



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

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

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14<sup>th</sup> May, 2019

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

**RE PQ 18932/19: To ask the Minister for Health the number of children in County Louth that have received all three dental assessments to which they are entitled since the programme began.**

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.

The Louth Meath dental service provides oral health care to priority target groups including children under the age of 16 and adults with special care needs. In keeping with the statutory requirement to provide a dental screening service to children, Louth Meath Dental Service targets specific classes in primary school, and offers oral health assessments and treatment to children in these classes.

The current pattern of service delivery, whereby children attending specific classes in national schools are targeted for receipt of dental services, has been heavily influenced by the “Leyden Report” which was produced in 1988 by a Working Group appointed to review the delivery of dental services. This working group wished to see an annual screening service for all eligible children as the norm, but recognised that the resources to implement such a comprehensive service were not available at that time. It therefore recommended that “the service should focus on children in first and sixth classes in the first instance and that children in those classes should be given appropriate treatment as necessary. If and when resources became available, a full screening service would be introduced to children in other classes”. The concept of targeting specific classes was reinforced in the 1994 National Health Strategy – *Shaping a Healthier Future*, which set out an integrated action plan for dental services, involving “improvements in the school dental services to ensure systematic screening of children in 3 designated classes in primary and post-primary schools.

It is impossible to say how many children have received three dental assessments since the programme began as that data is not available to us. Also 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.

Previously in Louth 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 1990's which has impacted on the capacity of the HSE dental service to maintain a consistent level of services to its target groups.

The information requested is not available. However on the best information available, the data for the last 5 years is as follows:

School Year	Consents Forms Received 1 <sup>st</sup> Class	1 <sup>ST</sup> Class Screened	Consent Forms Received 4 <sup>th</sup> Class	4 <sup>th</sup> Class Screened	Consent Forms Received 6 <sup>th</sup> Class	6 <sup>th</sup> 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%)

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,




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**Pat Bennett**  
Chief Officer  
Midlands Louth Meath CHO