

ULTRA NEWS

Newsletter of Ireland South
Women & Infants Network



Welcome to our
Spring 2026 edition
of **UltraNews**

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MacNeill, announces €2 million for
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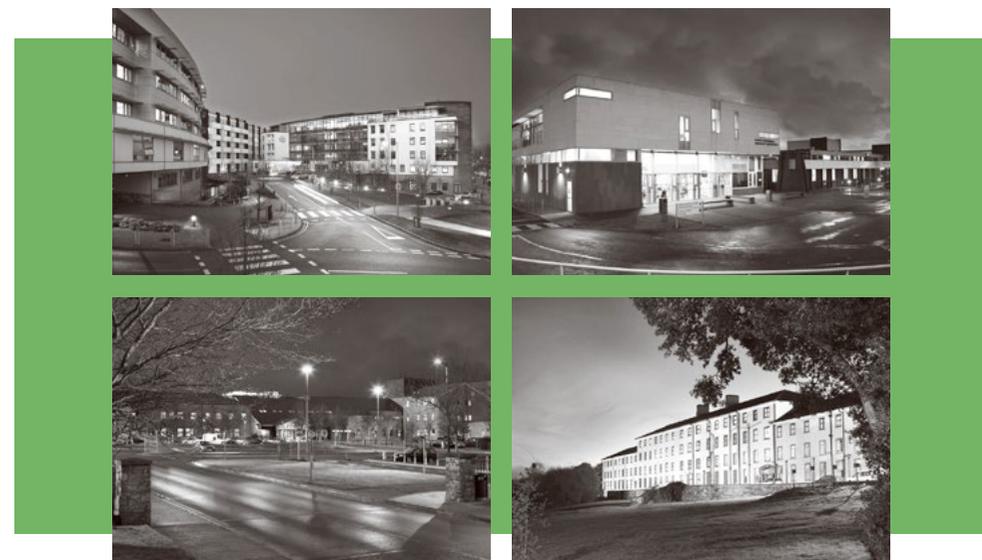
WELCOME TO THE FIRST ULTRANEWS EDITION OF 2026!

As we look ahead to the months to come, we feel refreshed, optimistic, and ready for what's next. And just like us, our service is evolving too.

Our Directorate has now been renamed as a Network. This change better reflects how we work together as a collaborative maternity network within the wider HSE family, and it aligns with our mission statement, which has always described us as a Network.

We are proud to be a clinical academic network – teaching the next generation of healthcare professionals and sharing learning through initiatives such as Grand Rounds, education sessions, and cross-site collaboration. These activities strengthen our culture of excellence and support our continuous efforts to improve the care we provide.

I want to thank you for your continued commitment to delivering the best possible service to women, infants, and families throughout 2025. Over the past year, we saw fantastic service enhancements that brought significant advances across our Network. Our collaborative partnership grew even stronger, particularly in how we ensured that those requiring critical care were safely and efficiently transferred to receive the right care, in the right place, at the right time.



2026 is an important year for women's health. The recent announcement of ringfenced national funding for women's health research marks a meaningful step forward. It reflects a growing recognition of the importance of women's health and supports our shared goal of ensuring timely access to expert care. We are confident that our Network will continue to lead in this area.

Communication remains central to our success. We continue to meet weekly to share updates, identify pressures and opportunities, and support each other across our four units.

Throughout 2026, we will also continue to share learning and expertise through events and educational activities. If you have feedback you would like to share, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

John R. Higgins

Clinical Director, Ireland South
Women & Infants Network

HSE South West, Professor of Obstetrics
and Gynaecology, University College Cork



In Loving Memory of Grace Benyin

Forever in our hearts



It is with deep sadness that we remember our dear colleague and friend, Grace Benyin, whose passing has touched all of us who had the privilege to know her. We extend our heartfelt condolences to her beloved husband Frederick, her cherished daughters Tracey and Quincey, her sons Joseph and Epaphras, and to her parents, her brother Par Kwasi, and her sisters Stella and Beatrice in Ghana.

Grace was born in February 1989 in the Ekufemi district outside Accra. She grew up surrounded by the love of her older brother, Par Kwasi, and her younger sisters, Beatrice and Stella. From an early age, her gentle nature and strong spirit shone through.

Grace was deeply religious, and her faith was very important to her. It was through choir that she met her husband, Frederick who spoke of how taken he was by her from the very first moment they met. Wanting to be near her, he joined her choir and eventually became the choir president. They married in 2009, building a life filled with love, hard work, and unwavering dedication to their four children and their education.

Grace completed her midwifery training in 2016 and served in several healthcare settings in Ghana, including the Central Municipal Clinic, the Adabraka Polyclinic, and the Achimota Hospital.

