



25<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Deputy James Browne,  
Dáil Éireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.

**PQ 3634/20 - To ask the Minister for Health the number of persons in each LHO area waiting for an oral health appointment in primary care at the end of February 2020 or the latest date available; and the number waiting 0 to 12, 12 to 26, 26 to 52 and more than 52 weeks**

**-James Browne**

Dear Deputy Browne,

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.

I would advise the Deputy that the system does not hold data in the manner requested.

The latest KPI Data for the Dental and Orthodontic Service as at Q4 December 2019 is detailed in Appendix 1 and 2 below. It is important to note the following:

- i. Eligibility for dental services is a statutory entitlement under the Health Acts. Almost one million children aged up to and including 15 years are eligible for HSE Dental services. All of the HSE Dental Services are provided free of charge.
- ii. Routine dental services are targeted at certain age groups, and use school class as part of the targeting of services, therefore the academic year can be a factor in reporting progress of targeted programmes. In many instances, information is not held in a format that facilitates the response to the question.
- iii. The HSE Routine Dental Services are provided on the basis of need, with a strong emphasis on prevention. This is delivered through targeted screening and prevention for school children at certain dental developmental milestones and for special needs groups. This approach involves identifying children with the greatest needs, and the highest risks of dental disease.
- iv. Emergency care for the relief of pain (e.g. toothache) and infection is available on a same day/following day basis for all for all children aged up to 15 years, and patients with Special Needs. Approximately 70,000 children attend for emergency treatment each year, with a 4.5% increase seen this year.
- v. Children in the targeted age groups are typically in 1st/2nd Class and 6th Class, with some 4th Class children being seen in some parts of the country as resources permits. Children in secondary school in general receive only an emergency service.
- vi. Orthodontic treatment with the HSE Orthodontic Service is limited to those children with the most severe and complex orthodontic treatment needs. A Modified Index of Treatment Needs (Modified IOTN) system is used to determine if a child can be accepted for treatment.

- vii. Access to HSE Orthodontics is through a referral process that starts in 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 will be 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.
- viii. The waiting periods for dental treatment and orthodontic treatment are therefore different and the information for question is presented into the tables accordingly.

#### Dental Services

Details of numbers of patients attending for scheduled assessment, those attending for unscheduled assessment, those who commenced treatment with three months of scheduled oral health assessment and those who had their first visit for active care more than 3 months after scheduled oral health assessment are given in the Appendices Section in Tables 1 - 4.

At the end of Q4 2019, activity for target groups attending for scheduled assessments was -6.7% behind target for these groups. This is at a time when recruitment and retention of dentists has been problematic, and restricts the capacity of the service.

#### Orthodontic Services

Details of numbers of patients on assessment waiting lists, those in active treatment, and those on treatment waiting lists are given below.

##### Assessments

At the end of 2019, 10,202 children were awaiting assessment by the regional orthodontic departments, 1,859 for 0-6 months, 8,343 between 7-12 months. Full details for each regional department are given in the Appendix.

##### Numbers in treatment

At the end of 2019, there were 16,994 patients in active treatment for malocclusions in categories 4 and 5. Full details for each regional department are given in the Appendix.

##### Numbers waiting for treatment

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 the Appendix.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Siobhán McArdle', written in a cursive style.

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Siobhán McArdle,  
Head of Operations Primary Care,  
Community Operations