



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

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April 9TH 2013

Mr. Bill Tormey
Chairperson
Regional Health Forum – Dublin North East
Health Service Executive
Dublin Road
Kells
Co. Meath

Dear Mr. Tormey,

I refer to your letter dated 27th March 2013 to Mr. Tony O'Brien in relation to a Motion passed by the members concerning the destruction of Guthrie Cards which was sent to me for response.

“All babies born in Ireland are screened for 6 rare conditions soon after birth, so that babies with rare conditions can be given early and appropriate care. This is known as the Heel Prick Test. It involves taking a few drops of blood from the baby's heel onto a screening card for testing. The screening programme was updated in June 2011 and screening cards are now stored with parental consent for 10 years after the test is completed.

The National Newborn Bloodspot Screening Programme has older screening cards from all heel prick tests carried out since 1984 in storage. To comply with national and EU Data Protection law, it was proposed that screening cards from babies born between 1984 and 2002 be disposed of during 2013.

Following concerns raised about the potential future value of Newborn Screening Cards, the Minister for Health indicated on March 25th 2013 that an Expert Group is to be set up to consider if a method can be found to archive the material in a manner that satisfies the concerns of the Data Protection Commissioner. This expert group will include representatives from the Attorney General's office.

The Minister has requested that no destruction of the Newborn Screening Cards should take place until the Expert Group has had an opportunity to consider the matter. The Minister would like to assure everyone that none of the information on the cards may be or will be used without the express permission of the individuals concerned.”

Kind regards.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Leo Kinsella". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Leo Kinsella
Regional Director of Operations
HSE Dublin North East