Grace and her family made the decision to build a new life in Ireland. Grace began her adaptation programme in CUMH in September 2023, with weekly shifts in Tipperary University Hospital. From the very beginning, she became an integral part of our team. Grace brought with her not only clinical skill and professionalism, but also deep kindness, compassion, and a quiet confidence that reassured everyone around her.

Her warm personality and radiant smile were unmistakable. Grace had a wonderful sense of curiosity and joy, she loved sightseeing and often took the local bus on her days off. She integrated quickly into our community while she awaited the arrival of her family in February this year, and her presence enriched all of us.

Although Grace was with us for a short time, she left an extraordinary imprint on our team. She was a wonderfully skilful midwife, a devoted mother, a loving wife, and a cherished colleague.

We will remember Grace always.

Maggie Dowling,
Director of Midwifery, TippUH

Working together - We're Breastfeeding Friendly Kerry Initiative

University Hospital Kerry (UHK) Maternity Services and the Kerry Community Public Health Nursing Department remain committed to supporting Health Research Board-funded projects such as PEEB and Max/Bf, led by the School of Nursing and Midwifery at University College Cork.

The PEEB (Practice Enhancement for Exclusive Breastfeeding) project was a large-scale study undertaken in partnership with UHK. Its aim was to enhance exclusive breastfeeding throughout the pregnant woman's journey up to three months postpartum. This work laid the foundation for Max/Bf, which focuses on identifying ways to normalise breastfeeding and maximise support across Ireland.

Our collaboration created an opportunity to work together on the Healthy Ireland Government Initiative with Kerry County Council. On October 6th, 2025, we proudly launched We're Breastfeeding Friendly Kerry.

Pictured (l-r): Liz Cogan, Research Support Officer Clinical UCC for Max/Bf Project, Mairead O'Sullivan, CNM2 Infant Feeding Coordinator UHK, Helen Sheehy, Infant Feeding Lactation Support Specialist, Community Services Kerry.

This initiative brings together healthcare divisions in Kerry, including Health Promotion, Community Dietitians, and Healthy Ireland, alongside Kerry County Council. Its goal is to ensure breastfeeding mothers feel supported and welcomed when out in the community and upon returning to work.

By working as a team with healthcare professionals, local authorities, and the public, we are making significant strides toward normalising and supporting breastfeeding in our communities.



Specialist Lactation Support Role in Acute Maternity Services

Mairead O'Sullivan IBCLC, Infant Feeding Coordinator, UHK

Original Article: Journal of the European Lactation Consultants Alliance



Pictured: CNM2 Infant Feeding Coordinator Mairead O'Sullivan during National Breastfeeding Week, showing milestone cards she designed for service users at UHK to celebrate key milestones on their breastfeeding journeys.

This article provides an insight into the varied and evolving role of an IBCLC working as an Infant Feeding Coordinator at University Hospital Kerry (UHK), Ireland. It outlines the daily and weekly responsibilities across inpatient, outpatient, and community settings, highlighting the importance of multidisciplinary collaboration, staff education, and quality improvement initiatives. Key developments include the introduction of colostrum harvesting, promotion of skin-to-skin, and new support policies for mothers and infants. The article also discusses service challenges, such as time management and resource limitations, and celebrates achievements like the creation of breastfeeding milestone cards and enhanced clinical skills training. The experience demonstrates both the impact and ongoing need for specialist lactation support within acute maternity services.

A Typical Week in My Role

As a busy mum of 4 breastfed children, now teenagers, my morning normally starts at around 05:45 am, getting all the arrangements at home organised before heading into work to start for 8:00 am. My return time home can vary throughout the week depending on clinical need.

Monday

On a Monday morning, my first task is to review my electronic charts for any referrals received over the weekend. This is often only looked at briefly before I head to our multi-disciplinary Maternity Governance meeting. After the meeting, my Monday can vary depending on what's on the schedule. In some cases, I may be facilitating Breastfeeding Antenatal Education classes, either alone or with my parent craft facilitator colleague. We run these classes on alternate weeks. After lunch or in the afternoon, I then

return to the Postnatal Ward and complete any additional reviews or referrals which I had not managed to attend to earlier in the day. The afternoon may then be filled with attendance of any subgroup meetings I'm included in, or catching up on emails, returning patient calls or messages received throughout the day or weekend. Mondays often end with a late evening finish for me.

Tuesday

Tuesday is my main outpatient clinic day, which is held off-site from the main hospital. However, most days I come to the hospital in the morning first to collect supplies etc. for the day ahead in the clinic. On average, I will review 7-10 families. Tuesday patients are normally new patients, urgent postnatal hub referrals, or those needing support with antenatal colostrum harvesting. Some Tuesdays may also involve me attending other relevant Infant Feeding Specialist Support Forum meetings. With the aid of the electronic chart, I am also able to receive and review any new patient referrals I have received since the previous day and will triage these appropriately. If patients remain an inpatient in UHK, I will aim to link with the midwife caring for the mother and baby and will review them on the Postnatal Ward that evening when possible.

