

April 15th 2021

Colm Burke T.D.,
Dáil Éireann,
Dublin 2

PQ ref 16430/ 21

“To ask the Minister for Health the current position in respect of the five year delay for orthodontic treatment in Cork city and county; if some of the work will be transferred out to private practitioners in order to reduce waiting times for this treatment; and if he will make a statement on the matter.”

Dear Deputy Burke,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question, which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response.

The primary goal of orthodontics is to improve the appearance and function of misaligned or crooked teeth. The HSE provides free orthodontic treatment for children with the most severe orthodontic problems. The criteria used to decide whether a child qualifies for treatment in the HSE is determined by nationally agreed eligibility guidelines based on an international grading system (IOTN). To ensure the resources available in Cork Kerry Community Healthcare (CKCH) are used in the most appropriate way to meet the presenting needs, all referrals for the service are triaged and given a priority rating.

Cork Kerry Community Healthcare are currently working with the National Oral Health office around a new wait list initiative for a particular priority group waiting over 4 years for orthodontic treatment in Cork and Kerry and it is envisaged that this initiative will commence by Q3 2021.

The emergence of Covid-19 in Ireland in March 2020 severely disrupted the delivery of health services in Ireland, including the orthodontic service and while services have resumed adherence to infection, prevention, control measures, to reduce the risk of the spread of Covid-19, has resulted in fewer treatments being provided per day. While the demand for orthodontic services continues to grow, it is hoped that the measures outlined to you previously, i.e. the introduction of a centralised wait list and the recruitment of a Consultant Orthodontist for Kerry would improve equity of access to orthodontic services across Cork and Kerry and help to reduce the overall waiting times for patients requiring orthodontic treatment in both Cork and Kerry.

If I can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Aisling Lenihan
A/Head of Service - Primary Care,
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare