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15/03/2024

Deputy Shortall
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House
Dublin 2

PQ 11006/24: To ask the Minister for Health the current waiting times for people to access the regional fertility hubs; if he will outline the average waiting time for each regional fertility hub for each step along the process; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Shortall,

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.

A commitment to “introduce a publicly funded model of care for fertility treatment” is included in the Programme for Government. The Model of Care for Fertility was developed by the Department in conjunction with National Women and Infants Health Programme (NWIHP) in order to ensure that fertility-related issues are addressed through the public health system at the lowest level of clinical intervention necessary.

In order for patients to be referred for such advanced treatment, they must be accessed and investigated by one of the six regional fertility hubs and thereafter a clinical determination made that such advanced treatment is required and confirmation that the patients meet the national access criteria for publicly funded AHR treatments as defined by the Minister of Health and the Department of Health. In terms of waiting times at regional fertility hubs, on average wait times to see a public consultant with expertise in the area of reproductive medicine are circa 12 – 14 weeks with patients being seen and worked up by clinical nurse specialists prior to such appointments. Once identified as requiring AHR treatment and as meeting the national access criteria, couples further to consenting to such referrals, are referred to their chosen Provider within a matter of a few working days.

I trust this clarifies the matter.

Yours sincerely,

MaryJo Biggs, General Manager, National Women and Infants Health Programme