



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
Health Service Executive

Oifig NaisuintaSlainte Beil,
Fedhmeannacht na Seirbhíse
Slainte,
31-33 Sráid Caitriona,
Luimneach.

National Oral Health Office,
Health Service Executive,
31-33 Catherine St.,
Limerick.

**Jennifer Murnane O'Connor, TD,
Dáil Eireann,
Leinster House,
Kildare Street,
Dublin 2.**

9th July 2020

Re: PQ 13406/20

Question: ***“To ask the Minister for Health if dental patients on medical cards can access the National Treatment Purchase Fund to have pressing procedures undertaken; the waiting list time in the HSE schools programme for children under 16 years of age awaiting approved braces or HSE dental procedures; and if a breakdown of the procedure is unavailable, the timeline for these procedures to take place in view of the Covid-19 restrictions by county on waiting list numbers - Jennifer Murnane O'Connor. -Jennifer Murnane O'Connor”***

Dear Deputy Murnane O'Connor,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Question which has been referred by the Minister for Health to the Health Service Executive for direct response.

Adult Medical Card holders

Adult medical card holders have access to primary care dental services under the Dental Treatment Services Scheme through care provided by private dentists that hold DTSS contracts with the HSE. In 2019, 374,119 adults received treatment under the scheme (30.67% of those eligible), with 1,048,321 treatment items provided at a total cost of €56.24m.

From 28th March 2020, dental services were restricted to urgent and emergency treatment in line with Statutory Instrument 121/2020. With effect from 18th May 2020, the resumption of elective dental procedures was enabled by Statutory Instrument 174/2020.

The National Treatment Purchase Fund is a corporate body with functions and responsibilities as set out under Statutory Instrument 179 - National Treatment Purchase Fund (Establishment) Order, 2004 and the Nursing Homes Support Scheme Act (2009). Its key functions include arranging for the provision of hospital treatment to classes of persons determined by the Minister; as well as collecting, collating and validating information on persons waiting for public hospital treatment.

The vast majority of dental procedures are provided in primary care settings and do not require hospitalisation. Medical card holders that require dental procedures in hospital settings are referred through clinical pathways.

HSE Orthodontic Services

Access to HSE Orthodontics is through a referral process from the HSE Dental Service, usually when the child is in 6th Class. If a child is identified as having a treatment need that may qualify through the Modified IOTN system, then s/he is referred for an Orthodontic Assessment with the HSE's Regional Orthodontic Department. If the treatment

need meets the criteria under the Modified IOTN, the child will then be placed on a waiting list for treatment. There are a number of categories within the system, and these are used to prioritise care. These waiting lists (orthodontic assessment list, orthodontic treatment list) are managed by the HSE's Regional Orthodontic service.

The information relating to the number of children waiting for orthodontic treatment following assessment is set out below. This is gathered on a quarterly basis. Due to the restrictions on services and staff redeployment associated with the Covid-19 pandemic, the latest available data is reported. At the end of 2019, there were 19,216 patients waiting for orthodontic treatment, (10,882 in Category 4, (8,334 in Category 5). Full details for each regional department are given in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Number of patients placed on treatment waiting list Category 4 per area and wait band

Number of Patients on treatment waiting list Category 4, end 2019							
Area	1-6 months	7-12 months	13-24 months	25-36 months	37-48 months	Over 4 years	TOTAL
DML Former East Coast	60	53	107	180	92	0	492
DML Simms	68	45	205	281	308	20	927
Midlands	70	44	167	216	161	855	1513
DNE	83	200	440	437	327	438	1925
South	470	574	694	527	283	0	2548
South East	108	114	227	287	371	268	1375
Mid-Western	61	95	164	188	180	93	781
North West	46	47	77	76	28	0	274
West	142	162	295	328	120	0	1047
TOTAL	1108	1334	2376	2520	1870	1674	10,882

Table 2: Number of patients on the treatment waiting list Grade 5 per area and wait band

Number of Patients on treatment waiting list Grade 5, end 2019							
Area	1-6 months	7-12 months	13-24 months	25-36 months	37-48 months	Over 4 years	TOTAL
DML/East Coast	117	70	126	167	36	36	552
DML Simms	104	233	312	251	292	35	1227
Midlands	88	92	163	93	64	55	555
DNE	89	281	589	317	67	65	1408
South	121*	293*	553*	219*	0	0	1186
South East	148	189	438	377	310	186	1648
Mid-West	74	120	229	227	191	61	902
North West	143	73	100	-	-	-	316
West	199	115	174	26	26	-	540
TOTAL	1083	1466	2684	1677	986	438	8334

*Number of Patients on treatment waiting list Grade 5 for the South Regional Orthodontic Department is not available for 2019. Numbers shown represent data as at Q4 2018.

Elective orthodontic Services are gradually resuming having been phased down due to the Covid-19 pandemic. All service locations are implementing social distancing and other organisational measures, as well as infection prevention and control guidance that has been updated during the pandemic. Some of these measures mean that the usual throughput of patients is reduced at the start of the resumption, but this is expected to improve over time.

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 planning, clinicians are reviewing

the records of all patients that were under treatment at the time when services were phased down. Priority for early appointments will be given to patients that need to be seen urgently.

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

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Green', written over a light grey rectangular background.

Joseph Green,
AND, National Oral Health Lead – Operations