Wednesday

On Wednesdays, I offer a virtual breastfeeding class in the morning or will carry out ward inpatient reviews. I may also facilitate one-to-one antenatal education sessions depending on clinical need. I aim to finish work by lunch time on a Wednesday. Thursday Thursday morning, I generally start my day in UHK and will undertake any patient bedside reviews. At this time, I also hold my second outpatient clinic in combination with the midwifery postnatal hub clinic in our off-site clinical area. This clinic normally starts at 12pm and finishes around 6pm.

Thursday

Patients are often urgent referrals, follow-up appointments, or direct referrals from the postnatal hub clinic.

Friday

I aim to work only alternate weeks on Fridays. By this point, I have often worked already well over my contracted weekly hours. However, I do aim to review any patients on the Postnatal Ward who may still require input. If patients require a follow-up, I ensure these appointments are also arranged and, when possible, try to catch up with some administrative work. Fridays will also often be spent making antenatal colostrum harvesting packs ready for any antenatal mother requests in the week ahead.

Scope of the Role

As the only Infant Feeding Coordinator in University Hospital Kerry working with the Maternity Services, I may often also be contacted to review patients in the Accident and Emergency Department, Paediatric Unit or Gynaecology Department. Most of my referrals come via our electronic chart system, but I also receive referrals via phone call or email. My Public Health Nurse and General Practitioner colleagues also sometimes refer new mothers and infants to me for additional support in those first postnatal weeks. If I receive referrals for infants or lactating mothers at a later stage postpartum, I will refer to the Community Infant Feeding Coordinator in Kerry. We link closely to ensure we are not duplicating on the workload. Every other month, my community colleague and I facilitate Multidisciplinary Team Breastfeeding Clinical Skills Education available to all staff. Other additions to the role include providing updates to staff on the wards on a regular basis and completing monthly Infant Feeding Audits for both the Postnatal Ward and the Special Care Baby Unit (these are submitted

nationally on a monthly basis). At other times throughout the year, I also complete other regular audits. I recently completed a Supplementation Audit and also an audit on skin-to-skin in the theatre area. Within my role, I am also a very active member of our Infant Feeding Specialist Support Forum group, part of the National Women and Infants Health Programme (NWIHP) in Ireland, which is actively involved in developing education, raising awareness, and formulating policies related to infant feeding

Developing Infant Feeding Policies and Practices

Over the last few years in my role as Infant Feeding Coordinator at UHK, I have been actively involved in developing and implementing numerous policy changes aimed at improving the care of newborns and supporting new mothers on their breastfeeding journey. One key advancement is the widespread adoption of colostrum harvesting, which is now well established and encouraged amongst all staff in UHK Maternity services. Colostrum harvesting packs are provided for all women as part of their antenatal care and attendance at antenatal education sessions is strongly promoted. Although we do not recommend that everyone collects colostrum, we provide education to all women on the process of colostrum harvesting allowing for maternal choice. This has increased awareness of the importance of the initial feed infants receive either directly from the breast or from fresh or antenatal colostrum which is typically administered in small amounts via 1 or 2.5ml finger syringe feeds. Another major focus has been the promotion of skin-to-skin contact for all mothers and babies, both in the Labour Ward and in the Theatre Area following caesarean births. Although this remains an ongoing quality improvement initiative, substantial progress has been made in recent years. The importance of skin-to-skin contact has been firmly embedded within the multidisciplinary team's practice, which is particularly crucial in our Maternity

Site co-located with the general hospital, where collaboration between different departments is key. Another very successful initiative has been the introduction of our "red hat policy" for infants born to mothers with gestational or insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus (GIDDM / IDDM). Previously, these infants—now easily identified by the red hats placed on them at birth—were routinely admitted electively to the Special Care Baby Unit for observation, causing unnecessary separation from their mothers. Thanks to a comprehensive review of our neonatal hypoglycaemia policy and the "red hat policy", combined with active promotion of antenatal colostrum collection, this separation is no longer standard practice. In fact, more than 70% no longer require separation. More recently, we have introduced early administration of buccal colostrum in our Special Care Baby Unit for infants who are unable to feed initially.

