

## Corporate Affairs Department

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**24th February, 2022**

Deputy David Cullinane

Dáil Éireann

Leinster House

Kildare Street

Dublin 2

**Re: PQ ref 7268/22** – *To ask the Minister for Health the reason for the delay in the treatment and establishment of the orthognathic and orthodontic service in St. James's Hospital; the alternatives he will put in place in view of the fact that orthodontic surgery at St. James's hospital has been significantly delayed; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

Dear Deputy Cullinane,

Like the majority of acute public hospitals in the state, the onset of Covid-19 has had a major impact on the ability of St James's Hospital to provide access for some planned elective services. The priority has been to provide access to patients awaiting treatment, or surgeries, for time-sensitive procedures. Clinical prioritisation is given to patients who are deemed the most time-sensitive, such as those with a cancer diagnostic element to their care, and/ or those having surgery as part of their cancer treatment pathway.

Thankfully we have seen a reduction in the number of Covid admissions over the last few weeks, however the drop in Covid admissions has seen an increased acute demand, with rising numbers of emergency admissions resulting in our ability to admit planned elective cases remaining restricted. The hospital continues to utilise the Private Hospital Safety Net Agreement to outsource cases that are clinically appropriate, although capacity is limited.

Capacity is routinely monitored and as Covid and emergency demand reduces, access for planned admissions will be increased. The hospital has also submitted a number of proposals to the HSE under the Sláintecare Improvement Plan process, which if supported, will allow the hospital to

deliver on the Sláintecare targets of having no patient waiting greater than 12 months for an inpatient/day case procedure and no greater than 18 months for an outpatient appointment.

Yours sincerely,

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

Mr Noel Gorman

Chief Operations Officer