



Priscilla Lynch
Head of Service, Primary Care,
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare,
Coolnagarrane, Skibbereen, Co. Cork
Email: Priscilla.Lynch@hse.ie

3rd November 2021

Deputy Christopher O Sullivan T.D.,
Dáil Éireann,
Dublin 2.

PQ ref 23394/21

“To ask the Minister for Health if his attention has been drawn to the school dentist waiting list and the fact that currently primary school children are not receiving any appointments in south western areas of County Cork; and if he will make a statement on the matter.”

Dear Deputy O’ Sullivan,

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 Care Dental Services team provides dental treatment to eligible children, medical card holders, special needs clients and others in the care of the HSE at various locations throughout County Cork. Children under 16 years of age are treated in HSE dental clinics and adults are treated by private dental practitioners contracted to the Health Services under the Dental Treatment Services Scheme (DTSS). People who are categorised as high risk, for example: people with specified medical conditions, or special care needs adults, can avail of more extensive dental care.

The emergence of Covid-19 in March 2020 has had a significant impact on the provision of all health services including dental services throughout Cork and Kerry. Per our pandemic plan, the HSE Dental Service had to curtail service provision to emergency services only and oral health staff were largely redeployed into COVID testing, contact tracing and the vaccination program. The school dental screening program was suspended from March to September 2020 and again from January to March 2021. This has led to significant delays in service provision.

While most oral health staff have now returned to core duties enabling the safe resumption of services, strict adherence to physical distancing and enhanced infection prevention and control measures has reduced the capacity of the available staffing from what it would have been pre-Covid and it is necessary to target the resources available.

The dental service continues to prioritise special care needs patients and medically compromised patients. The service also continues to provide emergency care for all eligible patients.

There is currently a reduced service in West Cork due to a vacant post. However, a recruitment process is now underway and we expect another dental surgeon to be based in Bantry in the near future, once the recruitment process is completed by the HSE Recruitment Department.

In the case of the school dental screening in Cork, taking into consideration all available resources at this time, the backlog of 6th class pupils from 2019/2020 is currently being prioritised. When this patient cohort is completed, screening of the 2020/2021 6th class children will commence followed by the recommencement of screening of 2nd class children.

I hope this answers your query but if I can be of any further assistance please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Priscilla Lynch', written in a cursive style.

Priscilla Lynch
Head of Service - Primary Care,
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare