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**Deputy David Cullinane
Dáil Eireann
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2**

PQ 28158/20

To ask the Minister for Health the number of persons with special needs on dental and orthodontic services waiting lists; the number waiting 0 to 6, 6 to 12 months, 1 to 2, 2 to 3 and 3 plus years, by LHO in tabular form; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Cullinane,

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.

People requiring Special Care Dentistry (SCD) are those with a disability or activity restriction that directly or indirectly affects their oral health and is impacted by the personal and/or the environmental context of the individual. SCD takes a comprehensive, holistic approach to the care of patients, sometimes referred to as a group of people with 'special needs'. These groups may include but are not limited to people with intellectual, sensory and/or physical impairments, those with mental health issues and/or complex medical conditions and includes frail older people.

Most dental care for people with disabilities is not complex and is provided in primary care and community settings by a dental workforce with the relevant skills and competencies. However, the treatment needs for many people require the use of sedation or general anaesthesia (GA). Treatment under GA involves hospitalisation.

Clinical records of all patients include the relevant medical details, medications and underlying conditions, including disability, of each individual. However, it is important to note that the HSE respects each individual's views with regard to how they self-identify.

The information set out below is supplied from each Community Health Organisation. It should be noted that it is not captured through a single methodology.

CHO 1 – Information on current position not available for final response

CHO 2

Dental – CHO2	Galway	Mayo	Roscommon
0-6 months	35	300 (includes recalls and GA cases)	150+ (includes GA cases, no service currently for special needs children under GA in Roscommon)
6 to 12 months	36	200	100+
1-2 years	10	50	50
2-3 years		50	50
3+ years		Orthodontic patients only	Orthodontic patients only

CHO 3

The information the Deputy is requesting is not collected in tabular format as requested.

Our Dental Services provides assessment and treatment to all children of Primary School age, including children with special needs and does not differentiate.

The Dental Services in the Mid West CHO have a number of Senior Dental Surgeons with a speciality in Special Needs who provide services to adults and children with special needs. They have an active caseload of approximately 740 patients (adults and children) who are seen regularly (annually), the regularity being dependant on need according to the treating clinician.

Unfortunately, due to Covid 19 and Infection Protection and Control guidelines the regular review of these patients has been delayed. We have not been in a position to offer treatment (as the clinics were closed for most of 2020), therefore, the 740 patients outlined above have been waiting longer than would have otherwise been the case. These patients are now likely to be seen 6 months later than expected, due to the Pandemic.

We provide Dental Services to residential centres who cater specifically for persons with special needs. Please note, these residents are not included in the figures given.

We also have approximately, 95 special needs patients awaiting dental treatment in a hospital setting.

CHO 4

Children with Special needs GA restorative service was suspended in mid-March 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic. In Cork the CUH dental theatre was seconded by the CUH ED dept. An alternative theatre has been identified and it is planned to resume this service in December 2020. There are 125 patients on the Cork list who have all been waiting over 1 year.

The Adults Special needs GA restorative service, was also suspended in mid-March due to the Covid-19 pandemic. It recommenced in Mallow General Hospital in September 2020, although on a much reduced capacity. There are approximately 86 adults with special needs awaiting GA restorative service including patients from Cork, Kerry and Tipperary. With the reduced capacity of theatre the wait time is approximately 18 months.

Any adult or child with special needs who is in pain, will be seen and treated for emergency GA extraction within 7-10 days.

No. Special Needs Children GA Restorative Service

Wait Band	Numbers waiting
1-6 months	4
7-12 months	6
13-24 months	129
>24 months	3
CKCH Total	143

No. Special Needs Adults GA Restorative Service

Wait Band	Numbers Waiting
1-6 months	
7-12 months	
13-24 months	86
24-36 months	
37-48 months	
> 48 months	
CKCH Total	86

CHO 5

No. of persons with special needs on dental service waiting list				
	*Carlow/Kilkenny	*South Tipperary	Waterford	Wexford
Waiting 0-6 mths	189	357	7 GA	10 GA
Waiting 6-12 mths	130 74 (GA)	153 17 (GA)	5 GA	16 GA
Waiting 1-2 yrs			0	50 GA
Waiting 2-3 yrs			0	43 GA
Waiting 3 plus yrs			0	17 GA

*The Principal Dental Surgeon for Carlow/Kilkenny and South Tipperary would like to point out that she really does not have waiting lists as such for special needs patients e.g. 189 in the first cell for Carlow Kilkenny (this is the number of people attending centres for people with special needs (largely intellectual disability). They were last seen in October 2019. The Dental Department aims to examine all people attending centres once per year and these centres were due a visit in October 2020. However, as this has not happened (due to Covid-19), the Principal Dental Surgeon has put them in the waiting category of 0 to 6 months. The 130 figure similarly refers to groups in centres due to be seen last June. However within that there are a number of people who for various reasons may be due to be recalled more frequently than annually. This table has not picked up on those. Therefore this table does not reflect the true situation and particularly the huge deficit in Carlow Kilkenny caused by the fact that there is no Senior Dentist in Special Needs.

