



01 October 2021

**Deputy Paul McAuliffe
Dáil Eireann
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2**

PQ 45150/21: To ask the Minister for Health the position regarding the reported refusal by some dental practices to accept appointment requests from medical card holders; if he will clarify the responsibilities which dental practices have to medical card holders who request appointments and subsequently require treatment; if he will clarify which dental services are currently covered by the medical card; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy McAuliffe

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.

Adult medical card holders have access to dental services under the Dental Treatment Services Scheme (DTSS) through care provided by private dentists that hold DTSS contracts with the HSE. The mutual obligations and operational procedures of the scheme are defined by the contract.

The HSE is aware that some medical card holders have experienced difficulties in accessing dental treatment under the Dental Treatment Services Scheme.

Where this is made known to the HSE, each enquiry and representation is followed up by local community services who seek to assist medical card holders. Where access is difficult, local services make lists of DTSS contractors available to medical card holders and if required make arrangements to provide any necessary emergency dental treatment. In the event of the local service being unable to resolve an issue, there is provision in the DTSS contract under the Termination and Disputes clauses to investigate the matter further.

Dentists resigning from the DTSS are required to give three months' notice, and retain all their contractual obligations including seeing patients during this time.

In any one calendar year entitlement includes:

- A Dental examination including any necessary x rays
- Eligible patients are entitled to emergency treatment only, treatment includes:
 - o Two restorations (fillings) as part of emergency treatment
 - o Extractions (as many as necessary)
 - o Root canal treatment (restricted to front teeth only)
 - o Denture repairs

The provision of dentures requires approval by the HSE in emergency circumstances on application from the patient's dentist. Dentures are generally approved once in a five year period.

As well as assisting medical card holders, the HSE is working closely with the Department of Health in relation to the operation of the scheme, and addressing difficulties faced by some patients accessing services.

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