Across all areas of UHK Maternity Services, breast pumps are readily available for mothers during their inpatient stay. Upon discharge, if medically required, breast pumps are arranged for them through HSE Services, ensuring families do not have to worry about sourcing equipment or incurring additional costs. This approach supports the goals outlined in the HSE Breastfeeding Action Plan 2016-2023. Improvements in furniture on our Postnatal Ward and Special Care Baby Unit have also positively impacted maternal comfort. Reclining chairs are now available at every bed space in the Special Care Baby Unit and on the Postnatal Ward. In the Postnatal Ward, we now also have the option of "next to me" co-sleeping cots, which attach securely onto our hospital beds, providing a safe option for mother-infant closeness.

Staff education remains a central pillar of our work. Recently, we have introduced the National Infant Feeding Education programme (NIFEP) into UHK and will be holding ongoing clinical skills training

sessions with staff as part of ongoing quality improvement projects (QIPs). In addition, advanced therapies such as photobiomodulation (low-level laser therapy) for improved nipple wound healing and therapeutic ultrasound for relieving engorgement and mastitis symptoms have been integrated into our services for inpatients and in the Postnatal Clinic. Besides myself, two other IBCLCs are also available to offer these services if required. These treatments have significantly improved care for our lactating mothers and contributed to a reduction in postnatal readmissions.

Engaging Service Users and Reflecting on Progress

Our quality improvement efforts have actively involved service users, whose feedback has been invaluable in guiding developments. While it is recognised that further progress is needed, my colleagues and I also take time to acknowledge how far we have come.

Just five years ago, a dedicated Specialist Infant Feeding Support role did not exist at UHK. Remaining Gaps and Future Directions Despite these advances, there remain areas where specialist lactation support is insufficiently linked, including the Special Care Baby Unit, paediatric services, and community settings. Strengthening these connections is essential to ensure continuous and comprehensive support for breastfeeding families throughout their journey.

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Pictured: The National Infant Feeding Forum, part of the National Women and Infants Health Programme (NWIHP), held its meeting at UHK. The event was coordinated by Mairead and the Maternity Services Team, and included a tour of UHK's maternity facilities, featuring the newly introduced 'Home from Home' room and birthing pool facilities.

HSE Women's Health Podcast – Your Body, Mind & Baby

Adapted from *The Echo*, October 25

Cork GP Dr Doireann O'Leary says the adjustment of becoming a parent came as a shock to the system.



Dr Doireann O' Leary with CUMH Birth Reflections team, Gillian Walsh and Alex Campbell

Elaine Harrington, Communications Manager

"Before my children were born, I used to do one load of laundry a week, and then suddenly it was like one if not two every day – those type of adjustments come as a shock to the system."

That's according to Cork GP Dr Doireann O'Leary, who was reflecting on the early days of parenting and how it took time to leave behind her old life, and lean into 'mom life'. Dr Doireann is part of a new HSE South West Women's Health Podcast – Your Body, Mind and Baby.

The eight-part series is designed as a resource for women and families, offering expert insights, advice and support across obstetrics, gynaecology and newborn health. It covers a wide range of topics including complex menopause, menorrhagia, pelvic floor dysfunction, supporting families through the NICU, breastfeeding support, birth reflections, perinatal mental health, and the early days with newborns.

In the first episode, *The First 6 Weeks – Take The Help*, Dr Aisling Garvey and Dr Neidin Bussmann, Consultant Neonatologists at Cork University Maternity Hospital (CUMH), join Dr Doireann to share their personal experiences of early parenthood.

Mum-of-two Doireann remembers how transitioning to a life with babies took some getting used to.

She remembers how herself and her husband would typically get dressed up and go out to dinner on Friday night, and head to brunch on a Saturday.

"And I think for the first year of my first son, I was still trying to live my old pre-baby life – I was trying to keep up with that, because that was all I knew. I was trying to live my old life while trying to navigate and understand the best rhythm for my new life," she said.

And despite all her preparations before her first baby's arrival, she admits she still found it overwhelming.

"I am a medical doctor, I know how to recognise a sick baby, I know what to do if a baby has a fever, or a rash, but I had no idea about mom life, how to bath or swaddle a baby – you're not taught that at medical school! I was very nervous before my first child was born because I was overwhelmed by the how much I didn't know."

She 'diligently' watched YouTube videos about how to bath a new born – and also had a doula come over to her house to teach her things like baby wearing. "You could say it was OTT but I felt overwhelmed by the amount of stuff I didn't know," she admitted.

She recommended a book called *Your Baby, Week By Week* as a brilliant resource, but said her own mother was, and is, the baby expert she relies on most of all.

In those early days, she found lying down to rest, and conserving energy, was vital and recommended listening to a podcast by Andrew Huberman, who talks about the importance of non-sleep deep rest.

She also found her public health nurse to be an incredible service, but admitted that "some might say it's a postcode lottery and depending on where you live the service may vary".

Dr Doireann said: "There are also people doing amazing work in communities, things like mom and baby groups. With all of that said, there are places where women feel isolated and not supported. The system isn't perfect, but try to find your support network, it's so important for the early days and years even."

Even informal supports like talking to friends are helpful. "I had a friend who had a baby two days after my baby was born and we've been in almost hourly communication via WhatsApp for the last two years and it's so amazing!" said Dr Doireann.

Elaine Harrington, Communications Manager at Ireland South Women and Infants Network, had the original vision for the podcast.

"We know there's an overwhelming amount of information online for women and mothers, and it can be difficult to navigate or know what's trustworthy," she said.

The HSE is a reliable source of health content, but sometimes there are barriers to accessing that information. We're fortunate to have incredible experts within our network and across the health service who can guide women to the right care pathways, so this podcast is about bridging that gap.

"By using platforms that women already engage with, like Instagram and Spotify, we can meet them where they are. Dr Doireann has been doing this brilliantly for years, building a huge following and showing that women want to educate themselves and better understand their health."

The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive.

"It's not only a valuable resource for women and mums, but it also gives us a chance to shine a light on the incredible people working in our health service. They are passionate about promoting women's and infants' health and are true experts in their fields, but stepping into a podcast like this can be daunting.

"Hearing such encouraging responses has been incredibly reassuring for them, and reinforces the importance of sharing their knowledge in this way."

Plans are already underway for series two.

"Its success has only inspired us to do more. There are so many important topics still to cover, and before we start planning series two, we really want to hear from listeners about what they'd like us to focus on next."



Minister for Health, Jennifer Carroll MacNeill, announces €2 million for women's health research

Above: Dr Tanya Mulcahy, Director of HHI and founder of FemTech Ireland with Minister Carroll MacNeill

Funding of up to €1 million each year in 2026 and 2027 has been ringfenced from the Women's Health Fund in her Department. This funding will be allocated to an Applied Partnership Awards scheme in Women's Health Research which will be administered through the Health Research Board. The investment aims to address a historic gap in knowledge and understanding of women's health issues and the impact of gender on health outcomes and experiences.

Minister Carroll MacNeill said: "Historically research into women's health has been overlooked and underfunded, leading to gaps in understanding conditions affecting women, delayed diagnoses, and treatments based on male data.

"Last August, I launched the report Femtech in Ireland: The Case for Prioritising Women's Health Research and Innovation. That report called for the State to deliver focused funding calls for women's health research. I am delighted that today I can respond to that call by announcing this significant research programme.

"The funding I have approved will support projects that can help address gaps in knowledge and increase our understanding of women's health, with the ultimate aim of achieving better health outcomes for women across all stages of life."

A formal call for research proposals will be launched by the HRB in January, with up to 10 awards to be granted. While the call covers all women's health areas, specific research themes have also been identified, following stakeholder engagement and listening exercises with women conducted by the Women's Health Taskforce. The theme selection was also informed by an evidence and gap map analysis conducted by the HRB and published in September 2025.

The specific themes are:

- Postpartum Mental Health, with a particular focus on traumatic births
- Endometriosis
- Menstruation
- Culturally sensitive Healthcare, Intersectional impacts on Women's Health

The Chief Executive of the Health Research Board Dr Gráinne Gorman said: "Our recent evidence and gap review across 38 OECD countries, including Ireland, identified clear gaps in women's health research. By delivering this funding we aim to address those gaps, inform better care and improve outcomes for women.

"The HRB is committed to advancing women's health research through a co-creation approach. Working in partnership with the public, stakeholders and knowledge users makes research relevant, inclusive and capable of driving real change."

Historic exclusion of women from medical research has implications for diagnosis and treatment of disease in women, as a result of the lack of knowledge on how particular conditions and treatments impact women.

The Department of Health has been working to address this through its two Women's Health Action Plans, published in 2022 and 2024. Both Action Plans have a specific action to grow the evidence base for women's health approaches in Ireland by supporting research in this area.

The women's health programme has sought to address the research gaps in recent years with a number of research projects supported to better inform the development of policy. The new Applied Partnership Awards in Women's Health Research represent a more structured and strategic approach to commissioning research in this area.



New national resources launched to create more compassionate workplaces for people who experience pregnancy loss

Above: Mayor of Cork, Cllr Fergal Dennehy, in City Hall with members of the PLRG in City Hall, Oct 25

Two new resources to help create more compassionate workplaces for people who experience pregnancy loss have been launched by the Pregnancy Loss Research Group at University College Cork (UCC), include a toolkit for employers and employees, and a book that shines a light on the experiences of pregnancy loss at work.

Professor Keelin O'Donoghue, Consultant Obstetrician at Cork University Maternity Hospital (CUMH) and lead of the Pregnancy Loss Research Group (PLRG) said they know from the PLACES project that there is a significant gap between the needs of individuals who experience pregnancy loss under 24 weeks gestation and the supports available to them in workplaces. She added:

"This impacts on their wellbeing, their physical and emotional recovery from pregnancy loss, and their return to work.

