



03 March 2021

Deputy Pauline Tully.
Dáil Éireann
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

PQ 8571/21: To ask the Minister for Health the number of children and adults on the orthodontic waiting lists in each county; the average waiting times for appointments; the number waiting more than six months; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy Tully,

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 wish to advise that the system does not hold data in the manner requested per county but data is available per Regional Orthodontic Unit. Appendix 1 details KPI data for the HSE Orthodontic Service (end Q3/Q4 2020). As a result of staff redeployment due to the COVID-19 pandemic, reporting of assessment and treatment waiting times for 2020 is incomplete.

Patients and their parents face difficulties in accessing orthodontic treatment with the HSE. These difficulties are expressed through the very high numbers waiting for assessment, and in both the numbers waiting for treatment and the length of time waiting for treatment. The predominant causative factor is lack of treatment capacity in the service.

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.

Access to dental and orthodontic services was restricted to urgent /emergency treatment under the terms of Statutory Instrument 121/2020 (28th March 2020 -18th May 2020). An emergency dental service was maintained in all HSE service areas throughout this time, which included remote consultation through telephone triage as well as clinical attendance for treatment.

During that time, and since, many HSE orthodontic staff have been redeployed to testing and tracing as part of the HSE's response to the pandemic. By the end of February 2021, the service had experienced eleven months of continual disruption.

The impacts can be summarised as follows:

- i. All patients under treatment in March 2020 (approximately 17,000 in active treatment) had their course of treatment interrupted.

- ii. No patients waiting to start treatment were called to commence treatment, with resultant increases in waiting times.
- iii. No patients awaiting assessment have been called for assessment, thereby increasing the waiting time for assessments

Orthodontic Services have gradually resumed. All service locations have implemented social distancing and other organisational measures as well as infection prevention and control guidance from the Health Protection Surveillance Centre that has been updated during the pandemic. The initial impact of these measures meant that Orthodontic Units were treating an average of 25 – 40% fewer patients per day than would have been treated prior to the pandemic, but this may improve over time. HSE Orthodontic staff members have been provided with appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) during the pandemic.

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 plan, each dental and orthodontic area is restarting their screening and treatment service for children. Clinicians have reviewed the records of patients that were under treatment at the time when services were phased down. Priority for early appointments has been given to patients that need to be seen urgently, and following up where necessary on cases that had emergency treatment during the restricted access period.

Full assessment of the impact on waiting lists of the restricted access period, reduced throughput on resumption, and the ongoing commitment to testing on the backlog in service provision is being undertaken. Reducing waiting times is a key priority for the HSE, while at all times ensuring that services implement the organisational.

National Initiatives underway to address Orthodontic waiting lists include:

- Orthodontic Procurement: The total patients transferred from the HSE to private providers under the Framework Type Agreement from 2016 to 2020 inclusive is 2007 patients.
- 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

Appendix 1: KPI Data HSE Orthodontic Service - As a result of staff redeployment due to the COVID-19 pandemic, reporting of assessment and treatment waiting times for 2020 is incomplete.

Appendix 1a: KPI Data December 2020

KPI Orthodontic Data December 2020	
Number of patients waiting for orthodontic assessment following referral by wait times	
1 – 6 months	1935
7 – 2 months	3050
13 – 24 months	2953
Longer than 24 months	243
Total	8181

Table 1.1

Number of patients waiting to commence treatment by wait times GRADE 4	
1 – 6 months	119
7 – 12 months	556
13 – 24 months	1703
25 – 36 months	1483
37 – 48 months	1537
Longer than 48 months	2303
Total	7656

Table 1.2

Number of patients waiting to commence treatment by wait times GRADE 5	
1 – 6 months	242
7 – 12 months	730
13 – 24 months	2551
25 – 36 months	1787
37 – 48 months	1247
Longer than 48 months	961
Total	7518

Table 1.3

Appendix 1b: KPI Data September 2020:

Regional Orthodontic Unit	Geographical area
North West	Saolta – Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim
Western	Saolta – Galway, Mayo, Roscommon
DML Former East Coast (Loughlinstown)	CHO 6, Dublin SE, Dun Laoghaire, Wicklow
DML Former South West (Simms)	CHO 7, Dublin West, South, SW, Kildare
Midlands	Laois, Offaly, Westmeath, Longford
DNE (Dublin North East)	CHO 9, Meath, Louth, Cavan Monaghan
South	CHO 4 Cork and Kerry
South East	CHO 5: S. Tipperary, Carlow/Kilkenny, Waterford, Wexford
Mid-Western	CHO 3- Clare, Limerick, N.Tipperary

Table 2.1 Regional Orthodontic Units

Number of Patients waiting for orthodontic assessment, end September 2020		
Area	0 – 6 months waiting time	7 – 12 months waiting time
DML – Former East Coast Loughlinstown	Incomplete return	Incomplete return
DML Simms	Incomplete return	Incomplete return
Midlands	Incomplete return	Incomplete return
DNE	322	0
South	215	1392
South East	178	646
Mid-Western	37	153
North West	106	471
West	367	561
TOTAL	1225	3223

Table 2.2: Number of patients waiting for assessment per area and wait band

Number of Patients in Active Treatment Grade 4 and 5, end September 2020	
DML, Former East Coast (Loughlinstown)	Incomplete return
DML, Former South West (Simms)	Incomplete return
Midlands	604
DNE	1558
South	2255
South East	1063
Mid-Western	1463
North West	742
Western	2093
Total	9778

Table 2.3: Number of patients in active treatment Grade 4 and 5

Number of Patients on treatment waiting list Category 4, September 2020							
Area	1-6 months	7-12 months	13-24 months	25-36 months	37-48 months	Over 4 years	TOTAL
DML Former East Coast							Incomplete return
DML Simms							Incomplete return
Midlands							Incomplete return
DNE	32	69	208	191	153	429	1082
South	13	216	380	242	178	85	1114
South East	19	84	213	246	304	345	1211
Mid-Western	0	85	166	161	217	199	828
North West	0	55	85	87	125	0	352
West	38	177	310	269	215	156	1165
TOTAL	102	686	1362	1196	1192	1214	5752

Table 2.4: Number of patients placed on treatment waiting list Category 4 per area and wait band

Number of Patients on treatment waiting list Grade 5, end September 2020							TOTAL
Area	1-6 months	7-12 months	13-24 months	25-36 months	37-48 months	Over 4 years	TOTAL
DML East Coast							Incomplete return
DML Simms							Incomplete return
Midlands							Incomplete return
DNE	69	116	538	306	72	64	1165
South	11	209	531	278	94	4	1127
South East	39	133	365	395	390	466	1788
Mid-West	2	105	197	216	240	129	889
North West	0	179	154	-	-	-	333
West	56	218	219	142	90	83	808
TOTAL	177	960	2004	1337	892	746	6116

Table 2.5: Number of patients on the treatment waiting list Grade 5 per area and wait band