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John Brassil, TD
Dáil Éireann,
Dublin 2

PQ ref 24919/19

“To ask the Minister for Health the number of children approved and waiting for treatment on the orthodontic waiting list in counties Kerry and Cork; the number from County Kerry; the details for same in each of the years 2014 to 2018 and to date in 2019; and if he will make a statement on the matter.”

Dear Deputy Brassil

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.

The primary goal of orthodontics is to improve the appearance and function of misaligned or crooked teeth. The HSE provides free orthodontic treatment for children with the most severe orthodontic problems. The criteria used to decide whether a child qualifies for treatment in the HSE is determined by nationally agreed eligibility guidelines based on an international grading system (IOTN). To ensure the resources available in Cork Kerry Community Healthcare are used in the most appropriate way to meet the presenting needs, all referrals for the service are triaged and given a priority rating. Children who meet the criteria to be placed on the Priority Waiting List, e.g., cleft palate, impacted teeth, etc, are seen within one month to a year. Children who meet the criteria to be placed on the Functional Waiting List are generally seen within 18 to 24 months and children who meet the criteria to be placed on the Routine Fixed Waiting List are usually seen within 4 years. Timelines for individual children may vary as emergency cases will occur and will need priority so any estimation given may not be accurate.

The HSE's National Service Plan for 2019 sets out the following targets for orthodontic assessment and treatment. The targets for Cork Kerry Community Healthcare orthodontic services are;

- 75% of patient referrals seen for assessment within 6 months
- 99% of patients to have commenced treatment within 4 years

Cork Kerry Community Healthcare has ongoing challenges in reaching these targets due to a population growth in children which has resulted in an increased number of eligible referrals for the service. An increased rate of paid statutory leave has also led to a reduction in available staffing resources. To ensure the available resource is used in the most appropriate way all referrals are

triaged by the Consultant Orthodontists in the department and through this process the most severe cases are prioritised and seen first.

A breakdown for children and adolescent on the Orthodontic Treatment Waiting list in Counties Cork and Kerry are set out below. These figures are based on Performance Indicator data as at the end of Quarter 4 for each of the years 2014 to 2018 and for Quarter 1 2019.

**Total Number waiting to commence treatment following assessment –
Grade 4 (Routine) & Grade 5 (Functional):**

Year	County	Total
2019	Cork	2,109
	Kerry	182
2018	Cork	1,679
	Kerry	488
2017	Cork	1,773
	Kerry	555
2016	Cork	1,493
	Kerry	501
2015	Cork	1,195
	Kerry	470
2014	Cork	787
	Kerry	343

There was a National Waiting List Initiative for those waiting routine treatment for over 4 years in 2016. While 237 children from the Cork Kerry area were offered access to this waiting list initiative only 142 availed of the treatment offered under this initiative. As those who availed of treatment under this initiative are coming to the end of their treatment Cork Kerry Community Healthcare anticipates that patients who are now waiting over 4 years will be offered the opportunity to avail of this initiative.

Cork Kerry Community Healthcare Orthodontic Service is also looking at initiatives to improve equity of access to the service such as the introduction of a single waiting list, a new IT System, patient flow processes and resource realignment in context of staff retirements/resignations in an effort to improve the effectiveness of the service in reducing waiting times. I regret that individuals on the Waiting List have such an extensive waiting time, however, Cork Kerry Community Healthcare has to live within its resource allocation for the service.

If I can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Teresa O' Donovan
Head of Service - Primary Care,
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare