

ADVICE: ‘MY FRIEND WON’T LEAVE A BAD RELATIONSHIP’

Trish Murphy
 Health&Family



In 2050, there will be a great Israeli film about the amnesia of the 19-year-old conscripts in Gaza today

Fintan O’Toole
 Opinion



ZERO TOLERANCE THE RISE OF ALCOHOL-FREE BEER, WINE AND SPIRITS

Paul Colgan
 News

Home birth service risks patient safety, HSE audit finds

Report finds ‘no national governance structure in place’ for home births

No agreed maximum safe travel time to the nearest maternity unit or midwife

SHAUNA BOWERS
 Health Correspondent

The current home birth system in Ireland creates a “risk to patient safety”, an internal health audit has found.

The Health Service Executive audit reached this finding as there is no agreed maximum safe travel time to the nearest maternity unit or self-employed community midwife (SECM).

In February 2022, the home birth service was moved from community operations to acute operations and is now integrated into the 19 maternity services nationwide.

In light of this, the HSE conducted an audit to establish the “adequacy and effectiveness of governance and risk management” of the home birth service.

The auditors examined three sites – Cork University Maternity Hospital, Rotunda Maternity Hospital and the Coombe Maternity Hospital – and reviewed 30 midwifery notes relating to home births that occurred between March 1st, 2023 and February 29th, 2024.

Weaknesses

It found weaknesses in the system of governance across all three sites, which the audit said created a “significant risk that the system will fail to meet its objectives”.

According to the audit report, there is “no national governance structure in place” for home births as acute operations no longer has oversight due to the reorganisation of the HSE into the six health regions.

In 2022, the national director of acute operations issued a recommendation that all women should reside 30 minutes or less “blue light distance” from their nearest maternity service.

However, the National Women and Infants Health Programme said it was “unclear who had responsibility for the governance” of home births due to the HSE’s reorganisation and no agreement had been reached on safe travel time or distance.

There is a “risk to patient safety where there is no agreed standard maximum safe travel time or distance from the mother’s residence to the SECMs and nearest maternity unit”, the audit report added.

While risk eligibility and suitability assessments were completed with the expectant mother at booking, there was no evidence of regular update of this throughout the pregnancy, it added.

In 2022, the most recent year for which figures are available, there were 432 women registered for home birth. The number has been rising quite significantly in recent years.

A spokesman for the HSE said that, going forward, home birth services will be operated within HSE health regions, reporting to the regional executive officer “in alignment with all other maternity services” which will ensure “consistency, quality and safety”.

Separately, the HSE also published an audit into consultant doctors who are not on the specialist register.

Under current legislation, doctors must be registered on the specialist division register (SDR) of the Irish Medical Council to be eligible for consultant posts.

However, there is a protocol in place which allows a consultant post to be filled by a doctor not on the SDR in “the most exceptional circumstances” when all options to recruit a suitable candidate have been exhausted.

According to the audit, despite the legal and professional requirement, the total number of consultant doctors employed by the HSE who were not listed on the SDR increased from 100 in 2021 to 133 in 2024. This number reduced to 112 by March last.

Some 21 per cent of that 112 have been employed for more than five years.

HSE audit finds 99 highest paid consultants earned average of €416,000: page 3



Para swimming finals Ní Riain takes silver in Singapore

Róisín Ní Riain of Team Ireland on her way to taking silver in the 100m breaststroke final during day two of the World Para Swimming Championships in Singapore. It was the Limerick swimmer’s second medal of the gala.

Report: page 18
 Photograph: Ian MacNicol/ Sportsfile

Sheridan fails to secure nomination for Áras run

Entrepreneur cannot get enough councils’ backing while time is running out for Steen

HARRY MCGEE
 and ELLEN COYNE

The likelihood of more than three candidates contesting the presidential election has receded following Gareth Sheridan’s failure to secure the backing of four local authorities.

The other prospective candi-

date with any hope of gaining a place on the ballot paper is barrister and conservative campaigner Maria Steen. She met Independent Ireland’s TDs last night to request their support as she scrambles to win the support of 20 Oireachtas members before the close of nominations tomorrow.

With 12 councils holding special meetings yesterday to consider whether or not to nominate candidates, Mr Sheridan (36) pinned his hopes on being endorsed by two of three councils – Meath, Offaly and Louth. He required two nominations, having been nominated by county councils in Kerry and Tipperary last week.