Many people return to work shortly after pregnancy loss, while still experiencing physical and/or emotional difficulties. Managing the impact of the loss, workloads, and social interactions can be particularly difficult. Many do not to disclose their pregnancy loss, take time off work or seek support due to stigma and fears of dismissal from work, or discrimination regarding career progression. There is a need for dedicated leave from work, and workplace policies and supports to better support people who experience pregnancy loss."

Dr Tommy Harty and Dr Caoimhe Ní hÉalaithe, doctors in specialist training in Obstetrics and Gynaecology, currently based at CUMH, co-led the development of the PLRG Pregnancy Loss and the Workplace Toolkit for Employers and Employees, with Professor O'Donoghue and Marita Hennessy, a researcher within the group.

The toolkit provides practical guidance and templates for employers, managers and HR staff. It also provides guidance for employees on how best to navigate work after experiencing a pregnancy loss, as well as information for workers on how they can support colleagues who experience pregnancy loss.

Dr Harty said: "While the toolkit focuses mainly on people who experience pregnancy loss prior to 23 weeks gestation, much of what is discussed, particularly the different ways that employees and workers can be supported beyond leave entitlements, is relevant to those experiencing pregnancy loss at any time in pregnancy. In developing and sharing this resource, we want to create more compassionate work environments and better experiences for people whose pregnancies end in loss. Our hope is that workplaces around Ireland now endorse and use this toolkit."

Tara Woulfe, a parent advocate within the PLRG, said the new resources are the result of incredible work by the group at CUMH. She said: "They have listened to the stories of women with lived experience of pregnancy loss and turned their research into a toolkit that will be of real practical help and support for both employers and employees alike. This paves the way for women to be met with compassion after their loss, and for workplaces to become places where grief is met with support, not silence."

The PLRG has also published a book titled 'Words at Work', a collection of 23 texts – all direct quotations from people with experience of pregnancy loss who participated in the PLACES project.

Marita Hennessy said the PLRG aims to lead national research to enhance people's experiences and outcomes. She added: "By communicating the findings from the PLACES project in many and varied ways, we hope that we are both holding space

for people's experiences and working towards social and political change for more compassionate and supportive workplaces. Recognising pregnancy loss as a workplace issue is essential. Words at Work makes that clear. The toolkit will help workplaces implement policies and procedures to make that a reality."

Dr. Mairead O Riordan, Clinical Director at Cork University Maternity Hospital (CUMH), reaffirmed the hospital's commitment to implementing the Pregnancy Loss Toolkit to ensure CUMH truly 'walks the talk' when supporting staff who experience pregnancy loss.

"The work of our colleagues in the Pregnancy Loss Research Group encourages us to do better when it comes to caring for staff who have experienced pregnancy loss. This toolkit will guide us to ensure that we 'walk the talk' and show kindness, compassion, and fairness to our colleagues. We must respect their experiences and ensure they feel our support."

Copies of 'Pregnancy Loss and the Workplace: A Toolkit for Employers and Employees' and 'Words at Work: Experiences of pregnancy loss in the workplace {up to 23 weeks}' are available on the PLRG website:

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/pregnancyloss/policyandadvocacy/workplaceresources/>



CUMH Hosts Bi-Annual GP Education & Networking Event



On December 10th, CUMH hosted its bi-annual GP Education & Networking Event. With flu cases on the rise, the event, typically delivered in a hybrid format, was held entirely online. This change did not impact engagement, with an impressive 243 GPs joining live.

The evening featured a series of informative presentations on key topics:

- **Service Update**

Dr. Mairead O'Riordan, Clinical Director, CUMH

- **Endometriosis Service Update**

Dr. Cathy Burke, Consultant Obstetrician & Gynaecologist, Clinical Lead of the Cork Supra-Regional Endometriosis Centre
Dr. Aoife McSweeney, Consultant Obstetrician & Gynaecologist

- **Postnatal Hubs**

Aoife Daly, ACMM3 Midwifery Led Services

- **Patient Information for Obstetric Anaesthesia / Pre-Op Assessment Clinic**

Dr. Fionn O Laoire, Consultant Anaesthetist
Dr. Kate O'Hare, Consultant Anaesthetist

- **A Guide on Iron During Pregnancy**

Mairead Kennedy, Dietitian

The presentations concluded with an engaging Q&A panel session, allowing attendees to interact directly with the speakers. Feedback collected via MedCafe, who facilitated the event, was overwhelmingly positive. Examples included:

What was the highlight of this webinar?

