



Oifig Náisiúnta Sláinte Béil,
31-33 Sráid Caitriona, Luimneach
Teil: 061 464140

E: nationaloralhealth@hse.ie

National Oral Health Office
31-33 Catherine Street, Limerick
Tel: 061 464140
Email: nationaloralhealth@hse.ie

12 October 2020

**Deputy Alan Dillon
Dáil Eireann
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2**

Re: PQ 26530/20

To ask the Minister for Health the number of children on waiting lists for State provided orthodontic care in counties Mayo and Galway; the number that have been categorised as having a high level of need for orthodontic treatment but have been subjected to a waiting time of 36 months and more; the number of orthodontists assigned to tacking general waiting lists in the counties; and if he will make a statement on the matter

Dear Deputy Alan Dillon,

I refer to the above Parliamentary Questions which have been referred by the Minister for Health to the Health Service Executive for direct response. Following engagement with the Regional Orthodontic Unit, Merlin Park, below is the current position;

The data requested is the same for both Mayo University Hospital and Galway University Hospital as patients from both hospital regions are treated under the Saolta group and the Orthodontic Unit, Merlin Park is responsible for both (as well as Roscommon).

The average treatment waiting time is currently 4 years and 1 month. There are 1552 patients currently on the treatment waiting list. The KPI Data for the Orthodontic Service (as at Q4 2019) is detailed in Appendix 1 and details patient numbers by category and wait band.

There are 3 orthodontic consultants and 3 WTE associate specialists who are currently all fully booked to capacity at Merlin Park and in our peripheral Clinics in Tuam PCC, Castlebar General Hospital and Claremorris PCC. There are 2642 patients currently in active orthodontic treatment- this does not include assessments, reviews/ recalls, pending treatment and those in retention following treatment.

The Orthodontic Unit is not in a position to make any substantive change to the treatment waiting list times due to already being full to capacity with the above patients.

Is it not until an active patient is finished their treatment (which can take up to 3 years or more for complex cases) that a space can be made available to take a patient from the waiting list.

The Covid-19 Pandemic and resulting guidance from HSE/ HPSC/ National Oral Health Office and the Irish Dental Council has meant that the Orthodontic Unit now treat on average 25-50% less patients per day than we would have pre-Covid times. There is a need to prioritise patients who are already in orthodontic appliances at this current time. This will unfortunately negatively affect treatment times and, in turn, waiting list times going forward.

National Initiatives underway to address Orthodontic waiting lists include:

- Recruitment of additional Consultant Orthodontist and Specialist Orthodontists
- Proposed recruitment and deployment of Orthodontic Therapists.
- Prioritisation of care: All orthodontic services prioritise the provision of care for those patients identified as having the greatest needs and the highest risk of developing dental disease.

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

Table 1: Number of patients placed on treatment waiting list Category 4 and Category 5 per area and wait band at end 2019

Number of Patients on treatment waiting list Category 5, end 2019							
Area	1-6 months	7-12 months	13-24 months	25-36 months	37-48 months	Over 4 years	TOTAL
West	199	115	174	26	26	0	540

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
West	142	162	295	328	120	0	1047