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Deputy Bernard Durkan
Dáil Eireann
Leinster House
Kildare Street
Dublin 2

PQ 61627/22: To ask the Minister for Health the total number of children currently awaiting orthodontic treatment; when such services are likely to be provided; the timeline for same; and if he will make a statement on the matter

Dear Deputy Durkan,

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.

The HSE Orthodontic Service is provided in Regional Orthodontic Departments. Access to treatment with the HSE Orthodontic Service is limited to those children with the most severe and complex orthodontic treatment needs. Referral for orthodontic assessment is usually made in 6th Class, so orthodontic assessments are limited to those aged under 16. The Modified Index of Treatment Needs (Modified IOTN) system is used in all regions to determine if a child will be accepted for treatment. There are a number of categories within the Modified IOTN system, and these are used to prioritise care, children whose treatment need is assessed as being in Grade 4 or Grade 5 of the Index are offered treatment with the HSE.

Orthodontic treatment waiting lists are collated and reported according to HSE eligibility criteria Modified IOTN, Grade 4 or Grade 5. Appendix 1 details KPI data for the HSE Orthodontic Service as at September 2022.

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.

In 2015 the Department of Health approved a Treatment Waiting List Initiative, with an allocation of €1million per annum, to target patients who were waiting over 4 years for treatment. In summary, between 2016-2020, this initiative placed 1,996 patients in treatment with service providers.

The National Oral Health Office in conjunction with HBS concluded a successor procurement arrangement with private service providers for the period 2021-2024 for the provision of treatment of patients assessed as Grade 4, waiting in excess of 4 years with immediate priority given to those waiting longest. Under the successor arrangement 2068 patients have so far transferred to private service providers. This cohort of patients includes 690 patients placed in treatment with external service providers in late 2021, with a further 1378 patients allocated to external service providers so far in 2022.

Additional National Initiatives underway to address Orthodontic waiting lists include:

- 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 HSE Orthodontic waiting lists for treatment: Q3 2022

GRADE 4 Modified IOTN	1-6 months	7-12 months	13-24 months	25-36 months	37 - 48 months	48+ months	Totals
Former East Coast (Loughlinstown)	39	29	9	32	20	18	147
SIMMS Tallaght	71	44	39	56	75	41	326
Midlands	49	58	56	140	108	282	693
DNE	34	75	116	62	53	125	465
South	78	112	195	380	431	172	1368
South East	97	78	148	97	170	433	1023
Mid Western	38	47	65	76	65	21	312
North West	7	31	40	65	78		221
Western	180	175	50	223	35	0	663
	593	649	718	1131	1035	1092	5218
GRADE 5 Modified IOTN	1-6 months	7-12 months	13-24 months	25-36 months	37 - 48 months	48+ months	Totals
Former East Coast (Loughlinstown)	79	31	52	60	7	56	285
SIMMS Tallaght	109	89	60	146	156	89	649
Midlands	45	57	17	11	10	23	163
DNE	59	186	212	137	227	269	1090
South	137	165	160	333	425	110	1330
South East	140	124	216	121	261	590	1452
Mid Western	51	67	113	83	151	126	591
North West	18	36	75	86			215
Western	192	204	90	162	32	0	680
	830	959	995	1139	1269	1263	6455