CHO 6

The following tables indicate the assessment waiting lists in Community Healthcare East by area for adults and children attending special needs schools, special classes in mainstream schools and adult residential and day centres.

Wicklow	0-6 months	6-12 months	1 – 2 years	2- 3 years	>3 years
0-16 years			166	82	35
> 16 years				109	400

Dublin South	0-6 months	6-12 months	1 – 2 years	2- 3 years	>3 years
0-16 years	163	164	324	118	
> 16 years	54	19	1		

Dublin South East	0-6 months	6-12 months	1 – 2 years	2- 3 years	>3 years
0-16 years			260	185	
> 16 years					1097

The Dental Service Manager has advised that treatment waiting lists are maintained online on SOEL Health. This system does not distinguish between patients with/ without special care needs. This includes the waiting list for a dental hygienist and includes the list of clients waiting for emergency extractions under general anaesthetic.

In addition, on the 14th October 2020 the dental service had a Pandemic waitlist of 1,290 patients who had appointments postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. This waitlist includes a cohort of child patients with special medical care needs that attend mainstream school.

CHO 7

Patients awaiting dental examinations and treatment are categorised according to the need for urgent dental care but not categorised due to primary presenting need, therefore it is not possible to provide the data as requested. If service users with special needs require urgent care, this is prioritised. They are also prioritised for all services ahead of routine school services. Centres that provide services for people with special needs are offered services depending on the dental resources available at a given time and these resources are allocated to provide as equitable a service as possible to all service users with special needs.

I can however give the data for Adult Special Needs patients who are awaiting treatment under General Anaesthetic at Naas General Hospital in the format you request – please see below

Kildare West Wicklow:**Dublin South West:**

Waiting times	Dental Services Waiting List	Waiting times	Dental Services Waiting List
0 – 6 months		0 – 6 months	
6 – 12 months	4	6 – 12 months	
1 – 2 years		1 – 2 years	1
2 – 3 years		2 – 3 years	
>3 years		>3 years	

CHO 8

Please note the enquiry does not define the term special needs so therefore it is difficult to provide accurate data to the question.

MIDLANDS DENTAL

General Anaesthetic waiting list for special needs patients					
Longford/Westmeath					
Wait time	0-6 mths	6-12 mths	1-2 yrs	2-3 yrs	> 3yrs
Children	2	5	7	0	0
Adults	4	1	4	0	0

Laois/Offaly					
Wait time	0-6 mths	6-12 mths	1-2 yrs	2-3 yrs	> 3yrs
Children	6	9	20	0	0
Adults	5	3	11	0	0

Oral health assessment waiting list for special needs patients					
Longford/Westmeath					
Wait time	0-6 mths	6-12 mths	1-2 yrs	2-3 yrs	> 3yrs
Children	90	60	0	0	0
Adults	15	20	0	0	0

Laois/Offaly					
Wait time	0-6 mths	6-12 mths	1-2 yrs	2-3 yrs	> 3yrs
Children	100	78	0	0	0
Adults	32	44	0	0	0

LOUTH/MEATH DENTAL

Louth/Meath Waiting list name	WAITING TIME					Total
	0 to 6 months	6 to 12 months	1 to 2 years	2 to 3 years	3 plus years	
Special Care Waiting List	22	29	491	119	0	661
General anaesthesia Adults	2	1	6		0	8
General anaesthesia paeds^						57
Hygienist special care list	1	37	2			40
TOTAL						766

*List currently being validated

^List due to be validated, so cannot give accurate breakdown by waiting time

The numbers presented are those currently on waiting lists for the Senior Dental Surgeon's in Louth and Meath. However they are an underestimate of the number of special care patients waiting for treatment, as all HSE dentists treat special care patients, but there is currently no way to identify these patients within the national dental electronic patient record system.

CHO 9

Whilst CHO DNCC Dental and Orthodontics service do have some separate lists for special care patients, most are mainstreamed and seen as part of the general patient population. We would not have the resources in order to collate this information manually and to give the overall figures for the general patient population would be misrepresentative.

HSE Orthodontic Service

Patients are assessed and treated based on their orthodontic needs. Patients with special needs are not differentiated on the waiting lists for Orthodontic Services. Patients on these waiting lists are recorded as Grade 5 and Grade 4 in accordance with their ranking under the HSE Modified IOTN Eligibility Guidelines. The only exception to this are children with cleft lip and palate and these children are treated as soon as the orthodontic need arises.

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