



21 December 2020

**Deputy Richard O'Donoghue
Dáil Eireann
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2**

PQ 42389/20: To ask the Minister for Health if he will report on orthodontic appointments and anticipated wait times for 2021; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy O'Donoghue,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for response.

Appendix 1 details KPI data for the Orthodontic Service as at Q3 2020.

Access to dental and orthodontic services was restricted to urgent /emergency treatment under the terms of Statutory Instrument 121/2020 (28th March 2020 -18th May 2020). An emergency dental service was maintained in all HSE service areas throughout this time, which included remote consultation through telephone triage as well as clinical attendance for treatment.

During that time, and since, many HSE orthodontic staff have been redeployed to testing and tracing as part of the HSE's response to the pandemic.

By the end of November 2020, the service had experienced eight months of continual disruption. The impacts can be summarised as follows:

- i. All patients under treatment in March 2020 (approximately 17,000 in active treatment) had their course of treatment interrupted.
- ii. No patients waiting to start treatment were called to commence treatment, with resultant increases in waiting times.
- iii. No patients awaiting assessment have been called for assessment, thereby increasing the waiting time for assessments

Orthodontic Services have gradually resumed. All service locations have implemented social distancing and other organisational measures as well as infection prevention and control guidance from the Health Protection Surveillance Centre that has been updated during the pandemic. The initial impact of these measures meant that Orthodontic Units were treating an average of 25 – 40% fewer patients per day than would have been treated prior to the pandemic, but this may improve over time. HSE Orthodontic staff members have been provided with appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) during the pandemic.

In locations where orthodontic services share waiting areas and other facilities, all services are working together to ensure that services are delivered safely and effectively. As part of their resumption plan, each dental and orthodontic area is restarting their screening and treatment service for children. Clinicians have reviewed the records of patients that were under treatment at the time when services were phased down. Priority for early appointments has been given to patients that need to be seen urgently, and following up where necessary on cases that had emergency treatment during the restricted access period.

Full assessment of the impact on waiting lists of the restricted access period, reduced throughput on resumption, and the ongoing commitment to testing on the backlog in service provision is being undertaken. Reducing waiting times is a key priority for the HSE, while at all times ensuring that services implement the organisational and preventive measures required to reduce the risk of Covid-19 transmission.

I trust this information is of assistance to you, but if you require further clarification please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours Sincerely,



Joseph Green
AND, National Oral Health Lead - Operations



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Appendix 1: KPI Data Orthodontic Service Q3 2020

	In Active Treatment	Waiting < 2 years	Waiting 2-4 years	Waiting > 4 years	Totals
Former East Coast (Loughlinstown)*		481	447	152	1080
Former South West (St James's)*	2,261	935	1073	327	2335
Midlands**	604	**	**	**	**
DNE	1,558	1,032	722	493	2247
South	2,255	1,360	792	89	2241
South East	1,063	853	1335	811	2999
Mid Western	1,463	555	840	328	1723
North West	742	473	212		685
Western	2,093	1,048	716	239	2003
Totals	12,039	6737	6137	2439	15313

*Data for Former East Coast (Loughlinstown)*Former South West (St James's)* at Q2 2020

** KPI Treatment Waiting Time Figures for Midlands Orthodontic Unit have not been recorded on the KPI Data Portal