- Suggestion of a What's app help group
- Updates on endometriosis services
- Extensive discussion on all aspects
- General updates
- Endometriosis Update
- Making us aware of the huge number of resources on the website
- Service update and proposal for What's app group
- Enthusiasm to communicate
- Discussion among the panel around Endometriosis set against the broader issue of chronic pelvic pain
- The advice about group B strep
- Practical and as usual Dr O Riordan excels in including us gp colleagues and striving for the best service for patients
- Endometriosis info, service update
- Mairead O Riordan and openness to engage
- Q&A
- HUBS
- Anaesthetists input
- Learning about the endometriosis services available
- Update on services, post natal hubs and WhatsApp group suggestion
- Very interesting to hear re GBS and that positive urinary culture more insidious than vaginal swab
- Many highlights but in particular the update on endometriosis
- The dietician's recipe booklet
- Very interesting updates on endometriosis
- Iron containing foods
- MDT



A Special Milestone at CUMH

CUMH proudly celebrated its 100th waterbirth in January 2026. Mum Dawn, pictured, welcomed a beautiful baby boy in the New Year, earning him the honour of being our 100th waterbirth baby.

Throughout her pregnancy, Dawn was supported by her local Midwifery-Led Clinic in Mitchelstown, where she received continuity of care from a familiar, friendly team.

During the birth, Dawn was cared for by a delivery suite midwife alongside a member of the DOMINO team, who worked together to create a calm, reassuring, and empowering environment for this very special arrival.

Congratulations to Dawn and her little one, and to the incredible teams who make moments like this possible every day.



Thank You Bridie

Today, we celebrate the remarkable career and well-earned retirement of Bridie O'Sullivan, whose impact on nursing, midwifery, and patient care across the HSE South West will resonate for years to come.

Bridie's journey in healthcare spans more than three decades of dedicated service, beginning at Mercy University Hospital, where she first qualified and practiced as a midwife.

Her progression to Director of Nursing at Mercy University Hospital marked a period of strong, thoughtful leadership, particularly in the field of gerontology, where she championed and advanced care for older adults. She played a pivotal role in developing gerontological nursing practices during the opening of the Acute Assessment Unit for older adults, bringing innovation, empathy, and a deep understanding of patient needs to the forefront.

In October 2014, Bridie took on the role of Chief Director of Nursing and Midwifery for the SSWHG. With responsibility for ten hospitals across the region, she provided

unwavering professional and clinical leadership, shaped strategic direction, and supported thousands of nursing, midwifery, and support staff.

Bridie's leadership was always grounded in knowledge and continuous learning. With a Higher Diploma in Gerontological Nursing, a Master's Degree in Gerontology, and a Diploma in Leadership and Quality from the Royal College of Physicians, she brought academic depth and professional insight to every role. Her appointment as Adjunct Clinical Professor at the School of Nursing and Midwifery, University College Cork, stands as a testament to her influence on future generations of healthcare professionals.

But beyond her titles and achievements, Bridie is known for her kindness, integrity, and unwavering commitment to patient-centred care. She worked tirelessly to elevate the standards of nursing and midwifery across the region.

Thank you Bridie for your service, your wisdom and your vision. Wishing you a retirement filled with joy, rest, and all the fulfilment you so richly deserve.

Going Digital

A decision was made to transition the 2024 Annual Report from a hard copy publication to a fully digital platform. The goal of this change was to reduce costs, minimise paper and printing use, and ensure all staff could easily access their own copy. Ms Gemma Fitzgerald, PA to the Director of Midwifery, led this project in partnership with the IT Department.

Collecting and presenting the required data for a digital format proved to be an ongoing challenge. However, incorporating photographs of staff and services has greatly enhanced the readability and overall experience of the report.

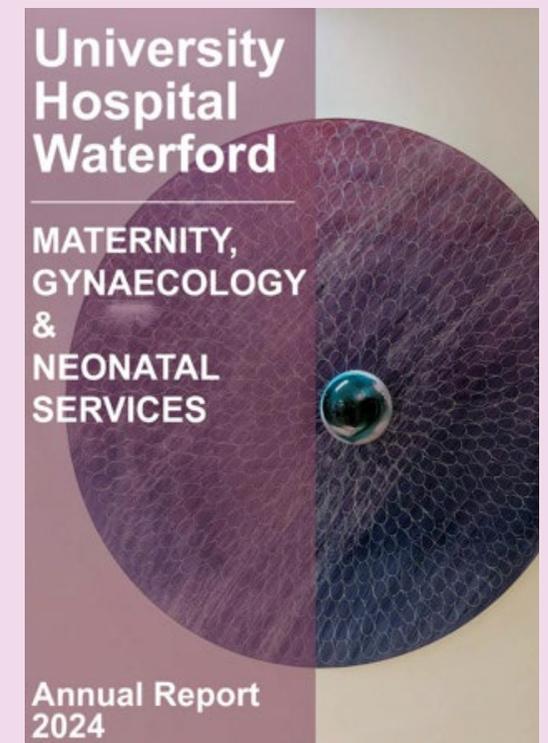
One of the most significant challenges for the IT Department was creating a flipbook style report, as no suitable software was available. Our dedicated IT link, Mr Killian Fitzgerald, developed a purpose-built programme specifically designed to meet our needs.

