88 cases annually. In clinical practice Paediatricians encounter very few cases with the full clinical picture of low birth weight and abnormal faces. As such, the HSE and its maternity services continue to concentrate on the about alcohol avoidance during pregnancy.

In responding to your query, data has been derived from the HSE’s HIPE Data collection system, which records the discharge data per episode of care. Patients may be admitted to hospital more than once in any given time period with the same or different diagnosis i.e. the data is not patient specific. HIPE collects day patient and in-patient activity.

With this in mind, the table over page provides data in relation to the number of new born discharges, aged 0 – 3 weeks, in the period 2011 to 2020 recorded with a discharge diagnosis of being affected by maternal use of alcohol, or fetal alcohol syndrome, or affected by maternal use of drugs of addiction or withdrawal symptoms from maternal use of drugs of addiction.

Year	National Figure
2011	146
2012	136
2013	136
2014	130
2015	101
2016	110
2017	93
2018	99
2019	96
2020	102

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,



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