The entrepreneur received the first significant setback yesterday morning, however, after Meath County Council voted by 14 votes to 13 to reject his nomination.

Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael councillors all voted against his nomination, while Sinn Féin members abstained. There were eight abstentions.

Mr Sheridan then travelled to Tullamore to make a case at a meeting of Offaly County Council in the early afternoon. He was strongly supported by the chairman of the council, Independent councillor John Leahy, who called on his colleagues to give Mr Sheridan a chance.

“Let us give this young man an opportunity to go up the

road with three nominations on his ballot paper,” he said.

By a majority of 11 votes to five, with two abstentions, the council voted against endorsing any candidate. Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael councillors all voted against any nomination.

Following the vote, Mr Sheridan acknowledged that “mathematically” it was the end of his campaign and confirmed he was conceding.

“But that’s fine, we gave it our best shot,” he said. “We got two nominations, which was really encouraging, and we had a

pathway. Unfortunately, the pathway in the plan didn’t work out.”

He said he had “no regrets” about seeking a nomination.

His spokesman said: “Meath and Offaly county councils were two of the four prime targets for us. Losing Meath by one vote was a hammer blow. It was so tantalisingly close.”

Connolly disagrees with Starmor on Hamas; Trump loyalist claims to be behind online abuse of Gavin: page 2

Some Israeli ministers ‘had genocidal intent from day one’, says Taoiseach

KEITH DUGGAN
 in New York City

Taoiseach Micheál Martin has stated certain members of the Israeli government “clearly had genocidal intent from day one” in their response to the Gaza conflict.

He also stressed the importance of the United States using its influence on Israeli prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu. Mr Martin made the remarks as United Nations member states awaited today’s address from US president Donald Trump at the General Assembly in New York.

Ireland’s delegation intends on using the high-level week to emphasise the dire need for urgent resolution, with Tánaiste Simon Harris lobbying member states for a vote on taking sanctions against Israel.

Having recognised the state of Palestine in May of last year, the Irish Government has been

encouraged by the recent succession of countries, including Britain and Australia, falling into step.

“[To say] the world is becoming very, very angry and frustrated is an understatement in terms of the continued killing in Gaza and the absence of any pathway to settlement,” Mr Martin said, speaking outside the UN headquarters in Manhattan immediately after the opening address.

Two-state solution

“The conference today is designed to try and create a pathway to a two-state solution, but we can see what is happening in the West Bank is designed to undermine any possibility of that. I think there are many people in Israel who are now very disillusioned with prime minister Netanyahu’s government and the behaviour of minister [Bezalet] Smotrich and [Itamar] Ben-Gvir, who clearly

have had genocidal intent from day one.

“It’s very, very bleak. The approach of prime minister Netanyahu is absolutely shocking. He seems to be plunging Gaza further and further into the abyss. He is, almost in a premeditated and deliberate way, contributing to the isolation of Israel diplomatically in the international world.”

Mr Netanyahu, who is due to address the UN on Friday, has repeatedly scorned the concept of an international forum on a two-state solution.

Describing Ireland as being “vindicated” in its “solid, grounded” diplomatic support for Palestine and the plight of Gazans, Mr Martin stressed that the outcome of the next few days in New York are “an important moment for the Middle East and Palestine”.

Reports and analysis: page 6

Weather

Mainly dry with a mix of cloud and sunny spells once early mist and fog patches clear. Highs of 12-15 degrees.

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Special care: A father whose teenage son is involved with a drug gang has lost his appeal over a refusal to detain the boy (16). Page 4

World News



Poland: The Nato member will not hesitate to shoot down objects that violate its airspace and pose a threat, prime minister Donald Tusk has said. Page 7

Business + Your Money

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Central Bank: Ireland will soon have one of Europe’s fastest ageing populations, governor Gabriel Makhlouf has warned. Page 15

Sports Tuesday

Soccer: St Patrick’s Athletic’s Mason Melia celebrated his 18th birthday with a brace in his side’s 4-0 victory over Cork City. Page 18

Ryder Cup: US captain Keegan Bradley has described opting not to play in the tournament as the biggest decision of his life. Page 19

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