



Deputy Pádraig Rice,
Dail Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2

25th March 2025

PQ ref 11503/25

To ask the Minister for Health if she will commit to implementing a standard criteria for diagnosis and support for people living with foetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD), given that Ireland is the only country in the European Union without a national diagnostic regime for FASD; if any work in this regard has commenced; and if she will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Rice,

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 HSE recognises that FASD is underdiagnosed. A survey conducted by the HSE in 2022 identified that only 39 healthcare professionals out of 485 who participated (8%) had made a diagnosis of FASD. One in five healthcare workers had never seen a case. The international literature suggests that the prevalence in Ireland is between 2.8% and 7.4%, thus there are high numbers of undiagnosed cases.

The HSE has developed a position paper on the prevention of FASD which outlines 14 key actions for the HSE, which includes action 13 on the development of a model of care for FASD.

Further information can be found in the HSE Position Paper on the Prevention of FASD:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/healthwellbeing/our-priority-programmes/alcohol-programme/hse-position-on-prevention-of-fasd.pdf>

Work has commenced on scoping action 13. In June and November 2024, workshops were held with key stakeholders from across public health, maternity, primary care, mental health, disability, and social inclusion services to explore how learning from Scotland could inform the development of the HSE's response to prenatal alcohol exposure in Ireland. The Fetal Alcohol Advisory Support and Training Team (FAASTT) at the University of Edinburgh are funded by Scottish Government and have a national remit to provide and facilitate training, consultation and research in order to enhance the capacity, knowledge and confidence of Scotland's health and social care workforce in their work with those affected by FASD. At these workshops, FAASTT shared their learning in developing training, research and services for FASD.

A key learning shared was that specialist FASD centres or pathways were unlikely to be sustainable and it is difficult to meet the needs of children with complex physical and mental health needs. Scotland is therefore now implementing a single neurodevelopmental pathway to include FASD, and is focused on developing skills within existing health and social care services using a trauma-informed approach.

The HSE is currently exploring how a single neurodevelopmental pathway to include FASD could be implemented in Ireland, and how a scalable and sustainable model for building capacity of Ireland's health and social care workforce to work with those affected by FASD can be built.

I trust this information is of assistance to you but should you have any further queries please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Aisling Sheehan

National Lead Alcohol and Mental Health and Wellbeing Programmes, Access and Integration, HSE