Feedback to date has been overwhelmingly positive. A major advantage of the new format is its compatibility with mobile phones, enabling staff to access statistics instantly from any location.

The front cover image was selected at the request of our Director of Midwifery, Ms Janet Murphy. It features a beautiful piece of commissioned artwork located in our Outpatients Department, created in 2010 by Ms Roisín de Buitléar. This artwork symbolises new beginnings and the nurturing role of motherhood.

We look forward to building on this success with the completion of the 2025 Digital Annual Report.

**Gemma Fitzgerald,
PA to the Director of Midwifery.**



[UHW Maternity Neonatal Services Annual Report 2024.html](#)

25 Years of Dedicated Gynaecological Cancer Care in University Hospital Waterford



This year marks 25 years since specialist gynaecological oncology services were established at University Hospital Waterford, providing dedicated cancer care to women across the South East of Ireland. For over a quarter of a century, Dr John Stratton has led the development of a comprehensive regional service, ensuring that women facing complex and life-changing diagnoses can access expert care closer to home.

Through clinical leadership, innovation, and an unwavering commitment to patient care, the service has grown into a vital regional resource. Thousands of women and their families have benefited from the expertise and multidisciplinary care that now underpin the region's approach to the treatment of gynaecological cancers.

The Gynaecological Oncology Team at UHW

The service is led by a full-time Consultant Gynaecological Oncologist, who also serves as Lead Colposcopist and Obstetrician at UHW.

The multidisciplinary team includes:

- A Complex Pelvic Surgery Fellow
- A Specialist Registrar in Obstetrics and Gynaecology
- Senior House Officers
- A full-time Gynaecological Oncology Liaison (CMM2)

Patients are seen in a dedicated weekly clinic alongside general gynaecology referrals. Approximately 1,500 women attend this clinic annually, including both new and follow-up cancer patients. Each year, around 150 new referrals are received for women with suspected gynaecological malignancies.



Comprehensive Cancer Surgery and Oncological Care

University Hospital Waterford is an NCCP-accredited tertiary referral centre and a key provider of complex radical and exenterative gynaecological cancer surgery in the region.

The Gynaecological Oncology team has a dedicated operating theatre day each week, typically performing two to three major oncological or complex pelvic surgeries in addition to minor procedures.

The service provides a fully integrated diagnostic and treatment pathway within the Obstetrics and Gynaecology Department, incorporating surgery, imaging, pathology, and oncology services.

A bimonthly Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) meeting is held at UHW with participation from Gynaecological Oncology, Radiation Oncology, Medical Oncology, Histopathology, and Radiology. These meetings support shared decision-making and ensure coordinated, evidence-based treatment planning for every patient.

Strong links with regional medical and radiation oncology services facilitate rapid access to adjuvant and neoadjuvant therapies.

Surgical Innovation and Patient-Centred Care

In 2023, UHW established its Robotic Surgical Programme with the introduction of the da Vinci Xi robotic system, significantly enhancing surgical capability. In 2024, the Consultant Gynaecological Oncologist performed 38 robotic procedures.

The department has also implemented the Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS) protocol supported by a comprehensive prehabilitation programme including:

- Oncology psychotherapy support
- Post-operative physiotherapy
- Lymphoedema physiotherapy services
- A pre-operative education clinic led by the Gynaecological Oncology Liaison

These services incorporate the *ThisIsGO.ie* programme, which provides education and resources for patients and their families.

Community Engagement and Awareness

Each year, as part of World Gynaecological Oncology Day, UHW staff and consultants participate in awareness initiatives such as 'Dance for GO' and 'Dip for GO', helping to raise public awareness of gynaecological cancers.

Professional Engagement

In October 2025, members of the UHW Gynaecological Oncology team attended the SAGO 2025 State-of-the-Art Conference on Gynaecology and Oncology in Prague. The conference featured a two-day scientific programme covering advances in diagnostics, systemic therapies, surgical techniques, perioperative management, and palliative care.



Fitness Breaks at SAGO 2025



Have you got a story?

Thank you to all staff who contributed to this edition of UltraNews. If you have a story for a future edition, please contact Elaine Harrington, Communications Manager, eharrington@ucc.ie
I would love to hear from you!

