

Minister for Health Announces Relocation of the National Maternity Hospital, Holles Street, Dublin

The Minister for Health Dr. James Reilly TD, together with Minister Alex White and Minister Kathleen Lynch, today (Monday 27 May 2013) announced the Government's intention to relocate the National Maternity Hospital (NMH), Holles Street, to the St. Vincent's University Hospital Campus at Elm Park. An indicative sum of €150 million has been approved the HSE's Capital Plan to allow this project to proceed.

Making the announcement in Holles Street, the Minister said: "This project heralds a new and exciting chapter in maternity care for women and infants in Ireland. Mothers and babies have been assured of a quality service in Holles Street down through the years. Now they can be assured of the same service in a state of the art, custom built, modern health care facility, providing care to international standards in the most appropriate surroundings and with access to the facilities and staff of a major acute hospital; in short - the best care in the best environment."

The proposed relocation addresses a key recommendation in the 2008 KPMG Independent Review of Maternity and Gynaecology Services in the Greater Dublin Area Report that Dublin maternity hospitals should be located alongside adult acute services. Co-location of maternity hospitals with adult acute services is the optimal solution for the provision of hospital-based maternity services, as it can provide access to the full range of medical and surgical specialties and clinical support services in sufficient volume and complexity to provide added value. This is particularly important for high-risk mothers and babies.

Welcoming the announcement, Dr. Rhona Mahony, Master of the NMH Holles Street, said "Our vision is to create an environment which facilitates clinical excellence so that women and infants attending the NMH receive the highest standard of care. Currently NMH is situated on Holles Street in an old building no longer fit for purpose. A new facility is urgently needed. The relocation of NMH will address this need and will achieve our strategic aim of close location with St. Vincent's University Hospital. We look forward to working with the Minister, the Department of Health, the Health Service Executive (HSE) and St. Vincent's University Hospital to make this vision a reality."

St Vincent's Hospital Healthcare Group also expressed its support for the development and welcomed the Government's commitment. Mr. Nicky Jermyn, CEO said: "We currently enjoy a very close working relationship with the NMH. Over the years many clinical synergies have been created in anticipation of co-location. We look forward to closer physical proximity and enhanced collaboration in the best interest of patients. The aim is to provide clinical excellence for the delivery of the maternity services enhanced by close organic linkage to the wider clinical research and medical services of St. Vincent's Healthcare Group/St. Vincent's University Hospital."

In conclusion, the Minister said: "This commitment by the Government underpins a determination to provide strong maternity services for Ireland. It will also strengthen the very successful relationship with University College Dublin as part of the Dublin East Hospital Group. Staff at NMH have worked very hard in difficult circumstance for some time now. This project signals a clear desire to provide the best possible services to women and their families. It also demonstrates clear support for the staff who serve our families."

Estimated Cost to Exchequer

1. An indicative sum of €150 million has been approved in the HSE's Capital Plan to allow this project to proceed. The project will be funded by the Exchequer. The HSE has calculated estimated costs for each major element of the project but they cannot be released because they are commercially sensitive. The HSE will continue to refine these estimated costs as the project progresses.

2. An estimated €25m in capital funding would be required for the NMH, in the short-term, if it were to remain in situ. There are significant capacity and risk issues to address in the existing buildings, and while these are being actively managed from an operational perspective, the longer the hospital stays in its current location, the greater the capital investment requirement will be. In addition to the funding earmarked for this project, the 2013-2017 Capital Plan contains provision for an upgrade/refurbishment of the Neonatal ICU.

Background to Holles Street

3. Parts of the Holles Street buildings date back to the mid-1700s. In the mid-1930s, the original houses were demolished when the main hospital building was constructed with sweepstakes funds. The most recent major extension is the 1960s wing added to the core building space along Holles Street.

4. Over the past twenty years the number of babies delivered at NMH has increased by almost 50%. The hospital's primary services are obstetric, gynaecology and neonatology. It is a national tertiary referral centre for many specialities/sub specialities in these areas – in particular foetal medicine and neonatology. It is one of the primary participants in the National Neonatal Transport service and is also a main centre for services provided under the National Cancer Screening Service.

Details of the new Hospital

5. The purpose built hospital will be designed to accommodate up to 10,000 births per annum. Accommodation at the new hospital will include a High Dependency Unit (HDU), a Neo-Natal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) and a Special Care Baby Unit (SCBU). Ante- and post-natal care will be provided in mostly single, en-suite rooms. Birthing accommodation will include operating theatres, birthing rooms (including for multiple births) and a midwife-led birthing unit.

6. The new hospital will provide for the following national specialties and expertise:

- National Neo-Natal Transfer Service
- Foetal Medicine
- Urogynaecology
- Gynaecology
- Neonatology
- Colposcopy
- Complex gynaecology surgery
- Infertility and Genetics

Other services include:

- Early pregnancy assessment unit

- Emergency Assessment Area
- Day Services
- Outpatients
- Radiology
- Ultra sound and x ray facilities