



**Bernard J. Durkan TD**  
Dail Eireann,  
Leinster House,  
Kildare Street,  
Dublin 2.

25<sup>th</sup> February 2021

**PQ 7742/21**

**“To ask the Minister for Health the extent to which dental and optical services have been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic; if plans are in hand to address any issues arising; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Bernard J. Durkan”**

Dear Deputy Durkan,

The Health Service Executive (HSE) has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question (Reference 7742/21), which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

The HSE is working to ensure timely access to children and adults requiring dental and optical services, and to reduce long waiting times for these important services. The HSE is committed to delivering efficient high quality dental and optical services to all eligible service users. In 2020 a total of 110,577 new oral health patients attended for assessment and 59,951 patients were seen by ophthalmology services.

To address the current third wave of Covid infections there was a requirement to prioritise the level of services delivered during this period. Building upon the experience from earlier waves of the pandemic, Community Services have developed a prioritisation framework to support local decisions to be made on service prioritisation. This approach will ensure that services will be focused on identifying and supporting patients who have the greatest need and enabling staff to be deployed where necessary to support these patients. Where services are curtailed or reduced, this will be in line with clinical approval, a shared national position and with an appropriate risk assessment and communication with providers, service users and families. It is the intention of Community Services that full services would return as soon as is safe and practicable.

I trust this information is of assistance to you.

Yours sincerely

**TJ Dunford**  
Head of Operations; Primary Care.  
Community Operations.