



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Príomhoifigeach ECSP Ceantar 8
Baile Átha Cliath & Lár Laighin
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Bóthar an Ardáin
An Tulach Mhór
Co Uíbh Fhailí

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14th May, 2019

Deputy Gerry Adams
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.

RE PQ 18931/19: To ask the Minister for Health the number of children in County Louth in each year over the past ten years that have received dental assessments during their primary school years; and the number of children in County Louth over the past ten years that left primary school without ever having received a dental assessment.

Dear Deputy Adams

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. I have examined the matter and outline the position as follows.

Louth Meath Dental Service targets specific classes in primary school, and offers oral health assessments and treatment to children in these classes. Children in these age groups have been targeted because of certain dental developmental milestones. In addition to the targeted approach, an emergency service is available for all children under the age of 16.

Specific data is not available for the past 10 years for those children in primary school who have received a dental assessment during their primary school years. This total would include children attending for emergency services, children on recall appointments, children with special care needs who are seen more frequently and also the children targeted through the school oral health programme. Our national Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) focus on the latter group, but have not been in place for the past 10 years, therefore only an estimate of the number of children receiving an oral health assessment can be provided.

In Louth we currently collate the number of consent forms received annually and track each clinician's progress through allocated target classes. Previously children in 1st, 4th and 6th class were targeted but in recent of years, only 1st and 6th class children have been targeted for oral health assessments. Louth has experienced a dramatic and sustained increase in population since the mid 1990s which has impacted on the capacity of the HSE Dental Service to maintain a consistent level of services to its target groups. In Louth, the population increased by 40% between 1996 and 2016. (Census 2016 Published Reports CSO).

Based on the best information available, the data is as follows:

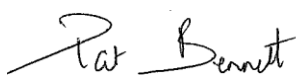
School Year	Consents Forms Received 1 st Class	1 ST Class Screened	Consent Forms Received 4 th Class	4 th Class Screened	Consent Forms Received 6 th Class	6 th Class Screened
2013/2014	1,649	1,420 (86%)	1,675	1,385 (82%)	1,850	1,590 (85%)
2014/2015	2,236	2,002 (89%)	-----	-----	1,945	1,556 (80%)
2015/2016	2,381	1,976 (82%)	-----	-----	2,408	2,112 (87%)
2016/2017	2,424	2,130 (87%)	-----	-----	2,497	1,980 (79%)
2017/2018	2,502	2,205 (88%)	-----	-----	2,471	2,108 (85%)

All children for whom a signed consent form is received will be offered an appointment. Where patients fail to attend this appointment, they will be sent a follow up one, but some will still fail to attend. It is now practice that a dental nurse will telephone parents of children in 6th class who have missed two assessment appointments.

It is impossible to say how many children over the past 10 years have left primary school without an oral health assessment, as we do not prospectively follow individual children's uptake of the services e.g. a child could miss an assessment in one target class but be seen when they reach another target class. The number of children who are not seen by the HSE also includes children whose parents do not consent to take part in the programme by indicating same on the consent form or those who do not return consent forms at all. Some parents or guardians will contact us at a later date, when the child is out of the target class, and although they will be seen they will not be captured statistically in the target year, but will be recorded as a non-school screening, in KPI's.

I trust the above is in order but please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any further queries in this regard.

Yours sincerely,



Pat Bennett
Chief Officer
Midlands Louth Meath CHO