

Cork Kerry Community Healthcare
 Office of Head of Primary Care
 HSE Community Services Building
 Rathass
 Tralee
 Co. Kerry
 V92 YA25

Tel: 066-7184516
 Email: Teresa.ODonovan2@hse.ie

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Thomas Gould T.D.,
 Dáil Éireann,
 Dublin 2

PQ ref 19466/20

‘To ask the Minister for Health the number of children and adults on the orthodontic waiting lists in Cork city; the average waiting times for appointments; the number waiting more than six months; and if he will make a statement on the matter.’

Dear Deputy Gould,

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 emergence of Covid- 19 in Ireland in March 2020 has severely disrupted the delivery of health services in Ireland, including the orthodontic service. The primary goal of this service is to improve the appearance and function of misaligned or crooked teeth, with free orthodontic treatment being provided to children with the most severe orthodontic problems. Qualification for treatment is determined by nationally agreed eligibility guidelines based on an international grading system (IOTN). All referrals for the service are triaged and given a priority rating by the clinical team.

Our IT system does not currently allow for the breakdown of the figures for the assessment and treatment waiting times for individual areas. Therefore the figures set out below are an overall total for Cork and Kerry as at the end of June 2020:

No. waiting for Orthodontic assessment

Wait Band	Numbers waiting
1-6 months	660
7-12 months	1120
13-24 months	596
>24 months	4
Total	2380

No. waiting to commence Orthodontic treatment(Routine and Functional).

Wait Band	Numbers Waiting
1-6 months	282
7-12 months	555
13-24 months	946
24-36 months	699
37-48 months	438
> 48 months	77
Total	2997

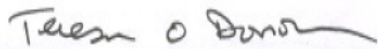
Prior to the emergence of Covid- 19 children who met the criteria for the Priority Waiting List, e.g., children with cleft palate, impacted teeth, etc., were seen within a year. Children who met the criteria for the Functional Waiting List were generally seen within 24 months and children who met the criteria for the Routine Fixed Waiting List seen usually within 4 years. These timelines were indicative given that emergency cases occur requiring a prioritisation of available resources.

Prior to Covid, CKCH had plans to deliver a range of service improvements including the introduction of a centralised wait list to improve equity of access across the CHO and the recruitment of a Consultant Orthodontist for Kerry. While the demand for the service continued to grow, it was hoped that these measures would help to reduce the overall waiting time.

While Cork Kerry Community Healthcare has a plan in place for the structured and phased return of services, adherence to infection, prevention control measures, to reduce the risk of the spread of Covid-19, will result in fewer treatments being provided per day. In the absence of additional resources being made available, this will further impact on the waiting times for the orthodontic service. I appreciate the difficulties this creates for those waiting for a service and I acknowledge their continued patience and understanding

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