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Deputy Brendan Griffin, T.D.,  
Dáil Éireann,  
Dublin 2.

**PQ ref 56274/21**

**“To ask the Minister for Health if the HSE dental services in County Kerry are available to medical card holders given there is no private dental services available for medical card holders.”**

Dear Deputy Griffin,

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 Service provides dental treatment to eligible children, medical card holders, special needs clients and others in the care of the HSE at various locations throughout Cork and Kerry. Children under 16 years of age and patients with special needs are treated in HSE dental clinics and adults are treated by private dental practitioners contracted to the Health Service Executive under the Dental Treatment Services Scheme (DTSS).

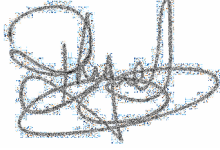
Unfortunately, in recent months there has been a significant reduction in access to the DTSS for medical card holders in Kerry as dentists who hold contracts under DTSS have either resigned their contracts or are not accepting new patients at this time. Kerry also has the highest reduction in percentage uptake of DTSS contracts over the last number of years. The percentage reduction in uptake between 2017 and 2021 for each former local health office area, of which Kerry is one area) ranges from 14.95% to 53.40% (Kerry) with a national reduction of 34.09% (year to date in November 2021).

The Principal Dental Surgeon’s office in Kerry will try and support medical card holders to find a dental practice, being mindful that this has become increasingly difficult in recent weeks. Additionally if medical card holders are experiencing a dental emergency such as pain, swelling, bleeding or trauma and are unable to arrange an appointment with a private dentist, they should contact the HSE dental service in Tralee on 066 7014919 for further assistance.

Unfortunately the public Dental Service in Co. Kerry is not resourced to provide a full range of dental services to medical card holders as it must continue to provide dental services to children and children and adults with special needs. A more long term solution will require engagement at a national level between the various stakeholders.

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 be 'Priscilla Lynch', written in a cursive style.

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